

**For information
on 15 April 2005**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

Versatile Maritime Policing Response Strategy

Introduction

This paper presents the Hong Kong Police Force's plan to achieve better cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency in discharging its marine policing duties, through implementation of the Versatile Maritime Policing Response strategy (VMPR). This strategy will enhance the Force's capability in meeting the changing needs of marine policing. It will also save \$86 million in annual recurrent cost, with a net reduction of some 200 posts. Besides, an amount of \$395 million in capital cost will be avoided by not replacing some existing craft on a like-for-like basis.

Background

Marine Police Region

2. The Marine Police Region is responsible for maintaining the integrity of 191 kilometres of Boundary of Administration (BoA), 1,651 square kilometres of coastal and port area, and 262 islands within the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Marine Police currently has a fleet of 147 craft. It performs a wide range of duties, which includes the maintenance of law and order at sea, patrolling the BoA, assisting the enforcement of immigration control, maritime safety, search and rescue operations, etc.

The Original Launch Replacement Programme

3. On 4 March 1999, the Panel on Security discussed a paper entitled "Replacement of Marine Police Launches". The paper put forward a Launch Replacement Programme which aimed to ultimately replace 35 marine patrol launches as they reached their life expectancy, in a phased manner over a period of 17 years. The first batch of vessels to be replaced was six Damen Mark I patrol launches. The Panel supported the Police's proposals, and funding for the first batch of replacements

was subsequently endorsed by the Finance Committee on 23 April 1999.

Review of the Launch Replacement Programme

4. Following replacement of the six Damen Mark I launches mentioned in paragraph 3 above, the next batch of vessels due for replacement are 14 Damen Mark III and seven Harbour Patrol Launches, which have served for 21 and 18 years respectively. As advised by the Marine Department, the normal life expectancy for these launches is 18 to 22 years and hence there is an imminent need to replace them. It would not be cost-effective for these aged launches to continue operation, as it is estimated that the cost of maintaining them would double with engine replacement if they exceed their life expectancy.

5. Proceeding along the basis of the Panel on Security's deliberations in 1999 (paragraph 3 above), we could pursue a like-for-like replacement under the original Launch Replacement Programme. Nevertheless, in view of the passage of time and the changing marine policing needs, the Police have taken the opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of the cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency of this Programme. As part of the review, the Force has examined the practices overseas and assessed Marine Police's operational needs in maintaining the safety and integrity of Hong Kong waters.

6. The current operating strategy requires the deployment of a sufficient number of large and radar equipped launches to form an interlocking ring of radar coverage around the BoA. Given the limited radar range of individual launches, 24^(Note) are currently required to safeguard the integrity of the BoA. These large launches are supplemented by a fleet of smaller launches which patrol inshore areas and the port. This mode of operation has proven to be effective over the past years in dealing with the various maritime problems and crimes, such as mass illegal immigration from the Mainland, influx of Vietnamese boat people and traditional coastal smuggling activities. However, Members will note that this strategy necessitates the deployment of a significant number of large launches and crew to cover the entire BoA. Moreover, the last few years have witnessed the increasing use of faster and more agile craft by criminal syndicates, which has rendered law enforcement relying on the existing police fleet increasingly difficult.

7. Internationally, subsequent to the terrorist attack on 11 September 2001, the International Maritime Organisation has reviewed the security of global merchant

Note: Including 22 patrol launches, and two barges at Deep Bay.

shipping. This led to the implementation of the mandatory International Ship and Port Facility Security Code in July 2004, which is applicable to Hong Kong. Under the Code, governments must enhance the security of international marine traffic and ensure that they have an adequate response and contingency capability. Though Hong Kong is already in compliance with the minimum requirements by virtue of the Merchant Shipping (Security of Ships and Port Facilities) Ordinance (Cap 582), as a major international port and to be in line with the international trend, we should continue to look for room for improvement to enhance our port security and responses capability.

Versatile Maritime Policing Response Strategy

8. In the course of our review, an alternative approach, VMPR, was identified. We consider that it will be more cost-effective than the Launch Replacement Programme and at the same time better meet the current and future operational needs of the Marine Police in discharging its duties.

9. VMPR comprises two major components – (i) a central command system and (ii) a fleet of smaller and more versatile police craft. The central command system will serve to monitor the offshore waters and coordinate all marine operations. The system will make use of the existing land-based radar of the Marine Department, as well as seven sets of day/night cameras to be mounted at existing off-shore radar sites. Together, the radar system and the day/night cameras will enable the Marine Police to monitor the situation at sea. Where necessary, such as when reports of crime, emergencies or maritime accidents are received, Marine Police will be able to mount a coordinated operation or response, and mobilise the police craft to take necessary action. The new fleet of smaller craft can then be swiftly and flexibly deployed to carry out the operations.

