

The U.S. – Gibraltar Relationship

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Background

Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory strategically located on the southern end of the Iberian Peninsula at the entrance of the Mediterranean Sea. The U.S. and Gibraltar have long enjoyed a close and enduring relationship centered around strong economic, cultural, and security ties.

From the first overseas military intervention by the U.S. in 1801 against the Barbary States to the present day, the U.S. continues to rely on Gibraltar’s strategic location. During World War II, Gibraltar served as a critical base of operation for General Dwight Eisenhower. General Eisenhower used Gibraltar as his headquarters to plan the liberation of North Africa and later stated, “Britain’s Gibraltar made possible the invasion of North-West Africa. Without it the vital air cover would not have been quickly established on the North African fields.”

In 1990 and 1991 an estimated 193 U.S. Navy ships used British Gibraltar Territorial Waters in support of operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield. And, crucially, Gibraltar was used by the U.S. Ready Reserve Fleet to refuel in route to the Middle East. In 2011, the U.S. used Gibraltar’s military facilities to assist with intervention in Libya when two attack submarines, USS Florida and USS Providence, were resupplied at Gibraltar after launching cruise missiles against Libyan targets. And, to this day U.S. Navy nuclear submarines visit Gibraltar, as the USS John Warner did in March 2018, for 10 days immediately prior to participating in military operations in Syria, as well as subsequently the following:

USNS Carson City, 5/2019

USS Georgia, 4/2022

USNS Medgar Evers, 11/2020

USS Florida, 9/2022

USS Seawolf submarine, 12/2020

USS Rhode Island and USS Ohio Submarines, 11/2022

USS Alaska submarine, 6/2021

US Navy Los Angeles Class Submarine, 4/2023

USS Albany submarine, 12/2021

USS Indiana fast-attack submarine, 1/18/2025

Gibraltar embraces the same freedoms that we in the U.S. hold dearly. And, even though their population numbers only around 33,000, like the U.S., Gibraltar is a melting pot of diverse cultures and includes Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu citizens. With a strong emphasis on education, the overwhelming majority of Gibraltarians continue their studies at university level.

The Congressional Resolution

Since the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, Gibraltar has remained a British Overseas Territory. The U.S. Department of State recognizes Gibraltar as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom based on this Treaty. In 1967 and 2002, over 98 percent of the citizens of Gibraltar voted in favor of remaining an overseas territory of the United Kingdom.

In recognition of the unique, historic relationship between the U.S. and Gibraltar, in the 118th Congress, Reps. Don Bacon (NE-2) and Gerry Connolly (VA-11) introduced a bipartisan resolution, H. Res. 624 expressing appreciation for the role Gibraltar has played in supporting U.S. national security and acknowledging Gibraltar’s right to self-determination.

An identical resolution will be introduced in the 119th Congress.

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