

For information
on 30 July 1998

**Legislative Council
Panel on Security**

Issues relating to security of the Airport at Chek Lap Kok

Purpose

This paper informs Members of:-

- a. the arrangements on permits for the disciplined forces and their vehicles for access to a restricted area;
- b. the processing of permits and exemptions; and
- c. the communication system used by Police officers at the Airport at Chek Lap Kok.

Background

2. Pursuant to the commencement of operation of the Aviation Security Regulation (ASR) on 22 June 1998, every person is required to wear a valid permit issued by the airport manager for entry into an Airport Restricted Area (ARA). Vehicles are not to be driven within an ARA unless a valid permit is in force for that vehicle and that such permit is displayed.

3. Accordingly, several categories of permits of different validity period ranging from 1 day to 5 years, viz. Permanent Permits, Temporary Permits, Escorted Permits, Control Authority Permits, Emergency Permits and Airside Vehicle Licences are issued by the Airport Authority's (AA) Permit Office to applicants requiring access to the ARA.

I. Arrangements on permits for the disciplined forces

4. In accordance with the ASR, officers of the disciplined forces who work at the airport requiring regular access to the ARA for

performance of duties have been issued with the requisite permits. Apart from Permanent Permits, Control Authority Permits have been also issued to these forces to enable temporary access into the ARA for officers who have an ad-hoc operational access requirement for performing duties airside. In respect of their vehicles, Airside Vehicle Licences have been issued.

5. Despite the above general requirement, section 22 of the ASR provides that the permit requirement is not applied to a police officer, an immigration officer, a fire services officer or officer of other designated forces who requires access to an ARA for the performance of emergency duties. Permit requirement for their vehicles is also waived.

6. To implement section 22 of the ASR, the Aviation Security Company Limited (AVSECO) has promulgated a set of operational procedures to facilitate access of the relevant officers to the ARA in case of emergency. Liaison meetings are held regularly between AVSECO and the disciplined forces to ensure that the established procedures would work smoothly, and where necessary, improvements would be made.

7. On 10 July, a traffic incident occurred at level 2 of the Passenger Terminal Building of the Airport. Two ambulances were turned out to attend to the casualty. As they were responding to emergency duties, immediate access were granted to them at gatehouse number 2 without any form of permit checking. They were then led by the escort vehicle to the scene and no delay was caused. However, in respect of the entry of police, misunderstanding may have arisen because the siren and blue flash light of the motorcycles were not turned on. As a result, the two police officers were not given immediate access because the security staff were not certain about the urgent nature of their duty.

8. Drawing from the experience of the incident, the operational procedure has been further reviewed between AVSECO and the disciplined forces. Under the new arrangement, officers of designated services, in carrying out emergency duties, will be given immediate access to the ARA without the need for permit checking or other form of security checks, even if the flash light/siren of the vehicle is not turned

on. The control centres of the disciplined forces and AVSECO would keep close contact in this regard to ensure that the arrangement is followed.

II. Processing of permits and exemptions

9. It would normally take four days to complete the processing of a Permanent Permit. The average processing time taken since the airport opening has been ten days. This is because many airlines and airport tenants did not meet the application deadline of mid-May 1998 set by the AA, and submitted a considerable number of applications only near the airport opening. The processing time has therefore been lengthened due to the large volume of applications. However, those requiring access to the ARA urgently can apply for a temporary permit or an escorted permit, which can be processed within an hour.

10. The Permit Office of the AA has been working closely with parties concerned to expedite the processing of applications. As at 24 July, out of the 29,230 permanent permit applications received, only 3,909 have not been completely processed. This is primarily due to the failure of the applicants to turn up for photo-taking and further verification.

11. Section 22 of the ASR provides for exemptions from the permit requirement, as explained in paragraphs 5 and 6 above. Apart from this, section 21 of the ASR provides that the Aviation Security Authority may also grant exemption to any person (vehicle) or class of person (vehicle) from the permit requirement. At present, there is no designated list of persons who are exempted from the requirement under this section. However, bona-fide passengers and air-crew are not required of a valid permit under section 5 of the ASR.

III. Communication system used by Police officers at the Airport

12. Police officers on patrol at the Airport at Chek Lap Kok are currently using two radio systems provided by the AA and the Police respectively. The AA's system provides communication channels to various users including the Police, while the Police's system would serve

as a backup to the AA's system and operates independently.

13. The AA's system is designed to have a coverage of 95% of the Airport. However, since the introduction of the system, two outdoor blind spots have been found. The Police and the AA have taken immediate actions with a view to improving the situation. Additional antennae would be installed to enhance the coverage levels. Notwithstanding this, the present state of use of radio of the AA's system has not jeopardized Police operation. The radio will emit a warning signal when the officer enters a blind spot and the officer will accordingly use the Police's system for communication.

Security Bureau

July 1998