



PRESS RELEASE

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THIS GOVERNMENT DOES NOT TURN A BLIND EYE TO SMUGGLING

HM Government of Gibraltar has noted Mr Hammond's recent concerns relating to tobacco smugglers operating on the quayside near Waterport Terraces.

These concerns are shared by the Government who can assure Mr Hammond that effective action is certainly being taken. In his Facebook post, Mr Hammond asks if the authorities are turning a blind eye to smuggling in this area. His footage was filmed on 25 January, just two days after 250 cartons of cigarettes were seized by HM Customs and where two arrests were made in exactly the same place. On the same day that the video was filmed, 600 cartons of cigarettes were seized in that very location and, on the following day, 26 January, the vessel shown in the film was chased and then detained by HM Customs, although the occupants fled into Spain.

The Government also notes that, around the time that Mr Hammond's video was filmed, at 1730hrs on 25th January, no-one (not even Mr Hammond) reported to HM Customs that any criminal activity was taking place. The Government is disappointed that Mr Hammond chose to put the footage on social media without reporting it to the proper authorities.

In the Facebook post, Mr Hammond also refers to 'the Bad Old Days,' an idea which is worthy of some consideration.

In 2009 and 2010, during the GSD's last term of office, the number of cartons of cigarettes seized by HM Customs from smugglers was:

2009 - 11,672 cartons

2010 - 9,870 cartons

During this Government's time in office, similar statistics were:

2016 - 17,690 cartons

2017 - 17,966 cartons

In 'the Bad Old Days' of the GSD in 2010, 16 persons were arrested by HM Customs for tobacco-smuggling offences. Similar figures for this Government's time in office were 87 persons in 2016 and, 55 persons in 2017.

Since 2014, this Government has also made several significant amendments to existing legislation with the aim of targeting tobacco smugglers. There have been amendments to licence conditions, a



tightening of club licences, the Statutory Amendments (Tobacco Act), the establishment of Special Zones and the establishment of Customs Posts on both Eastern Beach and Western Beach. Hardly the work of a Government which is 'turning a blind eye.'

In 2015, this Government showed its determination to stamp out the menace of smuggling by adding an additional 65 officers to the strength of HM Customs, which allowed for the establishment of a full-time Marine Section, something which had not previously existed.

So much for the past. What about the future? Residents of the Waterport Terraces area will be interested to learn that HM Customs' headquarters, including its Anti-Smuggling Team, will shortly be re-located on to the neighbouring waterfront to act both as a deterrent to smugglers and as a practical instrument of law-enforcement.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC said, 'Whilst my Government is only too aware that smuggling has not yet been totally eradicated from Gibraltar's beaches and border fences, we have greatly increased the number of Customs officers, introduced new legislation and, as a result, witnessed an increase in the amount of tobacco seized and the number of people arrested for smuggling. I am extremely proud of the work done by the men and women of HM Customs and the RGP. We will continue our 24/7 fight against smuggling and Mr Hammond's twenty second clip of footage will, in no way discredit them. We suggest that next time, he, a Member of Parliament, witnesses criminal wrongdoing, he should report it to the proper authorities.'