



CRUISE PASSENGERS EVACUATED

Military rescue missions

In separate dramatic operations, Canarian military squadrons were recently deployed twice from Gran Canaria on the same day, to rescue passengers off cruise ships who were in urgent need of medical attention.

The incidents took place on April 8. As both rescue operations exceeded the range of the Maritime Rescue Services, the Air Force sent a CN-235 Vigma (D.4) reconnaissance aircraft to locate the ships, which passed the exact posi-

tions onto the pilot of a Super Puma helicopter - which carries the necessary equipment for airlifting injured or sick people aboard.

The first situation unfolded with an emergency call from the MSC Seaview cruise ship, which was heading for the archipelago but was located around 500 kilometres off the coast of Gran Canaria. A 43-year-old Portuguese lady had gone into labour prematurely and, due to complications, both mother and child

were in a serious condition. The helicopter crew, from the base in Gran Canaria, took the patient aboard at 10.22am. The ship's doctor flew with the mother to the Doctor Negrín University Hospital in Gran Canaria, where she landed at 12.26pm and underwent an emergency caesarean.

A little while later, a call was received from the World Odyssey cruise ship. There, a 20-year-old woman from the United States was so seriously ill with an infection that an



↑ The pregnant woman was hoisted into the helicopter and flown out to the Doctor Negrín University Hospital

immediate evacuation was necessary. The ship was on its way

to Gran Canaria but was around 650 kilometres from its destination. At 2.34pm the helicopter crew took the woman

on board, and at 5.40pm they landed at the Doctor Negrín University Hospital in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. ■

ART AND EQUALITY

Festival news

A brand new diversity festival will be held this year between April 24 and 28 in Puerto de La Cruz. The International festival of Art and Equal-

ity comes under the banner of the 'Diverse' organisation and is all about visibility and acceptance.

It is the latest addition to the area's cultural offering, and aims to draw attention to women's issues and the collective of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals.

The festival will take place in the Plaza Europa and around the Castillo San Felipe. In addition to concerts, a number of film and book presentations will also take place. Amongst other acts already confirmed, highlights include Tenerife actress Bibiana Monje, activist Pamela Palenciano, the musical group Caracoles (on April 24), singer-songwriter La Otra (April 26) and Canarian reggae band Ruts & La Isla Music.

In addition, the open-air art festival MUECA, which is usually celebrated in May, has been postponed to September this year. ■

GRAN CANARIA PRISON INCIDENT

Four injured guards

On April 7, there was a serious incident during the morning at Las Palmas II prison.

One inmate, considered particularly violent and dangerous and therefore in solitary confinement, apparently refused to follow the prison guards in the morning, not wanting to leave his cell. He is said to have gone on to insult the guards and threaten to kill them, attack them as they entered the cell, throw cleaning utensils out of the window and beat himself. Initially, the guards retreated to give the man time to calm down, but later decided to intervene because there was a great risk the prisoner might hurt himself badly.

When three attendants and the head of the service entered the cell, he also apparently attacked them and injured them. They all had to be cared for in the infirmary, and several had to go to hospital.

The union has long criticised the prison's low staffing levels and lack of security material, and urges that measures be taken to relieve the situation. In many experts' opinions, the so-called Prison II in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria has become one of the most dangerous areas in Spain for guards. ■

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