10. Operationally VMPR can significantly enhance the efficiency of the Marine Police, enabling them to provide an enhanced service. Rather than relying on a fleet of large launches, VMPR allows a centralised command to coordinate the operations and deploy the launches in a speedy, flexible and efficient manner.

11. The Marine Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department have both endorsed the VMPR from the points of view of launch and technical design respectively. The Standing Committee of Government Craft also endorsed in June 2004 the replacement of craft under VMPR. The relevant advisory bodies, including the Port Area Security Advisory Committee, Provisional Local Vessel Advisory Committee and Maritime Industry Council, are all supportive of the VMPR.

Financial Implications and Potential Savings

12. We estimate that the total capital cost for implementation of VMPR will be about \$445 million. This covers the acquisition of a central command system, two Barge Operating Platforms, 17 Medium Patrol Launches and 23 Divisional Fast Patrol Craft. A breakdown is at **Annex A**. As regards manpower, about 750 staff are required to man the new craft and the central command system, which entail an annual recurrent expenses of about \$330 million. The annual maintenance cost of the new craft and the central command system is estimated at \$66 million.

13. On the other hand, the implementation of VMPR will bring about the decommissioning of 68 out of the existing fleet of 147 launches/craft, including 14 Divisional Patrol Launches, seven Harbour Patrol Launches, six Inshore Patrol Craft and 41 Launch / Barge Tenders. That is, the overall fleet size will be reduced by 26 craft. A breakdown is shown at **Annex C**. In addition, 948 posts involving an annual recurrent expenses of \$428 million for the existing craft will be saved. On the whole, there will be **net** recurrent savings of \$86 million per annum and staff savings of some 200 posts upon full implementation of VMPR.

14. The following table summarises the recurrent savings that can be realised from the implementation of VMPR - -

Item	Existing fleet	VMPR	Savings from VMPR
Annual Maintenance Cost	\$ 54 million	\$ 66 million	(\$ 12 million)
Annual Recurrent Expenses on Staffing	\$ 428 million	\$ 330 million	\$ 98 million
Total Recurrent Expenses	\$ 482 million	\$ 396 million	\$ 86 million
No. of Posts involved	948	About 750	About 200

15. Besides, if we implement the original Launch Replacement Programme, the capital cost of replacing the 14 Damen Mark III and seven Harbour Patrol Launches on a like-for-like basis is estimated to be about \$840 million. Implementation of VMPR, which requires a capital cost of \$445 million, would therefore avoid \$395 million of capital cost on balance compared with the original like-for-like programme.

Implementation and Alternatives

16. The Marine Police Fleet on full implementation of VMPR and the proposed

implementation plan for VMPR are at **Annex B** and **Annex C** respectively.

17. The alternative would be to continue to rely on the like-for-like Launch Replacement Programme, which however is no longer cost-effective and would not be able to meet present-day marine policing needs. It should also be noted that VMPR must be implemented as a whole package. In particular the two major components, i.e. the central command system and a fleet of small and versatile craft, must go together for the system to function and achieve its intended objectives.

Way Forward

18. Subject to Members' views, we will seek the approval of the Finance Committee for the required funding in the current legislative session.

Security Bureau
April 2005

Breakdown of Estimated Capital Cost for Implementation of VMPR

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost in \$million</u>
(a) Central command system	\$99.8
(b) Two Barge Operating Platforms	\$30.0
(c) 17 Medium Patrol Launches	\$255.0
(d) 23 Divisional Fast Patrol Craft	\$60.2
Total	<hr/> \$445.0 <hr/>

Marine Police Fleet
Changes on full implementation of VMPR

<u>Type of craft</u>	<u>Existing</u>	<u>2009/10</u>	<u>Changes</u>
Divisional Patrol Launches	26	12	-14
Inshore Patrol Craft	30	24	-6
Harbour Patrol Launches	7	-	-7
Training Launches	2	2	-
High Speed Interceptors / Fast Pursuit Craft	13	13	-
Police Barges	2	4	+2
Launch / Barge Tenders	67	26	-41
Medium Patrol Launches	-	17	+17
Divisional Fast Patrol Craft	-	23	+23
Total	147	121	-26

Implementation Plan of VMPR

Craft	Year						Total	
	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10			
	Commissioning	Decommissioning	Commissioning	Decommissioning	Commissioning	Decommissioning	Commissioning	Decommissioning
Barge Operating Platform	2						2	
Divisional Patrol Launches - Damen Mark III		4		10				14
Medium Patrol Launches	6		6		5		17	
Harbour Patrol Launches		4		3				7
Divisional Fast Patrol Craft	17		6				23	
Inshore Patrol Craft - Logistics Seaspray - Sharkcat		4 2						4 2
Launch / Barge Tenders - Searider - Carson 400 - Bombard		13 7 8		10 3				23 10 8
Total	25	42	12	26	5	-	42	68
Remarks			Setting up of central command system		Full operation of central command system and full implementation of VMPR		Fleet reduced by 26	