

**For discussion
on 9 April 2002**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

Police Policy on installation of CCTV systems in public places

Purpose

This paper seeks to explain the Police's plan to install a number of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in the Lan Kwai Fong area as a pilot scheme aiming at assisting crowd management and preventing crime.

Background

2. Overseas law enforcement agencies, particularly those in Europe, Australia and the USA, have over the last decade been making effective use of CCTV systems for crime prevention and detection purposes.

3. In Hong Kong, CCTV systems are already widely used in privately owned buildings, housing estates, shopping arcades, etc. for public safety, security or crime prevention/detection purposes. The videotaped footage have also been helpful in police investigations of various crime incidents. In some cases, the viewing of the tapes by investigating officers were instrumental in leading up to the arrests of the perpetrators of some serious crimes such as murder, robbery and wounding.

4. Apart from the CCTV system installed at the land-border for security and anti-illegal immigration purposes, the Hong Kong Police Force has also used, with great success, temporary CCTV to enhance public safety during crowd management operations in various locations such as Wanchai, Tsim Sha Tsui and Lan Kwai Fong for Halloween, Christmas and New Year festivities. The use of CCTV allows police to better monitor the movement and build-up of crowds so that appropriate manpower can be deployed to minimize or pre-empt problems such as overcrowding, activities by unruly elements, etc.

5. With the pedestrianisation of Lan Kwai Fong in Central District during designated times at the end of 2001, and the experience gained with temporary CCTV in the area, the Police considered it an ideal opportunity to introduce a small scale permanent CCTV facility into the area as a pilot project. The Police will evaluate its effectiveness in enhancing public safety and

preventing/deterring crime and consider if it should be introduced in major crowded public areas of Hong Kong.

Objectives of the plan

6. In keeping abreast with developments overseas, and based on the successful use of temporary CCTV for crowd management purposes throughout Hong Kong, the pilot scheme at Lan Kwai Fong is planned as a first step to integrate the best practices of policing with the responsible use of technology. This will be done as part of the Police Force's public safety and security management system for the purposes of sustaining Hong Kong as one of the world's safest and most stable societies.

Selection of Lan Kwai Fong

7. Lan Kwai Fong was carefully chosen for the pilot scheme based on the experience gained with temporary CCTV over the last few years. It is also a popular and busy location at all times of the day and particularly so during weekends, major festivals and events. As the area does not particularly have a crime problem, the main focus of the pilot will be on enhancing and facilitating public safety and crowd management.

8. Ongoing consultation by police with interested parties in Lan Kwai Fong, particularly with members of the Lan Kwai Fong Association, which represents a large majority of the business interests in the area, indicates that the business community would be very supportive of the proposal because of the expected public safety and the associated crime prevention/detection benefits.

Proposed CCTV Pilot Scheme

9. The pilot scheme in Lan Kwai Fong will be conducted for a period of six months. After this initial period, the scheme will be evaluated in respect of its effectiveness for public safety and crime prevention/detection purposes and other relevant considerations.

10. Besides the evaluation, the Police plan to consult through the established channels, such as District Councils and District Fight Crime Committees and with all interested parties before the scheme is considered to be extended to other crowded public areas in the territory. They will also critically assess the public safety and crime prevention/detection benefits in both tangible forms (e.g. reduced incidence of crime) and intangible forms (e.g. enhanced public confidence when going to the area).

11. Detailed design specifications are now being worked out for the project. Preliminary estimations suggest a capital cost of approximately

HK\$2.9m with an annual recurring cost of about HK\$590,000 for maintenance. There will, however, be no additional manpower cost implications as officers presently on duty in Central Police Station will be responsible for manning the system. It is expected that necessary installation work, including any tendering and public works requirements, will take approximately 16 months to implement.

12. Under the scheduled pilot scheme, there will be nine outdoor cameras located around the Lan Kwai Fong area in locations similar to the temporary CCTV installed for major events and festivals in the area. The CCTV will have a direct feed to a central monitoring point (CMP) in Central Police Station and a remote monitoring point (RMP) at the Regional Command and Control Centre of Hong Kong Island Region. Only authorized officers will be deployed to man the CCTV monitors.

13. The CCTV system will have standard CCTV functions, including zoom, pan and tilt options, with remote control functions from the CMP and round the clock recording functions. Every effort will be made to ensure that the camera functions will not capture images inside private premises. Signs will be erected in the area to advise members of the public and residents in the area that CCTV are installed and in operation in the public area concerned.

Privacy concerns

14. The retention and use of the recorded videotapes will only be for the Police's discharge of their duties under section 10 of the Police Force Ordinance, Cap. 232. The Police will ensure that the recording, use and retention of the videotapes will be consistent with the Bill of Rights Ordinance, Cap. 383, and in compliance with the Data Protection Principles of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, Cap. 486 (PDPO).

15. The police are mindful of the concerns from various sectors of the community regarding privacy matters relating to the use of CCTV in Hong Kong and will develop detailed and stringent internal procedures and guidelines with regard to training, operating procedures, security, accessibility and duration of retention of the CCTV tapes. This will be achieved by working closely with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data and other interested parties to ensure that personal data captured by the CCTV will not be misused or compromised.

Control of recorded material

16. Research overseas indicates that various jurisdictions have adopted different procedures and guidelines on how long recorded video tapes are kept. Under existing police procedures related to videotaped material, video tapes

may be destroyed after three months in accordance with established police guidelines. Where it is necessary to keep the videotapes for more than three months (e.g. for the purpose of crime investigation or investigation by the Complaints Against Police Office), approval from a Senior Superintendent of Police will be required, which will thereafter be subject to monthly reviews by the approving officer. Officers, irrespective their rank, who breach the guidelines will be liable to criminal or disciplinary action.

Appeal Mechanism

17. In addition to enforcing the stringent and comprehensive internal procedures and guidelines by the Police, members of the public may lodge any complaint with the Complaints Against Police Office if they are aggrieved by any misconduct of a Police officer. On the other hand, they may complain to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data if they consider that their privacy has been infringed.

Consultation

18. Consultation has been ongoing between Police and members of the Lan Kwai Fong Association since the commencement of the temporary CCTV coverage in the area for major festive occasions more than three years ago. The Lan Kwai Fong Association is generally in favour of using CCTVs for assisting crowd management in Lan Kwai Fong and would not object if the cameras were to be permanently installed in the area.

Way Forward

19. Further consultation will be undertaken with interested parties to address specific concerns regarding the proposal and also to gauge public opinions on this issue. Further research in overseas jurisdiction regarding the use and effectiveness of CCTV systems will also be undertaken.

Security Bureau
March 2002