

For discussion on
7 May 2019

Legislative Council Panel on Security Specialised Crowd Management Vehicles

Introduction

This paper introduces “specialised crowd management vehicles” (“SCMVs”) and the principles on the Police’s use of such vehicles.

Background

2. Hong Kong residents enjoy the freedom of and the right to lawful assembly, procession and demonstration. The Police have been handling all public events in a fair, just and impartial manner in accordance with the laws of Hong Kong. It has been the established policy of the Police to endeavour to strike a balance between facilitating the smooth conduct of lawful and peaceful public meetings and processions on the one hand, while on the other, minimising the impact of such events on members of the public and road users, as well as ensuring public order and public safety.

3. It is the Police’s duty to take lawful measures to maintain public order and public safety. If someone engages in illegal acts in a radical manner, or if public order, public safety and the lives and properties of the public are threatened, police officers must exercise professional judgement in light of the actual circumstances, take appropriate actions, which include deploying appropriate manpower and equipment, activating appropriate action plans, considering whether the use of appropriate force is necessary and, if so, what equipment should be used to achieve the purpose of using force to prevent public order and public safety from being endangered. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”) Government has always urged participants of public order events to remain law-abiding, peaceful and orderly when expressing their views and refrain from behaviours that are detrimental to public order or violent.

4. Having reviewed their experience in handling large-scale public assemblies in recent years, the Police consider it necessary to enhance the equipment for effective handling of large-scale and prolonged public assemblies that are held simultaneously at various places and illegal behaviours that may occur on such occasions. The Police have also noted that in such countries as France, Germany and Belgium, vehicles with water discharge devices are used when handling large-scale public assemblies or riots, in order that the police forces can deal with different situations. Therefore, the Police commenced procuring three SCMVs with water discharge devices in 2015-16 with a view to having an additional operational equipment option when it is necessary to disperse demonstrators who stage violent charging acts, or stop any acts that might threaten public safety and public order, and create a safe distance between demonstrators and police officers in order to achieve the said purpose, thereby reducing the chance of injury to both due to direct confrontation.

5. The three SCMVs were delivered to Hong Kong in mid-2018. After assembly and examination to ensure compliance with the electrical and mechanical safety standards, the vehicles were delivered to the Police in September 2018 for testing and training. The Police finished drafting the operating guidelines on such vehicles in March 2019. It is expected that the vehicles can be put into operation in the latter half of 2019.

Key equipment of SCMVs

6. Each of the SCMVs purchased by the Police measures 8 metres in length and 2.55 metres in width, and is equipped with a water tank and a pelargonic acid vanillylamide (“PAVA”) solution storage device. On its top there are two water discharge devices designed to disperse persons who stage violent charging acts. The vehicles can discharge water jets in different modes for various purposes. Depending on operational needs, operators can choose fog or stream modes, and the vehicles can discharge “PAVA” solution. In addition, the vehicles have protective water discharge devices and protective nozzles that can be used for defensive use and extinguishing fire for protection of the vehicles when necessary.

7. In order to film and record the scene of an event and the use of water discharge devices in real-time for review or investigation in future, digital video cameras are installed on the SCMVs to take video of external situations. The SCMVs are also equipped with public address

systems, which can put across effectively the Police's advice, warnings or other messages to demonstrators.

8. An Illustration of the key equipment of the SCMV's is at **Annex**.

Operation

9. Since the arrival of the vehicles in Hong Kong, the Police have been formulating relevant operating guidelines in a prudent manner and conducting effective and comprehensive training to ensure that instructors and operators have a clear grasp of the performance and operation of the vehicles and can manoeuvre them effectively and safely to support operational deployments. The Police have finished drafting the operating guidelines on the use of the SCMV's. As the guidelines on the use of the SCMV's involve operational details and the Police's tactical deployments, their disclosure is inappropriate as it may undermine the capability and efficacy of the Police's operations. The key points of the guidelines are summarised as follows:

- (a) The Police will only consider deploying the SCMV's in situations of widespread or significant public disorder where there has already been at least one of the following consequences, or when a threat assessment suggests that there is potential for widespread or significant public disorder that may lead to at least one of the following consequences:
 - (i) serious injury or loss of life;
 - (ii) widespread destruction of property; or
 - (iii) disruption or illegal blockage of traffic by occupation of major thoroughfares resulting in significant consequences on public order and / or public safety.

- (b) When the water discharge devices of SCMV's must be used, the Police will adhere to several important principles, including:
 - (i) subject to the circumstances at the scene, police officers will give a warning in advance indicating that such devices will be used;
 - (ii) before using such devices, the Police will, where practicable, give the relevant persons opportunities to obey the Police's orders;

- (iii) only a discharge mode reasonably necessary for achieving a lawful purpose will be used; and
- (iv) the use of such devices must cease immediately once the purpose is achieved.

10. Should situation as stated in paragraph 9(a) occur, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Operations) may authorize the deployment of the SCMVs to stand by or turn out for operation. The field commander (not below the rank of Chief Superintendent) can also seek permission for the deployment of the SCMVs in the light of the actual circumstances at scene.

11. The purpose of deployment of the SCMVs is to disperse a radical crowd engaged in violent charging, create and maintain a safe distance between police and the radical crowd, or to separate confronting crowds, so as to protect life and property. The deployment could stop violent and aggressive acts, in order to maintain public order and public safety.

12. The Police will pay attention to the potential risks in using the water discharge device of the SCMVs during a public disorder situation. The Police will only use the water discharge devices to deal with violent charging acts, and will not target individuals. The Police will cease using such device once the purpose has been achieved.

Training

13. On training, the Police will require all operators to undergo training on driving, operation and safety before using the vehicles and strictly adhere to the relevant codes of practice and guidelines. All SCMV operators must undergo five days of training, which consists of basic maneuvering, safety guidelines etc., so that the officers can acquire adequate skills and operate the vehicle and equipment onboard safely and effectively.

14. The Police have arranged for the manufacturers of the SCMVs to conduct training and demonstrations for officers at the end of August 2018, and sent officers to a country with experience in using similar vehicles for exchanges with local law enforcement officers in December of the same year. The Police are also planning for exchanges with more overseas law enforcement agencies to enhance the experience and knowledge on using such vehicles.

Conclusion

15. The HKSAR Government all along respects the public's freedom of and right to expression, speech and assembly. In handling large-scale public assemblies, the SCMV's provide the Police with an operation option necessary for stopping behaviours that threaten public order and public safety. The Police will not have to use SCMV's if demonstrators express their views in a peaceful and rational manner, follow the Police's advice and refrain from violent charging or illegal acts. The Police will continue to handle public order events with professionalism in a fair and just manner in accordance with the law. The Police also rely on the full cooperation of the public in complying with the law and jointly maintaining public order.

Security Bureau
Hong Kong Police Force
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Key equipment of Specialised Crowd Management Vehicles



- (1,2) :Left and right roof water discharge devices
- (3) :Front bumper water discharge device
- (4,5) :Left and right roof 360 degrees monitoring cameras
- (6) :Water tank and “PAVA” solution tank
- (7) :Water-filling device



(3)