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GOVERNMENT PROVIDES UN WITH EVIDENCE OF SPANISH BULLYING

The Government has formally submitted a 100 page dossier to the United Nations which outlines the campaign of hostility and aggression that Gibraltar is subjected to by Spain. This follows the questioning by the Spanish Government of the accuracy of the statements made by the Chief Minister to the United Nations Fourth Committee in October.

It will recalled that in a letter to the Fourth Committee Chairman, the Government of Spain declared that Mr Picardo's statements were "unacceptable" because they contained "flagrant falsehoods and serious insults".

In advance of last week's visit to New York, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia wrote to both the Chairman of the Political and Decolonization (Fourth) Committee and to the Chairman of the Committee of 24 in order to demonstrate that last year's statements by the Chief Minister were true.

A dossier of appropriate evidence was attached in each and every case in order to prove to the Committee that there was nothing false in what they had been told. The dossier tackled the question of incursions by Spanish state vessels into British Gibraltar Territorial Waters, the deliberate delays generated by Spain at the border and the jet-ski incident, all of which had been dismissed by Spain after they were reported to the Fourth Committee.

The dossier included relevant statistical data, photographic evidence, video evidence and press reports, all of which prove that the Chief Minister's statements were accurate.

"The reality is that the present Spanish Government has embarked on a campaign of bullying, aggression and hostility against Gibraltar not seen since the days of the dictator General Franco," Dr Garcia has told the Committee. "We are a small, Non-Self-Governing Territory and as such I believe it is the duty of the United Nations, particularly the Committee of 24 and of the 4th Committee to ensure that this bullying comes to an end", he added.

In the letter, the Deputy Chief Minister described as "absurd" the Spanish proposition that Gibraltar has no Territorial Waters. He points out that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ascribes up to 12 miles of territorial sea to every coastal territory.

Gibraltar presently claims three miles of territorial sea and up to the median line in the Bay of Gibraltar on the western side. Dr Garcia has also provided detailed lists of the occasions on which Spanish state vessels have entered Gibraltar waters.

The Deputy Chief Minister has reminded Spain that on 23 June 2013 shots were fired by members of the Spanish Guardia Civil at a Gibraltarian jet-skier, and that it was precisely this incident that resulted in the United Kingdom making a formal protest to Madrid. The UK Minister for Europe, Mr David Liddington, spoke to the Spanish Minister for the European Union Inigo Mendez de Vigo at the time. The UK then said the protest was made “in the strongest possible terms” and Mr Liddington made it clear that “the discharge of a weapon in or near Gibraltar is completely unacceptable.” Partly as a result of this incident, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, personally confronted the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy at a summit of European Union leaders which took place in Brussels later that month precisely over this incident, telling him that the UK Government would “stand up for and stand by” the people of Gibraltar in the face of any Spanish aggression.

Details of the delays at the border between Gibraltar and Spain were also described by the letter which confirmed that, “the Spanish Government is embarked on a policy of generating deliberate delays at the land frontier between Gibraltar and Spain. These delays reached up to seven hours in August 2013. They continue to this day in an attempt to discourage tourists and others from visiting Gibraltar. This is also causing considerable hardship to cross-border workers of different nationalities who live in Spain and work in Gibraltar. The Spanish frontier authorities, at their whim, stop and search every car entering or leaving Gibraltar. They also stop motorcycles and more recently even pedestrians. The control of smuggling is simply one of many excuses. This has no credibility because they stop cars entering Gibraltar (ie leaving Spain) as well.”

As a result of the European Commission’s mission to the frontier on 25 September 2013, a series of recommendations were made to the UK and to Spain for improvements at the border. Dr Garcia goes on to say that, “The situation has not improved. There is still no “red” and “green” channel operated by Spain and no selective risk-assessed controls. Moreover, the European Commission told Spain that there was no justification on exit checks to persons leaving Spain. The checks that create the delays are therefore disproportionate.”

The relevant paragraph concludes that, ‘This coercion and hostility is tantamount to a campaign of economic sanctions against a small Non-Self-Governing Territory.’

Commenting on the submission of this data to the United Nations, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The Chief Minister asked me to set the record straight at the United Nations before we went to address the Committee of 24 last week. This was done in advance. We have sent all the relevant data which proves that everything that was said to the Fourth Committee last year is true. Indeed, the dossier shows that no falsehoods or insults have been perpetrated against the Spanish Government and that every accusation that the Chief Minister made before the UN can be backed up with detailed evidence. The relevant data continues to be compiled in case it becomes necessary to send more information to the UN and elsewhere.”