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Panel on Security

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 4 May 2010**

Replacement of a crash fire tender in the Airport Fire Contingent

Purpose

This paper provides background information and summarizes discussions of Members on the Administration's proposal in 2007-2008 to replace a crash fire tender ("CFT") in the Airport Fire Contingent.

The Airport Fire Contingent

2. The Airport Fire Contingent is responsible for fire fighting and emergency rescue in aircraft accidents at the Hong Kong International Airport and its surrounding waters and area. The Airport Fire Contingent's entire airport rescue and fire fighting fleet comprises 14 fire fighting vehicles, two ambulances and eight rescue vessels.
3. The 14 fire fighting vehicles of the Airport Fire Contingent are deployed at two fire stations, namely the Main Airport Fire Station near the midfield of South Runway and the Sub Airport Fire Station near the midfield of North Runway. Each fire station is equipped with an identical fleet of fire fighting vehicles, which includes two Rapid Intervention Vehicles, two CFTs, two Hose Foam Carriers and one Jackless Snorkel.
4. In case of an aircraft accident, the airport rescue and fire fighting vehicles from both airport fire stations will respond in the first instance. Support fire appliances and ambulances will be deployed from nearby fire stations and ambulance depots outside the airport control area, if necessary.

Proposal in 2007-2008 to replace a crash fire tender

5. In its paper provided to the Panel on Security in December 2007, the Administration proposed to replace a CFT which was commissioned in 1995 and deployed at the Main Airport Fire Station. Its main function was to reach the aircraft accident site speedily on and off paved surfaces in all reasonable weather conditions, and apply uninterrupted foam for protection of the passenger evacuation path.

6. According to the Administration, the normal life expectancy of the CFT to be replaced was about eight years, after which it would be beyond economical repair. It had become increasingly difficult and costly to maintain the vehicle in good operating condition. Suitable spare parts for certain components of the engine and suspension system were difficult to find in the market. The annual maintenance cost had increased substantially in recent years from \$56,000 in 2004 to \$300,000 in 2007. The CFT to be replaced was reaching the end of its economic serviceable life after over 13 years of service. There was a need to replace it with a new vehicle with enhanced features to better meet the high safety standards of the Hong Kong International Airport. The Administration thus proposed to replace it with a new vehicle in 2011.

Deliberations of the Finance Committee

7. At its meeting on 23 May 2008, the Finance Committee considered the Administration's proposal to create a new commitment of \$16.5 million for procuring a replacement CFT to serve the Hong Kong International Airport.

8. Some Members sought information on the utilization of the CFT in service and enhanced features of the new CFT. The Administration explained the role of a CFT in a fire-fighting and rescue mission, and cited the example that in August 1999 when a passenger aircraft made a hard landing at the Hong Kong International Airport under stormy weather and caught fire, CFT was among the first fire fighting vehicles that arrived at the scene. CFT was instrumental to the successful evacuation of all passengers from the aircraft. The Administration advised that the replacement CFT would be equipped with a more powerful roof foam monitor with a longer flow range of 90 metres, a dedicated engine for operating the fire pump to make speedier intervention at the fire scene, a four-axle 8x8 wheel-driven chassis to allow for greater manoeuvrability in poor weather conditions and rough terrain, and a more environmental friendly Euro-III type engine.

9. The funding proposal was approved by the Finance Committee.

Replacement of another crash fire tender

10. The Administration now proposes to replace another CFT and plans to brief members on its proposal at the Panel meeting on 4 May 2010.

Relevant papers

11. Members may wish to refer to the following papers and minutes of meeting for further details of the discussions -

- (a) Administration's paper for the Panel on Security entitled "Replacement of a Crash Fire Tender in the Airport Fire Contingent" [LC Paper No. CB(2)696/07-08(01)];
- (b) Administration's paper for the meeting of the Finance Committee on 23 May 2008 [Paper No. FCR(2008-09)14]; and
- (c) Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee on 23 May 2008 [LC Paper No. FC 136/07-08].

12. The above minutes and papers are also available on the website of the Legislative Council (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>).

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