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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Government seriously concerned at latest illegal incursions**

- *Two incursions involve allegations of tuna fishing in Spanish Territorial Waters;*
- *Royal Gibraltar Police is investigating the circumstances surrounding the illegal incursions by Guardia Civil;*
- *Infanta Cristina vessel once again repeating belligerent statement that British Waters are Spanish.*

The Government is seriously concerned at the latest attempts on Saturday and Sunday by the Guardia Civil to exercise jurisdiction over Gibraltarian pleasure craft inside British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) and on which the Convent has issued a statement this afternoon.

These actions by official vessels of the Spanish state are illegal and contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The Government understands that the Guardia Civil suspected that the occupants of the pleasure craft had been fishing for tuna in Spanish waters.

The Royal Gibraltar Police is continuing to investigate the events surrounding these illegal interferences with the right of Gibraltarians to peacefully and legally enjoy the waters around Gibraltar. The allegations of fishing in Spanish waters does not in any way condone the behaviour of the Spanish agents who should have contacted the Royal Gibraltar Police for assistance, via the established Mutual Legal Assistance co-operation frameworks, as opposed to trying to take the law into their own hands in an area of sea where Spain has absolutely no jurisdiction, no right to seek to exercise control and zero sovereignty.

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar agrees with the UK in strongly supporting maritime cooperation between the respective agencies in and around the Strait of Gibraltar in the field of law enforcement and maritime safety. Any such co-operation must however be based on the principle of respect for the sovereignty of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters being upheld at all times.

Today a further illegal incursion has occurred when the Spanish Warship the Infanta Cristina has made another incursion into BGTW and, when challenged, insisted she was in Spanish Territorial Waters. All international charts reflect the UNCLOS position setting out the exact demarcation of BGTW which is recognised by all signatories to that international convention. There is therefore no excuse whatsoever for the Spanish Navy to provocatively come into BGTW in breach of UNCLOS and further exacerbate matters by making declarations to the effect that they are in Spanish Territorial Waters.

Although any Spanish incursions are a violation of sovereignty they do not create a threat to it. The Spanish Government must have advice telling them that such actions do not weaken or undermine the international legal basis for British sovereignty over Gibraltar and British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. Indeed, retired Spanish diplomats have revealed that they are entirely aware of the futility of their claims and actions in respect of BGTW.

The Government of the United Kingdom clearly cannot stop these repeated and ultimately futile challenges to British Sovereignty and it is right that it should protest each and every one of them at a diplomatic level to ensure they are thereby deprived of any cumulative legal effect. The desire of people in Gibraltar however is to see the Spanish authorities somehow dissuaded from acting in such manner in the future. In this respect, we remain in constant communication with HM Government of the United Kingdom on these issues.