

VICTIMS WRITE TO GORDON BROWN

# Soldiers' holiday rampage

□ By Karl McLaughlin

**R**estaurant customers who were caught up in an unprovoked attack by a group of eight British soldiers on holiday in Lanzarote have written a letter to Gordon Brown asking him to take up the incident with Army chiefs.

Four people were hospitalised after the soldiers, believed to be Welsh Guards, went on the rampage in the Vaca Loca restaurant in the popular resort of Costa Teguise. Witnesses say the violence was triggered when staff challenged one of the soldiers who tried to steal a bottle of wine. Customers, including several young children, had to dive for cover under their tables as some of the soldiers hurled tables and chairs across the restaurant while the others took it in turns to punch and kick the owner and his staff. One of

the customers, an Italian who was dining with his wife and 75-year-old mother and tried to aid the owner, received a brutal beating and requires facial surgery to rebuild his cheekbone and jaw. Another customer, German Thomas Salewski, almost lost an eye.

The customers and staff have published an open letter on the Internet to the British Prime Minister urging him to step in to make sure the soldiers are punished. Accompanying their letter with horrific pictures of the injuries, the customers called on Mr Brown to review the training methods used in the Army if they are to be put into practice on innocent people: "Your highly trained and perfectly coordinated soldiers wrecked a restaurant and ran off after their bloody assault. As a civilian like us, we call on you to keep better control of your Armed



Forces to ensure that when they go on holiday to another country they do not use their training to attack defenceless civilians. We also ask you to personally contact their Unit (your Consulate knows who they are) and investigate the type of training these men have received. It is appropriate for your soldiers to be

trained as human weapons to protect the civilian population, but we cannot tolerate their presence on our island if, like so many of your compatriots, they come here to cause damage, get drunk and annoy others. We have been physically hurt by the actions of your soldiers but that is nothing compared to

the psychological suffering of the children and elderly people in the restaurant who had to witness such a bloody spectacle".

The letter, signed by the 'Vaca Loca Restaurant victims', ends with ironic congratulations to the Prime Minister for having trained 'such highly skilled profes-

sionals whose 'team work' and ability to dish out violence was very much in evidence in their brutal assault'. Chef Martín Vessecchia, who needed several stitches for the head and facial injuries sustained during the attack, described the soldiers as 'drunk but totally in control of what they were doing. They were on automatic pilot, they did not care who they hit'. The Vaca Loca's owner, Hernán Martín, who had to close temporarily to repair the damage caused, said he was shocked at the level of violence used and would do everything in his power to make sure the soldiers are not allowed to return home without punishment.

The Ministry of Defence has refused to release any details of the incident, saying it had 'a duty of care to uphold and it would be highly inappropriate to give any personal details'.

Credit: Lavoxdelanzarote.com

## LIDL OPENING

## Trolley, steady, go

(Contd from front page)

**C**ertainly both German, English and Irish clients who spoke to *Island Connections* expressed their delight at finding goods from home at worthwhile prices in the new Lidl stores, where previously they would have been paying over the odds if the product was considered

'specialist' and carried a high import price. They were also attracted by the myriad of special offers in stock, which change on a regular basis. Jon, from England, and his Irish wife Shaunagh were among the first to shop in the store in Granadilla and left with a full trolley, happy with their lot. They told us they were



Lidl's Canarian manager Javier Suarez

delighted to have Lidl in the zone and would definitely be shopping there again.

Certainly the arrival of Lidl to the islands can only be

good news for the consumer. No doubt the existing big players will be watching Lidl's progress closely, and we can expect campaigns to

make sure their customers remain loyal. For shoppers it means a chance to shop around and match price for price as well as enjoy a whole

new selection of products that have not been available on the islands up to now.

The 12 Lidl stores in the Canary Islands are in, Tenerife in Puerto de la Cruz, Granadilla, La Laguna, Adeje, Santa Úrsula, Las Chafiras, in Gran Canaria they will open in Telde and Agüimes on February 25th and in Ingenio and Vecindario on March 4th and in Arrecife (Lanzarote) on March 11th and Puerto del Rosario (Fuerteventura) on March 18th.



Jon and Shaunagh were among the first Lidl customers in Granadilla

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