



**GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER  
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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Air terminal and tunnel response**

It is obvious that the Opposition have learnt nothing from their defeat at the polls just over a month ago following their statement which was critical of the policy of the Government in relation to the air terminal and the tunnel. They must understand that the Government was elected on the basis of its own commitments made to the electorate in our own manifesto. We have not been elected to implement and defend the commitments of the GSD.

The Opposition have said that it would be a “complete folly” for arrivals to revert to the old air terminal while the new air terminal building is completed. What is a “complete folly” is their decision to operate two different air terminal buildings at the same time in the first place. If they had not done this, in a poorly planned and rushed manner, simply for electoral purposes then the new Government and Gibraltar as a whole would not find itself in the predicament that it is in today. In any case, the Government has not said that it is going to close down the new air terminal building. The Deputy Chief Minister has said that an effort was being made to reduce operating costs in the new air terminal and then assess the situation.

Moreover, the expense of constructing an air terminal designed for a million passengers a year when Gibraltar had barely 150,000 in the last published official figures, has saddled the taxpayers of Gibraltar with astronomical levels of debt which it now becomes the responsibility of the new Government to deal with. The irony is that the taxpayers of Gibraltar have already paid a “heavy price” in respect of the air terminal which is the price-tag of 75 million euros at the last count.

The operating costs of the new air terminal are obviously much higher than the old one and additional to the capital costs. For example, the latest available figures show cleaning of the new terminal for the initial period of arrivals from 25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December cost £88,281,90. This was the cost for fifteen days only!

The Government has been told that there were at least five areas where false partitions were erected in order to cover up the building site behind them for the public viewing. These were the baggage reclaim area on the first floor to the north end of the terminal, the check-in area on the ground floor at the east end of that, the steps in the same area for people accessing from Spain were blocked off, the access to the staff offices on the first

floor and the very nerve centre of the building the unfinished control room was actually hidden behind a false wall. The last one was more than just a simple partition. Some of these were removed after the public viewing. The Government has no doubt that these were put up to give a false impression to visitors that the building was nearly complete when in fact it was not. Indeed, the suggestion that departures from the new air terminal might commence in February is nothing short of wishful thinking. The new Government has been given a completion date of May 2012. This shows the extent to which the public viewing was nothing more than an electoral stunt on the part of the previous administration.

The tunnel under the runway in its present form is the policy of the GSD. It is not the policy of the new Government. What was correctly described by the Deputy Chief Minister as a “financial disaster” is not the possibility that the contractor OHL might take legal action, but the fact that the estimated completion cost of the tunnel has been given as £55 million. This sum is in addition to that which has already been paid, which is about £13 million. The Government has been told that another £13 million more has also been invoiced. It is without question a financial disaster that a project which was supposed to cost the taxpayer about £ 30 million will now end up costing more than double. This happened during the watch of the GSD and is another “heavy price” that the people of Gibraltar will have to pay for many years into the future. The implication that the completion of the tunnel might somehow lead to less queues is absurd. All it will mean is that traffic will queue into the tunnel and down Devil’s Tower Road in the opposite direction that the queues are today. It will be recalled that the queues were supposed to be tackled by the much heralded Cordoba agreement and as everyone knows this has not happened.

Commenting on the matter, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“It is only logical that the new Government will prioritise our own manifesto commitments over those of the Opposition. That is what Governments do and that is why we are the Government and they are not. The economic cost of the “visions” that the GSD has had over 16 years in office and the financial liabilities that we have inherited from them as a result is precisely what Gibraltar simply cannot afford. We are all paying a “heavy price” already as a result.”