

香港特別行政區政府
保安局



The Government of the
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Security Bureau

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27 May 2019

Mr Anthony CHU
Clerk, Public Accounts Committee Clerk
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr CHU,

Public Accounts Committee
Consideration of Chapter 4 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 72
Administration of the Civil Aid Service

Thank you for your letter dated 15 May to the Secretary for Security on the captioned subject.

I enclose herewith the consolidated written response from Security Bureau and Civil Aid Service for the questions raised by the Public Accounts Committee.

Yours sincerely,


(HO Chun-man)

for Secretary for Security

Encl

c.c. Commissioner, Civil Aid Service	(Fax no. 2736 6101)
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury	(Fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit	(Fax no. 2583 9063)

Public Accounts Committee Questions and Request for Information
in respect of Chapter 4 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 72
Administration of the Civil Aid Service

Questions for the Security Bureau

1. According to paragraph 2.7, Audit found that from 2014 to 2018, a total of 1 351 new members were recruited by Civil Aid Service (CAS). However, there were 345 (26%) drop-outs, i.e. new recruits who left CAS before completing the recruitment training programme. Please inform this Committee:

(a) whether any member of CAS Management is responsible for not enforcing CAS General Orders effectively; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons; and

A: Members of the Civil Aid Service (CAS) are auxiliary members from all walks of life who serve the community in their spare time. The Security Bureau (SB) noted that CAS has been following the relevant chapters of CAS General Orders in handling matters regarding recruitment, training and resignation of new members. It is also appreciated that some new recruits might leave CAS due to difficulties which they encountered during the period of recruitment training arising from family, career or personal reasons.

According to Section 4 of the Civil Aid Service Regulation (Cap 518A), a member who, without reasonable excuse, resigns from the Service, or who is discharged or whose enrolment is cancelled, within 1 year of the completion of his recruitment training shall upon request by the Commissioner pay the costs of his recruitment training. For all cases of this nature, CAS (Department) will recover the relevant costs in accordance with the law. However, Civil Aid Service Regulation does not require new recruits to pay the costs of recruitment training if they leave the Service before completion of the recruitment training. Moreover, the CAS General Orders also do not provide any guideline on the leaving of CAS new recruits before their completion of recruitment training currently. Nevertheless, CAS (Department) will review the CAS General Orders from time to time for meeting CAS's operational needs. CAS (Department) will also explore ways to retain new recruits.

(b) as to the audit recommendation for CAS Management to enhance the governance of CAS, what specific plans and measures are in place by the authority and how to ensure that CAS staff and members will support the implementation of such plans and measures in future?

A: The SB agrees with the audit observations and recommendations. We understand that CAS has commenced a holistic review on its management,

training and operation arrangements, taking into account all recommendations in the Audit Report which seek to improve the overall administration of CAS. We will closely monitor CAS Auxiliary Force and CAS (Department) in conducting the review and in following up on the implementation and give our comments and advice as and when required.

Questions for the Civil Aid Service

2. According to paragraph 2.2, CAS General Order No.3.6.4 states that the 60-hour efficiency requirements might be met by a minimum of 30 hours of attendance in unit training plus a minimum of 30 hours of attendance in services. Any member who fails to comply with the efficiency requirements is an offence against discipline. However, paragraph 2.23 pointed that the overall number of CAS members who failed to comply with the efficiency requirements between 2016 and 2018 ranged from 954 to 1 059, representing 28% to 31% of the average strength of CAS members in the respective years. There were 215, 181 and 208 CAS members (representing 6%, 5% and 6% of the average strength respectively) who had neither attended any unit training nor provided any service during this period respectively. According to paragraph 2.24, CAS had not taken any disciplinary action against any CAS members under section 14(1) of the CAS Regulation (Cap 518A) for non-compliance with the efficiency requirements between 2016 and 2018. There were also no documented justifications for not taking any disciplinary actions on these non-compliance cases. Please inform this Committee:

(a) how the percentage as high as 28% to 31% of CAS members who failed to comply with the efficiency requirements between 2016 and 2018 has affected the CAS service;

A: From 2016 to 2018, the number of CAS auxiliary members remained over 3,200. The average daily number of CAS members deployed to perform countryside and hiking trail patrolling and vegetation fire fighting duties during normal weekends and public holidays was 116. Additional members were deployed to provide crowd control service in major public functions. For example, 1,668 CAS members were deployed for crowd control duties during the Legislative Council Election in 2016. CAS has sufficient manpower to meet the demand of services, and the non-compliance of efficiency requirements for some members had not affected the provision of service.

