

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Meeting on 3 January 2012**

**Replacement of one High Speed Pursuit Craft
of the Customs and Excise Department**

Supplementary Information

**I. Cause and investigation result of a grounding incident of a
Customs High Speed Pursuit Craft in October 2010**

1. The Customs and Excise Department (“C&ED”) has completed the investigation on the incident of a High Speed Pursuit Craft (“HSPC”) grounded in a narrow waterway near Town Island, Sai Kung during an anti-smuggling operation in October 2010. According to the findings of investigation, the major cause of the incident was due to unfavourable weather conditions for navigation at that time, including total lunar eclipse, extreme darkness at sea, rapidly-changing wind condition and heavy swell, rain and very low tide, etc., hence lowering the visibility and making the waterway shallower and narrower, making it difficult for the HSPC to maintain a stable course. When preparing for departure, the operators of the HSPC considered that the conditions were safe for navigation and arranged the HSPC for operation at Sai Kung as planned based on the data on the climate conditions then available, which did not include information on swell. However, when the HSPC sailed through the scene of the incident, the wind became more intense suddenly and a heavy swell developed. As a result, the HSPC deviated from the navigation course and was grounded after hit by strong wind and heavy swell.

2. Under normal circumstances, operators of HSPCs are required to maintain a safe navigation speed when adverse environmental factors are encountered. The investigation concluded that both the Crew Commander and Coxswain had already reduced the speed and kept adjusting the course to maintain the right navigation direction before the HSPC was grounded. However, their judgment on the adjustment of navigation speed required was not accurate enough. Considering that the relevant officers are experienced in vessel operation with good track records, and their judgment was affected by the sudden stronger wind and swell, upon thorough deliberation, C&ED administered a verbal warning to the Crew Commander and counseled the Coxswain.

II. Training requirements for HSPC operators in C&ED

3. All C&ED officers operating the HSPCs (i.e. Crew Commanders and Coxswains) must be holders of the Coxswain Grade 1 Certificate issued by the Marine Department (“MD”). Officers who wish to obtain the Certificate are required to complete designated navigation courses organised by C&ED in accordance with maritime standards and the Maritime Services Training Institute for about two months. The course content include international and local maritime laws, operating principles of vessels, knowledge of navigation, handling of emergencies, fire prevention and fire fighting, first aid at sea and personal survival techniques (please refer to **Annex I** for details). Officers concerned are required to accumulate not less than three years of navigation experience and pass the internal assessment of C&ED and relevant examinations of MD. In addition, C&ED regularly arranges maritime safety training courses and drills for vessel operators. Please refer to **Annex II** for the details of the courses and drills.

4. After the October 2010 incident, C&ED has already strengthened the training for the relevant staff which include-

- (i) arranging site inspections and drills for officers at night of black spots in Hong Kong waters on the environmental conditions similar to those encountered during the incident;
- (ii) enhancing officers’ understanding of the black spots, particularly the topography, locations of submerged rock, shape, width and depth of waterways, and the appropriate position, angle and speed in entering these waterways; and
- (iii) continuing to remind vessel operators at regular operation briefings about safety awareness and considerations required under unfavourable navigation conditions so as to maintain their alertness.

Customs and Excise Department
January 2012

I. Information on Training Course for Obtaining Coxswain Grade 1 Certificate

<u>Course</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Duration</u>
Training courses organised by C&ED in accordance with maritime standards		
Coxswain Grade 3 Training Course	To provide professional navigation training for those preparing to obtain the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate from MD	21 days
Coxswain Grade 2 Training Course	To provide professional navigation training for those preparing to obtain the Coxswain Grade 2 Certificate from MD	30 days
Training courses organised by the Maritime Services Training Institute		
Training Course on Fire Prevention and Advanced Fire Fighting	To provide training on fire prevention and fire fighting onboard vessels for those preparing to obtain the Coxswain Grade 1 or Engine Operator Grade 1 Certificate from MD	5.5 days
Training Course on First Aid at Sea	To provide training on handling techniques of casualties and injuries onboard vessels/at sea for those preparing to obtain the Coxswain Grade 1 or Engine Operator Grade 1 Certificate from MD	5 days
Training Course on Personal Survival Techniques	To provide basic training on survival techniques at sea and the proper use of distress signals for those preparing to obtain the Coxswain Grade 1 or Engine Operator Grade 1 Certificate from MD	2.5 days

Annex II

II. Information on Maritime Training Courses and Drills of C&ED

<u>Course / Drill</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Duration</u>
Training courses & drills organised by Marine Enforcement Group of C&ED		
Large Scale Rescue Drill	To provide training on the reaction ability and rescue actions in case of serious ship accidents	1 day Once every 2 - 3 years
Dinghy Capsize Drill	To provide training on the escape techniques in case of ship capsized	1 day Once a year
First Aid Refresher Course	To strengthen the knowledge and techniques of first aid	4 days Once every 3 years
Life Saving Refresher Course	To strengthen the knowledge and techniques of life saving	30 hours Once every 3 years
Fire Fighting Drill	To provide training on the reaction ability in case of fire outbreaks onboard vessels	Half a day Once every 4 months
Man Overboard Drill	To provide training on the reaction ability and rescue actions in case of man overboard	Half a day Once every 4 months
Ship Abandonment Drill	To provide training on the actions and procedures in case of ship abandonment	Half a day Once every 4 months
Training Courses organised by Training Centre of MD		
Radar Operator Training Course	To provide Radar operation training to promote operators' awareness of navigation safety in limited visibility	7.5 days

<u>Course / Drill</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Duration</u>
Simulated High Speed Radar Operator Training Course	To provide High Speed Radar operation training to officers of the Marine Strike and Support Division with a view to promoting an awareness of high speed navigation safety in limited visibility	3 days
Training Course organised by Guangdong Sub-Administration of Customs General Administration		
Anti-Smuggling Fast Interceptors Operating Techniques Course	To provide training on professional speed boat operating techniques	10 days