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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CHIEF MINISTER VISITS THE REGIMENT ON EXERCISE**

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo, has spent two days with the Royal Gibraltar Regiment in Marrakesh during their Exercise Jebel Sahara.

Mr Picardo witnessed a dawn "deliberate assault" on Wednesday morning. This illustrated the tactics that would be employed in clearing and taking an area in terrain which is similar to that being experienced by troops deployed on current British operations.

Accompanied by the CO, Lt Col Colin Risso MC, the Chief Minister was shown around "Camp Sidi Bou", where he met the men and women of the Regiment over lunch and he was able to see at first hand the logistical problems which had to be overcome when bringing 140 members of the Regiment out to Morocco. Mr Picardo addressed the Regiment, conveying to them the pride the whole of Gibraltar feels in the work they do, at home, training and when they are operationally deployed as members of the British Army.

The Chief Minister also met with General de Brigade M'Barek Moutaleb of the Moroccan 2nd Brigade Infanterie de Parachutiste (2BIP), who are participating in the exercise alongside the Regiment. He was also fully briefed by Lt Col Oumghari of the 2BIP on the importance to the Moroccan forces of Exercise Jebel Sahara. Various RG officers also briefed Mr Picardo on the many aspects of regimental training which are fulfilled by Exercise Jebel Sahara.

On Wednesday evening the Chief Minister hosted a dinner for the Officers and Warrant Officers of the Regiment and then, on Thursday, he was shown the work undertaken in sniper training. He was also given a detailed briefing on the weapons and communication systems used by the Regiment.

Speaking from Marrakesh, the Chief Minister said: "It has been a huge privilege to have been allowed to see the men and women of the Regiment in the training camp

in Marrakesh and witness the work they do whilst on exercise. I was able to see at first hand the hardships that soldiers experience on these exercises - conditions which I am told are remarkably similar to the terrain in current operational theatres.'

'Moreover, the relationship between the Regiment and their colleagues in the Moroccan army is clearly excellent and a testament to the work of the Commanding Officer of the Regiment, the Officers serving with him and each and every soldier deployed on exercise Jebel Sahara this year and in the past. I know I speak for all Gibraltarians when I say that we are all very proud of the Regiment and what they stand for and do."

Whilst in Marrakesh the Chief Minister has also taken the opportunity to start work on establishing stronger business and reciprocal tourism links with the private sector in the Kingdom of Morocco.