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SPANISH MEDIA REPORTS ARE OUT OF CONTEXT

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar notes the misunderstanding by certain sections of the Spanish media late yesterday and overnight of the statements by the Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo, MP, on the BBC Radio 4 flagship 'Today' programme on Wednesday morning which have been reported out of context, significantly altering their meaning and intention.

The Spanish press agency, Europa Press, reported that:

'Picardo has warned of the risk that Guardia Civil patrols continue "their incursions into BGTW without advance warning and, when coming in from the sun, remaining unidentifiable for those carrying out provisioning of British or American vessels."

"They could find themselves being shot at as they cannot be identified as a vessels belonging to a friendly power even though the ship (being intercepted by the Guardia Civil) was contravening international law. They could mistake them (the Guardia Civil) for terrorists," he said in declarations to the BBC.

In fact. In reply to the journalist's question "How close are we, do you think, to shots being fired?" Mr Picardo replied as follows:

"Well I certainly hope that we are not close to that, at all, and never will be. I think the point you are alluding to is a point made by Jim Dobbin, MP, who is the chairman of the All Party British Gibraltar Group, who made that reference as a result of Spanish Guardia Civil vessels coming into BGTW, without warning, coming in from the sun so to speak, where they are not visible to those who are carrying out refuelling or replenishment operations to British or American vessels in BGTW and who might them find themselves shot at because they are not identified as the vessel of a friendly nation even though that vessel may be doing something which is contrary to international law and they may be mistaken for terrorists. That is the issue and it's a security issue that Spain needs to be aware of also."

Members of the public can access the audio of the statement on the BBC website.