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Mrs Sharon TONG
Clerk to Panel
Panel to Security
Legislative Council

Dear Mrs TONG

Civilianization of non-core frontline duties

Thank you for your letter dated 5 November 2004.

Civilianization is indeed one of the standing measures which disciplined services departments use to ensure maximum economy in the use of public money. In general, all Heads of Departments have the authority and the responsibility to ensure that the department's manpower mix, in terms of grading, ranking, number, etc., is optimal. In the case of disciplined services departments, whether a position should be filled by a member of the disciplined grades or civilian grades is one of the factors that the departmental management has to study at the point of the creation of the post. Such study is an on-going one, as it may become feasible to replace a disciplined post by a civilian one with changes in circumstances, such as the availability of new technology.

Civilianization has therefore long been pursued in the disciplined services. Indeed, with the Government's control over Operating Expenditure in the past few years, disciplined services departments have been consciously

looking at measures to generate savings, including human resources measures such as civilianization. Such efforts have resulted in, for example in the past few years, the civilianization of posts in the Certificate of No Criminal Conviction Office and some posts at the Catering, Sports and Recreation Division in the Police Force, and the posts for handling visa-related enquiries at the Visa Control Division of the Immigration Department.

Apart from the above general practice, the Secretary for Security has earlier this year commissioned a study each of the civilianization potentials in the Police, Fire Services Department, Correctional Services Department, Immigration Department, and Customs & Excise Department. The studies have been conducted with participation by department managements and staff. Members will recall that the study was a subject of detailed discussion at a meeting on 21 June 2004 of the Public Service Panel. For details Members may wish to refer to the paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)2118/03-04(04)) submitted by the Civil Service Bureau to the Public Service Panel and the minutes of the Panel's meeting on 21 June 2004.

Yours sincerely

(Mrs Jennie CHOK)
for Secretary for Security