

23 May 2003

Clerk to Bills Committee on
National Security (Legislative Provisions) Bill
(Attn: Mrs Sharon Tong)
Legislative Council
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mrs Tong,

**Bills Committee on
National Security (Legislative Provisions) Bill**

Application for Search Warrant

Thank you for your letter of 13 May 2003.

Under the existing arrangements, all magistrates are available to consider urgent applications for warrants outside office hours. The contact telephone numbers and addresses of all magistrates are circulated to the concerned law enforcement agencies, including the Police. These law enforcement agencies can contact any of the magistrates who is available to consider an application for a search warrant outside office hours.

As far as the availability of magistrates is concerned, our experience is that this has not been a problem, as all magistrates are on the list and someone would be available.

As regards the time required for obtaining a search warrant outside office hours, the Judiciary can only comment on the part regarding the usual time required for a magistrate to consider an application. Experience shows that it usually takes not more than 30 minutes for a magistrate to read the papers and consider an application.

At present, there are few urgent applications for warrants outside office hours. Magistrates are seldom called upon to consider applications for warrants during odd hours or after midnight. However, magistrates are prepared to do so in cases of urgency.

Yours sincerely,

(Miss Vega Wong)
for Judiciary Administrator