

L/M(1) to SF(5) in SEC 9/1/100(06)

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4 April 2007

Mr. Raymond Lam
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr. Lam,

Replacement of Customs Patrol Launches

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Security on 6 March 2007, Members discussed the proposal to replace three sector patrol launches (SPLs) for the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) and requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on the following:

(1) **The maximum sentence and fine imposed by the court on persons involved in sea smuggling cases detected in 2006**

For sea smuggling cases resulting in successful prosecution in 2006, the maximum sentence and fine imposed by the court are 16 months' imprisonment and HK\$10,000 respectively.

(2) **Information regarding the internal review conducted by C&ED on the replacement of the three SPLs**

C&ED set up an internal working group in 2005 to review the strategy in combating sea smuggling activities, including the role and functions of the Customs fleet. Having taken into account relevant considerations, the working group concluded that the existing anti-smuggling strategy had addressed the sea

smuggling situation and catered for the environment of Hong Kong waters, and had effectively curtailed such illicit activities. In addition, each type of vessel in the Customs fleet has a specific role in fighting against smuggling activities. As such, there is the need for the Department to maintain the existing strength and functions of the Customs fleet, comprising five SPLs to perform round-the-clock anti-smuggling patrols, eight inflatable craft to carry out near-shore sea patrols and diving operations, and four high speed pursuit craft and two shallow water speed boats to pursue and intercept speed boats and mechanized sampans engaged in smuggling activities. As the three existing Damen Mark III type SPLs would soon reach the end of their serviceable life, the working group has recommended that they be replaced with three new launches. To support the Department's operational needs in combating sea smuggling activities, the model and facilities of the replacement launches should be similar to those of the two patrol launches commissioned in 2000.

We should be grateful if you could submit the above information to the Panel Members.

(Amy Wong)
for Secretary for Security

cc : Commissioner of Customs and Excise
(Attn: Ms Linda Tsui)