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Thank you to the Duke of Edinburgh on behalf of Gibraltar

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP

His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, a long-term supporter of Gibraltar, yesterday announced his well-earned retirement from public life. On behalf of the People of Gibraltar I would like to express my gratitude for his unwavering friendship over the years and wish him a happy and healthy retirement.

Many in Gibraltar will recall fond memories of Prince Philip's official visit to Gibraltar in May 1954 as he accompanied Her Majesty the Queen on her first official tour of the Commonwealth. However, that was not the Duke of Edinburgh's first visit to Gibraltar: he had been here before, in 1950, to oversee the opening of Gibraltar's Legislative Council. From the very beginning he expressed his support for the right of the Gibraltarians to self-determination, indicating in his speech that it was Britain's long-term goal to make Gibraltar self-governing.

The Duke of Edinburgh's affection for the Rock brought him back on several unofficial visits throughout the 1950s. Indeed, his signature appears as a casual Philip in the 1955 visitor book of the Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club, of which he is the Admiral. And at 9:00am on the 6th of February 1957 His Royal Highness brought HMY Britannia alongside Gibraltar's dockyard himself, on the final stop of what has become known as his Antarctic Adventure. During his 10 day stay on the Rock the Duke of Edinburgh took great enjoyment from our fortunate good weather, and spent time sailing yachts in our waters.

Prince Philip visited Gibraltar - and signed the Yacht Club's visitor book - one final time. On 30th May 1996, almost 21 years to the day before announcing his retirement from public life, he personally piloted the jet he landed on our world-famous runway. The visit, this time an official one, was to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Gibraltar. Amongst heightened border tensions Prince Philip kept true to his renowned sense of humour, and in a speech likened a crossing of the Gibraltar-Spain border to an 'adventurous expedition': words that unfortunately still ring true today.

Throughout his career, both officially and unofficially, the Duke of Edinburgh has been steadfast in his support of Gibraltar and of the right of the Gibraltarians to determine our own future. We, the People of Gibraltar thank him for his dedicated service and send him our very best wishes for a long, healthy and happy retirement.