



Deputy Chief Minister

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British Gibraltar is in US best interests says Garcia

In a packed programme of meetings, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia has told a wide range of Washington politicians and political advisors that a British Gibraltar is in the best interests of the United States. He has also provided a Gibraltar perspective to the general Brexit debate in a series of detailed, factual briefings on the subject.

The Deputy Chief Minister was able to discuss these matters, and Gibraltar issues in general, with the State Department Senior White House Adviser. This is the first time that the Government has been able to put across its views directly in this way.

Meetings were also held with chairmen of influential bodies such as the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Homeland Security Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade.

In a new initiative, Dr Garcia also briefed several policy advisors who work as the personal staff to Senior Committee Members.

There has been considerable interest on the impact of Brexit on Gibraltar given the fact that the UK submitted the formal notice of departure at the same time as the delegation from Gibraltar was in Washington. This has allowed Dr Garcia the opportunity to explain the Gibraltar Government's position to Congressman from both parties, to Senate offices and to the new administration.

The Deputy Chief Minister has repeated his call for a sensible, orderly and well-managed Brexit to a meeting of relevant Senate officers. He has argued that this is in the best interests of both Gibraltar and Spain. He recalled the fact that Spain closed the border completely from 1969 until 1982 when it reopened on a limited basis, and then 1985 when it opened for vehicles.

He made the point that Spain has often used the border as a political weapon against Gibraltar and argued that this was in nobody's interests. This came in the context of threats made in Spain to take advantage of Brexit negotiations in relation to its claim to Gibraltar.



Dr Garcia made the point that notwithstanding that the defence of Gibraltar was the responsibility of the United Kingdom, the Government welcomed the use of Gibraltar by US military assists. He went on to outline the historic association of the armed forces of the United States with Gibraltar. This dated back to the first action of the US Navy outside its shores in 1801 against Barbary Pirates, which took place from Gibraltar.

Indeed, in 1932 the US Government constructed the American War Memorial in order to thank the people of Gibraltar for their assistance during the First World War. The contribution that Gibraltar played, as host to General Eisenhower, during World War Two was also mentioned. In addition, Dr Garcia highlighted more recent calls by US Navy vessels to Gibraltar.

Amongst influential opinion-makers in the United States, the visit to Washington has raised Gibraltar's profile and has made for a much greater understanding of its current concerns.