



Deputy Chief Minister

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Garcia Tells Washington that Spain Fails to Behave Like a NATO Ally

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia has accused the Spanish Government of behaving in a cavalier and irresponsible manner in the waters around Gibraltar in a way which endangers the wider interests of the Western World. Dr Garcia made these comments in an event in Washington organised by the Heritage Foundation.

The seminar, which was entitled "Security in the Western Mediterranean and North Africa", saw Dr Garcia as one of three panellists in an event targeted at key Senate foreign relations and national security staff. He shared the floor with Mr Luke Coffey who spoke about the importance of Gibraltar especially in the light of recent events with ISIS and Russia in the region and with Mr Josh Meservey, a North African expert, who addressed the question of terrorism.

Dr Garcia gave a Gibraltar perspective on the subject. He explained that although defence and security were the constitutional responsibility of the United Kingdom, the Government of Gibraltar nonetheless had an opinion on the subject which is what he put forward.

The Deputy Chief Minister explained that the constant incursions and interference by Spanish state vessels were a distraction from the more serious security challenges that the region faced. He went on to outline the instances when Spain had interfered with naval vessels or military exercises in British waters and took the opportunity to explain the incidents that took place on 16 April involving Spanish state vessels and the American nuclear submarine USS Florida. "This is not how a NATO ally should behave," he told the audience.

Dr Garcia explained that Madrid had still not come to terms with losing Gibraltar three hundred years ago. He said that the aggressive manner in which Spain was asserting its "prehistoric and outdated claim" posed a real threat. Firstly because there was a danger that someone could get shot and secondly because those with a more sinister intent could emulate Spanish state vessels in order to plan an attack like that on the USS Cole in Aden some years ago. "The United Kingdom protests every such incident and the United States should do so as well," he added. "Spain has to stop doing this."

Dr Garcia then outlined the restrictions imposed by Spain on military aircraft or naval vessels



bound for or coming from Gibraltar. This meant that military aircraft with a Gibraltar destination cannot overfly Spain and naval vessels calling at Gibraltar are banned from calling at a Spanish port straight afterwards. These restrictions were imposed by General Franco in the 1960s in order to make life difficult for the United Kingdom and it was incredible that Madrid had not lifted the ban once Spain had joined NATO.

The Deputy Chief Minister went over the involvement of the armed forces of the United States with Gibraltar since their first foreign intervention outside America in 1801. He mentioned the erection of the American War Memorial in 1932 as a symbol of gratitude to the efforts that Gibraltar had made in assisting the United States during the First World War and referred to General Eisenhower planning the invasion of North Africa inside the Rock during World War Two.

Dr Garcia concluded by saying that the Straits and the region were infinitely more secure with Gibraltar in British hands.