

**For information on
6 June 2017**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

Preventing and Tackling Terrorist Activities

Purpose

This paper aims to set out preparatory work and contingency measures in various aspects taken by the Government to guard against and tackle terrorist activities.

Introduction

2. In recent years, terrorist activities have gone rampant around the globe while their *modi operandi* have become more diversified. Facing up to an increasingly complicated international landscape, Hong Kong maintains robust legal framework and adequate enforcement capability to guard against and tackle terrorist activities. Yet we must stay vigilant and step up preventive measures. The Government keeps a close watch on the international trend of terrorist activities and, from time to time, reviews and amends its legislation, while maintaining close liaison with law enforcement agencies (“LEAs”) of other jurisdictions for intelligence exchange and threat assessment. For the interest of Hong Kong’s internal security, it is most important to enhance preparedness and responsiveness of relevant authorities, formulate and test contingency plans, promote public education, etc.

Assessment of terrorist threat

3. The Government constantly assesses the risk of terrorist threat to Hong Kong. By consolidating, screening, analyzing, verifying and evaluating intelligence and information gathered through various channels, the Government ensures their reliability, usefulness, accuracy and applicability to terrorist threat assessment. When assessing terrorist threat, a wide range of factors, including international/regional/local situations, ideologies and motives of international terrorism, the trend of terrorist activities, recent incidents, the source of such threat as well as intentions and capabilities of terrorists, will be taken into account for assessing authenticity

and degree of terrorist threat to the city and determining the overall threat level of Hong Kong.

4. The threat of Hong Kong being subject to terrorist attack is assessed according to a scale of three levels, namely “high”, “moderate” and “low”. A “high” threat level means that there is a possibility of attack, and there is specific intelligence suggesting that Hong Kong is likely to be a target. A “moderate” threat level means that there is a possibility of attack, but there is no specific intelligence suggesting that Hong Kong is likely to be a target. A “low” threat level means that the possibility of attack is low, and there is no specific intelligence of terrorist attack. At present, the terrorist threat level of Hong Kong remains “moderate”.

Preparedness and responsiveness

Overall strategy

5. The Government shoulders the responsibility of reducing the risk of Hong Kong being subject to terrorist attack, and formulates effective and efficient mechanism under which swift responses can be made in case of terrorist incidents. The Government’s overall counter-terrorism (“CT”) strategy is featured by the following four major elements:

- (a) Prevention: adopting an intelligence-led approach to enhance communication and cooperation between departments as well as among departments and public/private organizations and to protect critical infrastructures, with a view to suppressing and preventing terrorist activities or related threat in Hong Kong;
- (b) Preparedness: conducting drills and training to maintain high vigilance and to ensure that emergency and support service personnel are well prepared, sufficiently trained and equipped with necessary resources;
- (c) Response: formulating effective response action plans to tackle and investigate terrorist activities and related threat in a professional, effective and efficient manner; and
- (d) Recovery: ensuring in case of terrorist incidents in Hong Kong that law and order are maintained and that community recovery, restoration and reconstruction can be promptly carried out to restore social order and rebuild public confidence as soon as possible.

Contingency Plan

6. For prompt implementation of effective response measures in case of emergency, various departments have in place contingency plans stipulating emergency response procedures (including those to be activated when there is an outburst of terrorist activities) as well as roles and responsibilities of departments concerned under particular incidents. After the CT exercise codenamed Windgate conducted in November 2015, the Security Bureau (“SB”) has, in consultation with policy bureaux, departments and relevant organizations, reviewed and updated the Hong Kong Counter Terrorism Plan under which relevant departments and public organizations formulate their action plans and appoint CT liaison officers for undertaking routine contact and enabling immediate and effective responses in the event of terrorist incidents. The Counter Terrorism Emergency Coordination Team, a dedicated internal inter-departmental CT forum chaired by the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations), is established for representatives from departments with CT roles to formulate and coordinate effective CT operational strategy for city-wide security.

7. Separately, the Government has formulated the contingency plan against attacks using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (“CBRN”) agents, and set up the Standing Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Planning Group (“SRPG”). Comprising specialists from the Hong Kong Police Force (“HKPF”), SB, Fire Services Department (“FSD”), Department of Health (“DH”), Hospital Authority (“HA”), Government Laboratory (“GL”), Hong Kong Observatory (“HKO”) and Civil Aid Service (“CAS”), the SRPG meets regularly to discuss contingency plans and procedures to handle CBRN attacks. The Government is committed to providing highly efficient deployment to tackle threatened or possible use of CBRN weapons/agents by terrorists or criminals to launch attacks. The CBRN Incident Advisory Group (“RIAG”), with membership including five experts drawn from HKPF, FSD, DH, HA and SB, are on call 24 hours a day. It offers support and advice to frontline units and departments at the initial stage of a CBRN attack, including making preliminary assessment, providing initial advice to commanders on the ground, following up on adjustments to contingency strategies as well as facilitating and enhancing communication between key players in the CBRN response, so as to promptly control the situation, minimise casualties and restore social order.

