



PRESS RELEASE

No. 479/2015

Date: 3rd July 2015

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar: Latest Angeles Alvarino Incident "Totally Unacceptable"

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar joins the United Kingdom Government in taking a very serious view of the further totally unacceptable incursion into British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) earlier today by the Spanish Survey Vessel Angeles Alvarino. This incursion marks the start of the summer season when the current Spanish Government traditionally uses Gibraltar as a distraction to divert attention from the problems that they have at home. This year being an election year in Spain, it is likely to turn out to be no different.

The Spanish vessel attempted to take executive action in waters which are not Spanish by trying to drop probes into the sea in order to take readings. The Royal Navy, Royal Gibraltar Police and Gibraltar Defence Police maritime assets were all despatched to the scene. A Guardia Civil patrol boat was also called in by the Angeles Alvarino.

The Survey vessel hit the Royal Navy patrol boat with a probe as it sought to prevent the Spanish vessel from dropping the probe into the water.

This latest stand-off lasted for about three hours.

Serious personally injury could easily have resulted to Royal Navy personnel given the reckless actions of the crew of the Spanish vessel. The Royal Navy personnel involved are to be commended for the professionalism of their actions, as are the RGP and GDP officers who also attended the incident.

The Government considers that the action taken by the Spanish vessel constitutes a further attempt to undermine the sovereignty of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters in seeking to further its argument that it has some responsibility for the environmental management of the indisputably British waters around Gibraltar.

The response by the United Kingdom Government to this ridiculous action must be clear and robust and designed to curtail any further repetition of this activity in the future.

Moreover, it is absurd that Spain should provoke an incident of this kind which engages law enforcement vessels from both countries when there is much more important work to be done in



the fight against organised criminals trafficking drugs and people across the Straits of Gibraltar as well as the need to be ever vigilant in respect of terrorism. Ludicrous activities of this type can only be welcomed by drug traffickers and other criminals who will appreciate the current Spanish Government creating such distractions for law enforcement agencies.

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar also notes that Spain, a NATO ally, regularly offers shelter and support to Russian warships across the Straits in Ceuta, Spain's North African enclave.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "This was, once again, dangerous and reckless nonsense no doubt orchestrated and applauded at the highest political levels of the current Spanish Government in pursuit of their claim to the sovereignty of our waters, an objective which it will never achieve. It's not going to happen legally or factually, however many probes they deploy and even former Spanish Ambassadors to the UN have recognised that. Once again, today, lives have been endangered and police and navy time has been wasted by these useless and needlessly provocative activities. The extraordinary crassness of today is that the events continued even as the UK and Gibraltar were observing a minutes silence in memory of those who were killed in Tunisia last week. That demonstrates an unforgiveable lack of common decency on the part of those who planned this latest incident which will not quickly be forgotten and which evidences, if further proof were needed, how some elements of the current Spanish Government cannot be regarded as "friendly" by the United Kingdom. The fact remains that the current Spanish Government achieves nothing with its actions on the water or at the frontier and in breaching the Córdoba Accords. Indeed, they will achieve no useful outcome other than to persuade the few we have not been able to persuade ourselves that the Spanish Government cannot be trusted to keep even to signed agreements, by the people or Government of Gibraltar, or even by the Government of the United Kingdom. For that much at least, we will be thanking Snr Margallo for many years."

Spanish state vessels entered BGTW 173 times during June with differing degrees of seriousness.