(b) of the reasons for not taking any disciplinary actions against CAS members who failed to comply with the efficiency requirements;

A: As CAS members are auxiliary members from all walks of life, some members may not have fulfilled the efficiency requirements for a certain period of time due to family, career or health issues. CAS has an established mechanism for monitoring members' efficiency requirements. According to CAS General Order No. 3.6.4 on "Attendance Management",

CAS officers are required to submit to CAS Headquarters on a half-yearly basis follow-up reports on members who do not fulfill the efficiency requirements. If a member could not be contacted for a protracted time, the member will be discharged in accordance with the law and CAS General Orders. As such, from 2014 to 2018, a total of 6 members were discharged due to the above reason.

CAS agrees with the recommendations of the Audit Report and will more closely monitor the efficiency requirements of members. CAS has also instructed its officers to interview their subordinates to review their attendance and performance, and give encouragement and advice, and to submit regular attendance record monitoring reports and take disciplinary actions (if required). Currently, 11 cases are in the course of proceeding to formal disciplinary actions.

- (c) whether CAS gave any pay or allowance to the above-mentioned members who had neither attended any unit training nor provided any service; if yes, what was the total amount involved and what are the reasons for still giving pay or allowance to these members; and
- A: The pay and allowances of CAS members are governed by the Auxiliary Forces Pay and Allowances Ordinance (Cap. 254). CAS members are eligible for pay and allowances only when they have been called out to provide emergency or regular services, or have attended training courses conducted by CAS. No pay or allowance will be given if a member does not attend any unit training or provide any service.
- (d) whether CAS has any remedial measures or plans for the problem of a great number of CAS members failing to comply with the efficiency requirements; if yes, of the details; if not, the reasons.
- A: CAS has implemented a series of attendance monitoring measures. Officers are requested to strengthen the monitoring of their subordinates' attendance and encourage them to actively participate in training and services. CAS will also expedite handling of cases of unsatisfactory attendance, enhance attendance management of members, formulate guidelines for attendance monitoring to enable all officers to conduct annual interview with their subordinates to review their attendance and performance, and revise the existing disciplinary procedures so that they can be implemented more effectively.
3. According to paragraph 2.5, audit examination revealed that in 2017, each of the 61 CAS members who received less than 30 hours of unit training had provided 100 or more hours of services. Of these 61 members, only 16 (26%) had applied for exemption from the efficiency requirements pursuant to CAS General Order No. 3.6.4 and were granted approval by the Commissioner of the CAS or Chief Staff Officer. Why did CAS allow its members, who have not fulfilled the minimum training requirements, not to apply for exemption with justifications in accordance with the CAS General Order?

A: According to CAS General Order No. 3.6.4, any member who completes a minimum of 60 hours of attendance in services and training in the overall may apply for efficiency exemption. In the past, CAS adopted a more flexible approach to allow eligible members to apply for efficiency exemption for any years at the beginning of each year, so as to enable members to make their application according to their own will or their actual circumstances.

In the light of the recommendations of the Audit Report, CAS has ceased the flexible arrangement. All eligible members are required to submit applications for efficiency exemption before July this year. From then on, all officers must conduct annual assessment on their subordinates' attendance and require eligible members to apply for efficiency exemption before a specific deadline. CAS will not accept any retrospective applications in future.

4. According to paragraph 2.7, Audit found that from 2014 to 2018, a total of 1 351 new members were recruited by CAS. However, there were 345 (26%) drop-outs, i.e. new recruits who left CAS before completing the recruitment training programme. Please inform this Committee:

(a) whether CAS has looked into the reasons why many new recruits left CAS before completing the recruitment training programme; if yes, of the details and findings; if no, the reasons;

A: From 2014 to 2018, new recruits' left CAS before completion of recruitment training mainly due to personal reasons such as further studies, family and work, or because they had applied for other disciplined services posts. Moreover, CAS recruit training certificate programme was successfully recognised under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) as Level 3 by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications in 2016. QF has stringent requirements on students' performance and attendance, each student being required to attend 160 hours of programme within 5 months of training. Some new recruits left CAS due to their failure to comply with the requirements on hours of attendance.

CAS will highlight the nature of CAS services and its requirements on training attendance for new recruits during recruitment, as well as strengthen its promotion and publicity efforts at tertiary institutions, so that new recruits can have a better understanding of CAS before joining the Service.

