

For discussion

on 11 November 1999

Legislative Council Panel on Security
Replacement of Three Police Launches

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to procure two dumb lighters and six high-speed interceptor boats to replace three existing Police launches (i.e. water jet boats) for the Marine Police.

Background

2. The Marine Police Region is responsible for the policing of the Hong Kong's territorial waters and some 240 islands within the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Marine Police perform a wide range of duties, such as immigration control, anti-smuggling, maritime safety, conservancy and maritime law enforcement.

3. The three existing water jet boats operate under the Marine Police West Division (MWDIV) at Tai Lam. They were specially built in 1986 to patrol the shallow waters of Deep Bay, mainly responsible for anti-smuggling and anti-illegal immigration operations. The Director of Marine has advised that the estimated life expectancy of these water jet boats is usually around 15 years after which they will be beyond economical repair. They will therefore

reach the end of their serviceable life and need to be replaced by 2001. In fact, owing to obsolescence, the performance of these fibreglass boats has been deteriorating. They were originally capable of a speed of 22 knots, but can now only achieve a maximum speed of 12 knots.

4. In considering how these boats should be replaced, the Marine Police have taken into account their actual operational experience in Deep Bay. The general increasing use of high-speed sampans in illegal activities and the narrow stretch of water in Deep Bay mean that they have to act quickly so as to identify and intercept suspicious vessels before the vessels reach the shore or exit the Hong Kong waters. At present, the Marine Police have deployed small high-speed rigid-inflatable crafts, which are capable of operating in shallow water and pursuing target vessels close to the shoreline, from the Small Boat Unit (SBU) and MWDIV to carry out operations in Deep Bay. Because of their deteriorating performance in speed, the three water jet boats are often used as radar and command platforms for radar surveillance and deployment of small crafts. This mode of operation has proved to be very effective. However, the small crafts under SBU cannot be re-deployed to Deep Bay permanently as they are frequently deployed for other operational tasks, such as assisting the Anti-Smuggling Task Force and carrying out crowd control duties during firework display. Hence, they cannot fully meet the operational requirements of MWDIV which needs to provide round-the-clock coverage in Deep Bay.

5. In the light of the above operational experience, the Marine Police have concluded that their requirements could best be met by two dumb lighters and six high-speed interceptors. The two dumb lighters would replace the three water jet boats to provide a stable radar and command platform and a

base for small high-speed boats tasked to intercept suspicious targets in the shallow water. They will also be equipped with advanced technological facilities such as satellite navigation and thermal imaging camera to better meet the more demanding operational needs. To provide adequate coverage of Deep Bay, a total of six interceptors, with a top speed of 35 knots, would be required. Under normal circumstances, two interceptors would be operated from each lighter with the third interceptor kept as a maintenance / operational reserve.

Proposal

6. As the three water jet boats concerned have almost reached the end of their estimated life expectancy, Marine Police originally planned to procure three water jet boats as replacement. Three non-recurrent commitments totalling \$24.8 million were approved by the Secretary for the Treasury under delegated authority in 1995 and 1996 respectively for the replacement of the three water jet boats. However, after critically reviewing their current and future operational needs, the Marine Police propose that instead of procuring similar type of vessels, the three water jet boats should be replaced by two dumb lighters and six high-speed interceptor boats to police the waters of Deep Bay. Besides improving operational efficiency, this new proposal will incur lower recurrent and non-recurrent costs. Details are at paragraphs 8 and 9 below.

7. As the proposed commitment exceeds the level of delegated authority, approval has to be sought from the Finance Committee.

Financial Implications

Non-recurrent cost

8. It is estimated that the non-recurrent cost for two dumb lighters and six high-speed interceptors will be \$21.304 million and \$3.124 million respectively, incurring a total of \$24.43 million. Detailed calculation of the non-recurrent cost is at Annex A.

Recurrent Cost

9. It is estimated that the annual recurrent expenditure arising from the proposed procurement of two dumb lighters and six high-speed interceptors will be \$2.38 million. This represents a reduction in recurrent expenditure of \$0.94 million when compared to the cost of maintaining the three existing water jet boats. Detailed calculation of the recurrent cost is at Annex B.

Implementation

10. Details of the implementation plan are as follows –

<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Estimated Schedule</u>
a) Funding approval	December 1999
b) Preparation of tender specifications	January – March 2000

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| c) Preparation of tender bids by shipyards | April – June 2000 |
| d) Award contract | July – September 2000 |
| e) Construction | October 2000 – September 2001 |
| f) Delivery of vessels (including trials) | October 2001 |

11. Subject to Members' views, we will prepare a submission to the Finance Committee to seek approval for the required funding in the current legislative session.

Security Bureau

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Breakdown of the non-recurrent cost

	<u>Item</u>	<u>\$ (million)</u>
(a)	One dumb lighter with life raft, deck crane and associated mooring equipment	4.600
(b)	Generator, air-conditioning and associated electrical equipment	1.050
(c)	Deckhouse and associated fittings	1.100
(d)	Electronic surveillance equipment	2.684
(e)	Launching system for high-speed interceptor	0.250
	Subtotal:	9.684
	Plus 10% contingency:	0.968
	Estimated cost for one dumb lighter	10.652
	Estimated cost for two dumb lighters:	21.304
(f)	Six high-speed interceptors	2.840
(g)	Plus 10% contingency	0.284
	Estimated cost for six high-speed interceptors:	3.124
	GRAND TOTAL:	24.43

Breakdown of the annual recurrent cost

	<u>Item</u>	<u>\$ (million)</u>
(a)	Maintenance of two dumb lighters including towing costs and consumable stores	1.054
(b)	Maintenance of six high-speed interceptors	0.252
(c)	Maintenance of electronic equipment	0.500
(d)	Fuel costs for dumb lighters and interceptors	0.570
<hr/> Estimated total annual recurrent cost:		2.38