



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR

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**GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO OPPOSITION STATEMENT ON
AMBULANCES**

The Government is not surprised at the latest reaction of the Opposition regarding the GHA's ambulance service. As is typical of them, they once again try to sidetrack the real issues by resorting to personal insults and character assassination.

In its previous statement, the Government rebutted the specific allegations made by the Opposition. The Government continues to stand by its initial statement. The Government also challenged Mr Costa on his distorted description on Facebook of an incident that he had witnessed. Regarding this specific incident, which has now become the focus of the Opposition's attention, the facts continue to be the same. Mr Costa posted a comment on facebook to the effect that he had witnessed an emergency ambulance requiring maintenance during an emergency trip to a Spanish hospital, and that if they won the Elections he would make the servicing of all essential hospital equipment an absolute priority. This comment was made in the context of a heated political debate regarding the GHA's ambulance service. The fact remains that it was due to a tyre puncture and not to lack of maintenance, as Mr Costa claimed. There is a very significant difference between both scenarios, especially in the context that the comment was made.

Health Minister, Yvette Del Agua has said: "The Opposition's contention now, is that it was indeed a puncture, but that the tyres were thread-bare and overused, and that these incidents could be avoided if the vehicles were checked properly and regularly. The Chief Ambulance Officer has confirmed to me that the ambulance crews carry out very thorough checks on a daily basis to ensure that all our ambulances are road-worthy. A First Parade Check is carried out on all vehicles prior to being used and at the start of a shift. The vehicles are fitted with good quality tyres which are replaced as and when needed. Regarding the vehicle to which the incident refers, the crew member who was driving the vehicle on the day in question has confirmed

that he carried out the appropriate checks before proceeding with the journey, and that there was nothing wrong with the tyres. According to him, they were neither 'overused' or 'threadbare', as Mr Picardo and Mr Costa claim. In addition, I have also received confirmation from the City Fire Brigade Mechanical Section, who regularly service and maintain our ambulances, that they serviced the vehicle in question less than two weeks before the incident, and the tyres showed no signs of wear and tear. That is the reality of the situation.

The fact that Mr Costa has chosen to divulge details of the unfortunate personal circumstances which led him to witness this incident, with which I fully sympathise, does not detract from the fact that he distorted the truth of what happened, and that Mr Picardo has purposely sought to perpetuate the lie. In an attempt to side-track the issue they accuse me of being 'a crass, callous, disrespectful, ineffectual, flippant and shallow person with an outrageous and cavalier disregard for people's suffering'. Despite this vicious personal attack on me, Mr Costa can rest assured that the level of support, sympathy and assistance, which I may or may not have offered him during his recent personal affliction and previous ones, will continue to remain a private matter between us".