



HM Government
of Gibraltar



Ministry
of Defence

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**JOINT STATEMENT ON THE MEETING BETWEEN THE CHIEF MINISTER OF
GIBRALTAR AND UK SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE**

The Hon Fabian Picardo, Chief Minister of Gibraltar welcomed the Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP, UK Defence Secretary, to Gibraltar for a short visit.

The Chief Minister and Defence Secretary jointly paid tribute to all of those working in support of the Ministry of Defence's activities in Gibraltar, and agreed that the current threats to regional and global security arising from West Africa to the Middle East underscored once again the strategic importance of a permanent joint operating base in Gibraltar very much of the current agreed size and shape going forward.

They announced that the Ministry of Defence would shortly invite commercial tenders for the resurfacing of the runway at Gibraltar airport, with the work expected to begin next summer. The airfield will remain open for civilian and military air traffic during the works, which are a tangible indication of the Ministry of Defence's long-term commitment to Gibraltar. The runway was last resurfaced in 1993.

The Chief Minister and Defence Secretary also announced that they had agreed that in future the costs of replacing key elements of Defence infrastructure at the airfield would be shared equally, in recognition of the strategic importance of these assets to commercial use of the airfield, and hence to Gibraltar's economy, as well as to its military use.

Also on airfield issues, the Defence Secretary and Chief Minister reaffirmed the joint commitment to transfer Defence Fire and Rescue Services to the Government of Gibraltar, welcomed the joint work that had already been carried out to this end and looked forward to approving the transfer at the earliest opportunity.

Under agreements dating back to 1974, MOD has transferred areas of land it held for defence purposes and which it no longer needs to Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar for it to retain, or dispose of for community or commercial use. The Defence Secretary and Chief Minister welcomed the recent progress that has been made on such transfers, and have initiated work on a further Lands Agreement to be agreed in early 2015.

This is expected to include a commitment to transfer to the Government of Gibraltar a block of warehousing at the Naval Base, once key elements of the 2011 Lands Agreement have been completed. The aim is to achieve this within twelve months of today's agreement.

It is also expected to include a commitment for the transfer of the site at Rosia Bay (previously known as Fortress Headquarters) on completion and implementation of all previous Lands Agreements. This is likely to be in 2017.

In both instances, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar will not be making any contribution to re-providing these MoD facilities.

Finally, the Defence Secretary welcomed the Chief Minister's commitment to introduce legislation to the Gibraltar Parliament in the next few weeks to place the Royal Gibraltar Regiment on the same footing as its British Army counterparts, highlighting its continuing valuable contribution both in Gibraltar and deployed on operations. Mr Fallon stated that he expected that the Royal Gibraltar Regiment would remain at its current size and shape for the foreseeable future.

The Defence Secretary is also meeting the Governor, Commander British Forces Gibraltar, and a range of defence personnel during the course of his visit.