

INVESTIGATIONS



Prime Minister Joseph Muscat with then Energy Minister Konrad Mizzi and Chief of Staff Keith Schembri inaugurating the gas tanker in 2016.

Ads by FatChilli

## Emails show how government choreographed media coverage for arrival of Electrogas tanker



The Shift Team

September 16, 2020 09:07

Email exchanges seen by The Shift show how communications aides for the government and Electrogas were tirelessly working to make the entrance of the FSU tanker and the first shipment of liquefied natural gas (LNG) appear to be a historic moment for the nation.



**Without fear or favour – Jacques René Zammit**  
Jacques René Zammit



team, [Alex Cutajar](#) and Lindsey Gambin, and Catherine Halpin, the commercial director of Electrogas.

PBS has recently been allocated increased funding of €30 million for five years. The leaked emails raise further concern about the government's use of the public broadcaster as yet another propaganda tool.

Mizzi's right hand man at the time, Cutajar, had a particularly busy time ahead of the ship's arrival in 2017. He was taking care of organising the public relations and marketing, and the emails indicate that media requests for comments or features had to go through him.

The press conference announcing the arrival of the first shipment of LNG was planned to take place at the Delimara Fort. However, Halpin seemed a bit concerned that the Fort was not "looking great" because of ongoing excavations.

She also wanted to make sure that a small token be given to the LNG vessel captain – a frame with a photo of the vessel displaying the ship-to-ship transfer (STS), with an engraving, saying 'First LNG cargo, Electrogas Malta' – being presented after the transfer was completed, not before.

"It would be nice to make one for ourselves, each shareholder, bumi [Bumi Armada] and the LNG carrier master. Normally this presentation is done after the STS (not to tempt fate)," Halpin wrote.

Time would prove that this tanker was indeed an icon; not for lower energy bills, but for corruption and murder. Today marks 35 months since Daphne Caruana Galizia was assassinated while investigating a cache of leaked emails from Electrogas that she had received. Yorgen Fenech is accused of commissioning her death by a

Kevin Cassar



**The Freemasons, the witch hunt and the kangaroo court**  
– Jacques René Zammit  
Jacques René Zammit

**Investigative journalism  
that speaks truth to power**

[click here to support us](#)

The  
Shift

**Get special updates directly  
in your inbox**

Email



Don't worry we do not spam

We use cookies to ensure we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this site we will assume that you are happy with it.

[Privacy Policy](#)  OK

## ‘Give story to PBS’

Ahead of the first shipment of LNG, the communications aides were tasked with announcing the arrival of the MV Armada Mediterranea, the tanker that would supply gas to the new power station.

Emails show that Cutajar stressed that the government needed to “run some features relating to gas safety” and related training before any footage of the massive LNG tanker heading towards Malta is released to the public.

The safety features are being filmed as we speak.

They will be published next week.


Best wait until then.

Also instead of just issuing the footage it would be a good idea to ‘give the story’ to a newsroom about the voyage per se and show the footage there. That way it won’t be just the footage on its own being shared but a whole story that includes the footage.

What do you think?

Lindsey Gambin  
Communications Coordinator

t: +356 [REDACTED] e: [REDACTED]@gov.mt | www.opm.gov.mt  
Kindly consider your environmental responsibility before printing this e-mail

  
MINISTER - OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
AUBERGE DE CASTILLE, VALLETTA, MALTA

Emails show how government communications aides effectively handled Electrogas’ PR including ensuring safety feature programmes are aired well before any footage of LNG tankers are made public in order to “soften the audience”.

Electrogas’ advertising agency had suggested that footage of the arrival of the tanker be released to all newsrooms at one go. However, Gambin, a former reporter at the Labour Party TV station, suggested that it would be wiser to “give the story” to a newsroom.

PBS was the obvious first choice, emails show.

In December 2016, the public broadcaster had, in fact, requested two features to be compiled about the MV Armada. One of the news features would be a “semi-technical one”, as the news coordinator put it, while another will be released on Christmas Day. It is one of the slowest days in the newsroom and PBS thought of featuring the

This email from a PBS “news coordinator” to Gambin and Cutajar, then both officials entrusted with OPM’s Projects Division’s marketing, ended with a obsequious offer that “he is always open to ideas and suggestions as to how best to work”.

Emails from the same period show that Johann Grech, who at the time was working at the Office of the Prime Minister, always had a taste for scenic footage even before being appointed to lead the [Malta Film Commission](#).

Emails from November 2016 have Grech instructing Cutajar to organise new footage for a “government production”. Halpin cautioned Cutajar that the use of a drone in the area might be illegal.

**From:** " [redacted]@pbs.com.mt" < [redacted]@pbs.com.mt >  
**Date:** Thursday, December 8, 2016 at 6:39 PM  
**To:** Gambin Lindsey at Minister-OPM < [redacted]@gov.mt >, Alex Cutajar < [redacted]@gov.mt >  
**Subject:** TVM - features re: FSU

Lindsey/Alex,

Nittama l-ewwelnett li tinsabu tajbin.

Qed niktbilkom biex nara x'inhi l-possibilita' li nipproducu zewg stejjer b'rabta mal-FSU. L-idea hi li nifilmjaw abbord l-fsu u mill-filming'intervisti li jsiru nkunu nisthgu nipproducu zewg servizzi separati.

a) Il-hsieb tieghi ghall-ewwel servizz hu li naghmlu walkabout abbord l-FSU u jkollna spjega dwar kif se jopera meta jkun qed jintuza bhala hazna ghal-LNG.

b) It-tieni servizz hu biex jixxandar f'Jum il-Milied. Dakinhar dejjem noholqu servizz dwar xi post tax-xoghol partikulari li jahdem 24 siegha kuljum. Ikun interessanti li naghtu titwila lejn l-FSU bhala post tax-xoghol, l-istaff li se jibda jkun hemm abbord, jekk hux se jservi ta' living quarters ghal xi haddiema, jekk fl-irwol ta' FSU u mhux tanker hux se jkollu kaptan u ekwipagg xorta abbord, x'xoghlijiet/professjonijiet se jkunu mehtiega abbord, etc. etc.