Police deployment

8. It is one of the operational priorities of the Commissioner of Police to

step up CT efforts in 2017. The Police, being well prepared and responsive in this regard all along, have a professionally-equipped and well-trained force. Apart from collecting intelligence and conducting investigation, high-profile patrols will be carried out constantly in various districts across the city. In case of terrorist attacks or suspected terrorist activities, immediate intervention will be made by frontline Emergency Units, the Police Tactical Unit, the Airport Security Unit and the Counter Terrorism Response Unit (“CTRU”). Depending on the circumstances, the Special Duties Unit (commonly known as the Flying Tiger Squad) will also be called to the scene. Having regard to the situation concerned, other CT dedicated units, such as the Police Negotiation Cadre, the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Bureau and the Key Points and Search Division, will also provide professional support.

9. In face of the persistently complicated international security landscape and the threat of terrorist attacks on critical infrastructures and networks, the Police have established the Critical Infrastructure Security Coordination Centre (“CISCC”). It strengthens self-protection and self-restoration capabilities of these infrastructures through public-private cooperation, risk management, on-site security inspections, promotion of restoration plans and the security design concept, etc. Where necessary, it coordinates police CT units and deploys resources according to different threat levels, with a view to strengthening protection for these infrastructures. Also, the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau has been monitoring network data flow and analyzing relevant intelligence to assist these infrastructures in guarding against network attacks.

Training and drills

10. Regarding training and drills, the Government has been arranging CT training for relevant personnel and, from time to time, exchanges the latest CT information with overseas counterparts via such channels as the Interpol’s CT thematic meetings, seminars and training courses. Moreover, training and multi-agency exercises are conducted regularly to practise and enhance CT contingency plans as well as ensure emergency preparedness. In the past five years (2012-2016), the Police conducted a total of 259 CT and major incident contingency exercises, mostly joint exercises participated by different departments and public organizations. During the first five months of 2017, nine routine CT exercises were carried out. A large-scale CT exercise codenamed Hardshield was recently held in May 2017. Participated by more than 900 members from various departments including the Police, FSD, Customs and Excise Department (“C&ED”), Government Flying Service (“GFS”), CAS and St. John Ambulance Brigade, this exercise is another large-scale joint exercise since the CT exercise codenamed Windgate

in November 2015. These large-scale CT exercises generally comprise intelligence development and simulated serial terrorist attacks in Hong Kong, in order to test CT response capabilities of various departments and organizations as well as the contingency plans concerned, optimise their coordination and readiness in light of the experience gained, and heighten the public's CT awareness through relevant education and publicity. In collaboration with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, the Police conducted a large-scale cyber security drill in January 2017, enabling more than 30 departments to experience how cyber security incidents should be handled. We will continue our efforts in this regard.

Transport

11. Regarding transport, the Hong Kong International Airport ("HKIA"), with heavy air passenger traffic, is one of the critical infrastructures and has adopted established and stringent security procedures. The Airport Authority Hong Kong ("AA") maintains close liaison with SB and will implement security measures corresponding to the alert level and relevant assessments. To safeguard aviation security of HKIA, various stakeholders, such as the Police, Civil Aviation Department, AA, the Aviation Security Company Limited and airlines, meet regularly to exchange the latest intelligence and enhance cooperation. As the major mass transit carrier on land, the MTR Corporation Limited has, apart from participating in joint exercises arranged by other organizations, also scheduled 15 major exercises with relevant units this year to test emergency response and handling under different scenarios to ensure effective use of relevant equipment, and to enable its staff and emergency service personnel to practise evacuation and rescue procedures.

Emergency rescue

12. As for emergency rescue, FSD is supported by adequate resources and professional equipment to carry out firefighting and rescue operations in incidents related to terrorist attacks, and will mobilise manpower and resources as warranted by actual circumstances. Where dangerous goods or hazardous substances (such as CBRN agents) are involved, FSD will deploy the professionally-trained HazMat Team and relevant equipment to the scene for rescue purpose. If necessary, various departments, such as GL, HD and HKO, will be consulted for professional advice. GFS fleets will also be sent to perform different missions of disaster response as well as search and rescue to meet operational needs of the Police and other departments. Moreover, HA has in place emergency response plans to cope with mass influx of injured persons at the same time during major incidents.