(b) of the breakdown of the 1 351 new members by means of recruitment in tabular form;

A: According to the records, the major means of recruitment of CAS members between 2014 and 2018 were as follows:

(1) General publicity and recruitment: Including placing advertisements in the press, publicising through CAS website and CAS Facebook ("CAS in

Action”), or setting up recruitment counters in public places and at activities organised by CAS or other government departments. The number of members recruited through such means was 1 214;

- (2) Civil Defence Leadership Programme (Tertiary Students): CAS liaised with tertiary institutions to conduct talks, set up recruitment counters at various institutions and organise promotional activities with the help of the institutions, thereby recruiting students of tertiary institutions to join CAS. The number of members recruited through such means was 35 (the programme was launched in 2018, and students recruited through tertiary institutions before 2018 were counted towards general recruitment); and
- (3) “Groom Our Cadets to be Instructors” Scheme: The scheme has been launched at CAS Cadet Corps to recruit retiring cadets at the age of 18 to join the adult team. The number of members recruited through such means was 102 (the scheme was launched in 2018, and retired cadets who joined the adult team before 2018 were counted towards general recruitment).

- (c) of the present number of CAS members by age group;

The number of CAS members by age group as at 17 May 2019 is tabulated below:

Age	16 - 17		18 - 29		30 - 39		40 - 49		50 and above	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sub-total	9	6	621	234	730	298	519	259	637	200
Total	15		855		1028		778		837	
	3513									

- (d) whether CAS has set any target number of CAS members (such as upper and lower limits); if yes, of the details; if no, the reasons;

A: The current establishment of CAS adult members is 3 769. CAS has not set any lower limit for the number of its members, while it will review from time to time the upper limit according to its operational needs. The latest review was conducted in the financial year of 2017-18 in order to facilitate CAS reorganisation to strengthen public education for coping with the needs of the community and supporting the Government’s direction of developing youth affairs.

- (e) whether CAS has reviewed the means of recruitment and package to encourage more people to join and remain in the CAS; if yes, of the details; if no, the reasons;

A: CAS attaches great importance to the audit investigation results and recommendations on CAS’s recruitment of new members. CAS will step up recruitment efforts, including conducting year-round recruitment

exercises, strengthening promotion, publicity and recruitment efforts at tertiary institutions, and co-operating with tertiary institutions by providing training to their students. CAS will also conduct comprehensive reviews on the enhancement of personal accoutrements, equipment and training arrangement with a view to encourage more people to join and continue serving in CAS.

(f) whether any member of CAS Management is responsible for not enforcing CAS General Orders effectively; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons; and

A: CAS is an auxiliary force, CAS members have to find time from their full-time work or studies to serve the community. In view of the fact that some new recruits left CAS before completion of recruitment training due to work or further studies, or because they had applied for other disciplined services posts, CAS has provided active assistance to new recruits in completing recruit training, which included distributing training schedule before commencement of the training programme, allowing students to swap classes, rescheduling of classes and arranging make-up classes for students. As for the members who could not fulfill the efficiency requirements and the arrangement for disciplinary actions, the management may take disciplinary actions against such members according to CAS General Orders but in order to encourage auxiliary members to actively serve the community, CAS generally takes non-disciplinary actions such as encouragement and advice (instead of formal disciplinary actions) against those members to minimise the chance of auxiliary members leaving CAS for personal reasons so as to retain talent.

(Please also refer to the Security Bureau's reply to Question 1(a).)

(g) as to the audit recommendation for CAS Management to enhance the governance of CAS, what specific plans and measures are in place by the authority, and how to ensure that CAS staff and members will support the implementation of such plans and measures in future?

A: Following the audit recommendations, CAS Management has commenced a holistic review on its management, training and operation arrangements to enhance the governance of CAS. In terms of stepping up recruitment efforts and retaining new recruits, CAS (Department) staff and auxiliary members will jointly formulate and execute plans to reduce wastage of new recruits and step up recruitment efforts : including conducting year-round recruitment exercises; promotion, publicity and recruitment efforts at tertiary institutions; co-operation with tertiary institutions by providing training to their students; and highlighting the nature of CAS services and its requirements on training attendance for new recruits during recruitment. As regards the members who could not fulfill the efficiency requirements and the enforcement of disciplinary actions, CAS will expedite the handling of cases of unsatisfactory attendance, enhance management of members' attendance, formulate guidelines for attendance monitoring, assess members' attendance and performance on a regular basis and revise the existing disciplinary procedures.