Nittama li t-talba taghna tintlaqa'. Jien dejjem dispost ghall-ideat/suggerimenti taghkom kif l-ahjar nahdmu.

Grazzi hafna

Mario Micallef  
News Co-ordinator  
TVM

PBS gives a new meaning to news coordination with news stories about Electrogas being pitched to OPM and open offers for “ideas and suggestions”.

### Replies to media go through government

Email exchanges show how the government was consulted whenever the team received questions from the media, with guidance or even draft replies frequently being promptly supplied by OPM.

On 17 April 2018, Franz Doerfler, CEO of Electrogas, received an email from a financial correspondent at The Guardian, as

The email was also received by [Turab Musayev](#), SOCAR Trading's representative on the Board of Electrogas who, in turn, asked Yorgen Fenech whether he thought Electrogas should reply.

“I believe it was sent to Siemens, as well. Can you please check whether any of the factual information below is not in public knowledge? Yorgen, any view whether EGM (Electrogas) should reply?”

Within hours, Doerfler would email the others, saying that Ronald Mizzi, the permanent secretary at Konrad Mizzi's Ministry, told him they would receive a proposal on how to reply from the government.


“I have just got a call from the Sec. of Ronald Mizzi. We will receive a proposal on how to answer from GOM (Government of Malta),” according to the email.

---

**From:** Mizzi Ronald at MOT <[REDACTED]@gov.mt>  
**Sent:** 18 April 2018 18:35  
**To:** Turab Musayev; David Galea  
**Cc:** Yorgen Fenech; Franz Doerfler; Togrul Kocharli; Hussein Fahmi; Ron Galea Cavallazzi; Cutajar Alexander at MOT  
**Subject:** RE: Responce to media - urgent

Some amendments from my end.

Ronald Mizzi  
Permanent Secretary  
Office of the Permanent Secretary



[www.tourism.gov.mt](http://www.tourism.gov.mt) | [www.publicservice.gov.mt](http://www.publicservice.gov.mt)  
Valletta 2018 - European Capital of Culture [www.valletta2018.org](http://www.valletta2018.org)  
Kindly consider your environmental responsibility before printing this e-mail

MINISTRY FOR TOURISM  
233, REPUBLIC STREET, VALLETTA, MALTA

---


**From:** Turab Musayev <[REDACTED]@socartrading.com>  
**Sent:** 18 April 2018 17:46  
**To:** David Galea <[REDACTED]@beatconsult.com>; Mizzi Ronald at MOT <[REDACTED]@gov.mt>  
**Cc:** Yorgen Fenech <[REDACTED]@tumasm.com>; Franz Doerfler <[REDACTED]@electrogas.com.mt>; Togrul Kocharli <[REDACTED]@socartrading.com>; Hussein Fahmi <[REDACTED]@electrogas.com.mt>  
**Subject:** Responce to media - urgent

Dear Ronald / David,

The following letter has been prepared by SOCAR PR Advisor and we have instructions from SOCAR Baku to send this tonight. This may prevent Guardian of publishing their article and underhand that there are a lot inaccurate information in their statements.

Let me know if you have any comments,

Regards,  
Turab

  
Turab Musayev  
SOCAR Trading SA  
Rue de Villereuse 22, 1207, Switzerland

Separately, SOCAR also ran their own replies to The Guardian's queries past Ronald Mizzi and [David Galea from Beat Ltd](#) noting that this letter from their UK defamation lawyers (described euphemistically as PR Advisors) may “prevent Guardian [from] publishing their article”.

We use cookies to ensure we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this site we will assume that you are happy with it.

phrase: “The process was a standard EU tender process and fully compliant with EU public procurement rules”.

The government celebrated the increased investment of €30 million in the public broadcaster with Minister Carmelo Abela saying that this money will serve to “implement the reform needed within PBS”. Yet these leaked emails shed light on how the government is using the public broadcaster paid by taxpayers’ money to push its agenda.



✉ Subscribe ▼



*Be the First to Comment!*

**B** *I* U

0 COMMENTS



Previous article

◀ **Ferry service providers at war over latest call for lucrative 15-year concession**

Next article

**‘The public inquiry will go on till the end,’ protesters tell Prime Minister** ▶

## Related Stories

FEATURE

We use cookies to ensure we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this site we will assume that you are happy with it.

[Privacy Policy](#)  OK

## REVEALED: Konrad Mizzi's secret agreement with Azerbaijan's SOCAR

Tista' taqra dan l-artiklu bil-Malti hawn. Before today, this



The Shift Team

September 4, 2022 10:30

FEATURE

## The 17 Black trail to Bangladesh

Updated with Right of Reply sent by Salman Rahman

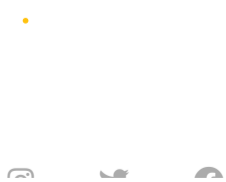


The Shift Team

December 5, 2020 09:44

LOAD MORE

## Our Awards and Media Partners



The Shift is an independent online news platform committed to investigative journalism and the defence

- Home
- About
- Contact

Email



Get special updates directly in your inbox

Advertising Dates

We use cookies to ensure we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this site we will assume that you are happy with it.

Privacy Policy  OK

cultural and social  
commentary from civil  
society.

We use cookies to ensure we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this site we will assume that you are happy with it.

[Privacy Policy](#)