Checks at control points

13. As regards checks at control points, the Immigration Department (“ImmD”) and C&ED continue to perform checks at control points under risk-management approach and will take appropriate control measures at control points in the light of terrorist threat assessments and actual circumstances, such as tightening interception of suspected persons and inspection of suspected cargoes, postal parcels and conveyances as necessary. Further, ImmD will enhance intelligence exchange with local and non-local LEAs through different channels to strengthen its enforcement capability against terrorists. Where there is intelligence identifying a person as a terrorist or terrorist associate, ImmD will put his personal particulars on a watch-list to prevent such person from obtaining a visa or entering Hong Kong via immigration control points. ImmD will refuse entry to Hong Kong attempted by suspected terrorists and, depending on the circumstances of the case, make referral to relevant LEA(s) for follow-up.

Legislation

14. On legislation, under the United Nations (Anti-Terrorism Measures) Ordinance (Cap 575) (“UNATMO”), the Government has implemented measures on prevention of terrorist acts, including publishing in the Gazette a notice of persons or organizations designated by the United Nations as terrorist or terrorist associate, freezing terrorist property, prohibiting supply of funds or weapons to terrorists, prohibiting recruitment to terrorist organizations, etc. Under UNATMO, apart from officers of the Police, ImmD and C&ED, officers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption are also authorized officers. Upon notice of situations involving terrorist activities, authorized officers may conduct an investigation with the authority conferred under UNATMO. Moreover, the Government has been preparing for the amendment bill of UNATMO to guard against new threat arising from foreign terrorism, including combating travels for the purpose of terrorist training and enhancing the mechanism on freezing terrorist property. Public consultation on proposed amendments was launched early this year and general support has been received. We will submit the amendment bill to the Legislative Council as soon as possible.

15. Other than UNATMO, a series of ordinances can also deal with various crimes related to terrorist activities. For example, prosecution of offences involving manufacture of explosives is instituted under the Crimes Ordinance which imposes very heavy sentences upon conviction. Besides, ordinances, such as the Offence against the Person Ordinance, the Firearms and Ammunition Ordinance and the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance,

also provide against various terrorist activities or related crimes.

Outbound travel alert

16. To help Hong Kong residents better understand possible risks to personal safety, including the risk of terrorist attack, in travelling to overseas countries/territories that are popular among Hong Kong people, the Government has put in place the Outbound Travel Alert (“OTA”) System. When there are signs of threat in a place that may affect the personal safety of Hong Kong residents, the Government will assess and consider the need to issue an OTA taking into account factors such as the nature (e.g. whether tourists are targeted), level and duration of such threat. For example, subsequent to the terrorist incident of explosion causing substantial casualties in Manchester in May 2017, the Government has issued an Amber OTA for the United Kingdom (“UK”) in view of the latest local situation and reminded residents who plan to visit the UK or are already there to monitor the situation, exercise caution, attend to personal safety, avoid places with large gatherings of people and pay attention to advice of local authorities.

Public education

17. To facilitate public understanding of the Government’s work on safeguarding public safety as well as measures to be taken and first aid methods in case of emergency, SB has produced several booklets to advise the public how to handle suspicious or emergency incidents, for example, ways to handle suspicious objects, suspected bombs and postal items containing suspicious powders/substances as well as emergencies in public areas or transport. The information has been uploaded to SB’s website. Via its mobile application “Safeguard HK”, SB from time to time disseminates to the public instant updates on major emergencies and OTAs through push notifications, and provides them with useful information on safety during travel and daily life. Through different social media, such as “Hong Kong Police Mobile Application”, “Hong Kong Police YouTube”, “Hong Kong Police Facebook” and “Hong Kong Police Instagram”, the Police also instill among the public safety knowledge and anti-crime awareness, thereby enhancing their alertness and responsiveness to major dangerous incidents.

18. In addition, through different subordinate formations and units, such as CISCC, Cyber Security Centre and CTRU, the Police always maintain close liaison with relevant public/private organizations and stakeholders, aiming to enhance CT response awareness and capabilities of these

organizations and the public through daily contact, security talks, security advice, joint CT exercises, etc. Relevant departments will continue to actively identify more channels for dissemination and publicity of CT information.

Conclusion

19. The Government will stay vigilant at all times and keep enhancing our CT capability to ensure that Hong Kong remain as one of the safest cities in the world.

Security Bureau
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