



PRESS RELEASE

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Government response to 11th September incident in BGTW

The Government considers that the incident of 11 September, where local vessels were rammed by a Guardia Civil RHIB, was dangerous and irresponsible. It was also a serious challenge to British sovereignty. In recent weeks Spanish helicopters have hovered metres above the ground, shots have been fired in BGTW by Spanish SVA officers and now pleasure boats have been harassed and collided with by a Guardia Civil RHIB.

The evidence suggests that the situation at sea caused by unlawful incursions by Spanish state vessels is getting worse and not better, contrary to the assurances given by Madrid in advance of the Prime Minister's visit to the Spanish capital.

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar has seen various pieces of video evidence of the incident. The incident involved two Gibraltarian pleasure craft, a Guardia Civil RHIB, the RGP Interceptor Launch Bravo 3 and the HMC Searcher.

The Chief Minister Fabian Picardo and the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia have also met with one of the Gibraltarian anglers who was on board the pleasure boat which was the victim of this latest act of harassment by the Guardia Civil and members of the family in the other vessel. All are undoubtedly law abiding citizens.

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar commends the quick and professional response of the RGP and Her Majesty's Customs in respect of this incident despite the sheer unprofessionalism and bad seamanship demonstrated by the Guardia Civil. This incident is demonstrative of the flagrant disregard of the Spanish authorities for the sovereignty of British Gibraltar, the very day after our National Day. The blatant refusal of the Guardia Civil to engage with the RGP or HM Customs in a professional or calm manner and their threats to take Gibraltarian civilians and an RGP Officer into custody are inexcusable and completely intolerable. Moreover, the dangerous manoeuvres of the Guardia Civil and the deliberate ramming of both a Gibraltarian pleasure craft and an RGP vessel, just weeks after the firing of live shots at Gibraltarians civilians in BGTW, shows the extent to which some representatives of the Spanish authorities are willing put Gibraltarian lives at risk.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC, said: 'This latest attempted executive action in which the Guardia Civil resorted to violent manoeuvres in place of what should have been calm



communication will be totally unacceptable to right thinking people who view the footage of the situation that developed. As the always laudable actions of the RGP and HM Customs have shown, every appropriate and proportionate response will be undertaken in order to protect Gibraltarian vessels in our waters. The video evidence is irrefutable and illustrates the danger created by the reckless navigation of the Spanish law enforcement officers in question. Those put at serious risk included a child who had been enjoying a day out fishing with his family and who was visibly and audibly shaken by the events in question. David Lidington was right to take this issue up immediately with his Spanish counterparts. The video evidence shows the world the facts as they occurred and will no doubt embarrass those involved on the Guardia Civil RHIB and those who, on their behalf, have put forward a demonstrably untrue version of events. It really makes a mockery of the statement by the Spanish Government two weeks ago on purported cooperation in respect of law enforcement. That will surprise no-one in Gibraltar."