

4 December 2005

The Honourable Mrs Rita FAN HSU Lai-tai, GBS, JP,
President of the Legislative Council

Dear Madam,

*An Urgent Plea for Survival
from the Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps*

The Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps (HKACC) is a uniformed group under the policy aegis of the Home Affairs Bureau. A registered charitable body and a member organization of the Hong Kong Community Chest, we have for the past thirty-five years been offering quality aviation education programmes to prepare young people for possible future service in the local Aviation Industry, thereby contributing to the economic well-being of Hong Kong. With strong support from the Aviation Industry, the community at large, and our strategic partner, the Hong Kong Aviation Club (HKAC), we are currently providing our 4,000 members:

- (a) 90 x twenty-minutes helicopter air experience flights each month (offered in collaboration with members of the Hong Kong Aviation Club);
- (b) eight fixed wing flying scholarships leading to the Private Pilot License or First Solo Standard (offered jointly with the Cathay Pacific Airways, the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, the Polytechnic University, the General Flying Service Flying School of Melbourne [flight training agency of Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department Air Traffic Control Officers]);
- (c) two 10-hours helicopter flying scholarships; (jointly offered with the Becker Helicopters Flight Training School, Australia and the Cathay Pacific Airways)
- (d) six glider aviator scholarships up to solo standards (offered in collaboration with the Auckland Gliding Club and the United Kingdom Air Training Corps);
- (e) annual Private Pilot License (Aeroplane) Ground School programme for 80 members (jointly offered with the Cathay Pacific Airways, the Polytechnic University, the General Flying Service Flying School and the Swinburne University of Technology, Australia);

- (f) annual Private Pilot License (Helicopter) Ground School programme for 50 members (organized jointly with the Cathay Pacific Airways and the Becker Helicopter Flight Training School, Australia);
- (g) the Dragonair Aviation Certificate of Merit/Aviation Mentorship Programme for 15 members (jointly organized with the Hong Kong Dragon Airlines); and
- (h) Aeromodelling Training Programme for 250 members conducted at our HQ Technical Workshop and the Tseung Kwan O Aeromodelling Base.

Air Cadets in the 1980's are now Captains and First Officers of wide bodied jets of local airlines, as well as Senior Pilots of the Government Flying Service (GFS). A full one third of the GFS aircrews are present and former air cadets. Three of our four fixed wing flying scholarship winners of 2004 managed to become cadet pilots of major local airlines.

In addition to Aviation Education, the HKACC also organizes non-formal education programmes such as adventure, citizenship and disciplined training. Our smart looking and highly disciplined honour guards were tasked by the HKSAR Government to be the first to greet Colonel Yang Liwei, China's first astronaut, and the National Olympic Team Gold Medallists at the Government House. Our progressive leadership training programme breeds young people with a strong sense of commitment to Hong Kong and the Motherland. An example of the kind of patriotic civic events in which HKACC frequently assumes a pivotal role is the May Fourth Youth Parade of 2005 (<http://www.rthk.org.hk/special/may4show2005/>).

HKACC is woefully alarmed by the complete disappearance of our HQ complex, along with the HQ of our strategic partner, the Hong Kong Aviation Club, on any of the Outline Conceptual Plans released under the Stage 2 Public Consultation for the future development of Kai Tak. The HKACC and HKAC are the true *natives* of Kai Tak, having been operating at where we are for 20 years and 60 years, respectively - our HQ building is the oldest surviving building of the entire Kai Tak area, dating back to 1958, with some of the peripheral structures such as the hanger and the Nissen Hut dating back to the late 1940's. The structures are of rich historical heritage and should be preserved for the benefit of the future generations.

HKACC has been struggling hard for resources since our formation and only for the last ten years or so our sterling works have earned us better support from the Government, the Industry and the Community. Only in mid-2005 we were able to raise the capital to refurbish our HQ complex to a standard we can call it a home to our 4,000, and increasing, members. Like a bolt out of the blue, HKACC is facing the unpalatable prospect of without a home.

We fully understand where the best interest for the Community lies, and we have never asked for a runway in Kai Tak. Our stand is and always for an Aviation Development Centre without a runway at the Sung Wong Toi Road site. We believe our flying needs can be addressed by other more pragmatic means and as such we have jointly engaged in a territorial wide land search with the HKAC to support the development of a flying base. We are only imploring the Government to grant us a room for survival by allocating just 1/3 of the open space of the proposed Sung Wong Toi Park to allow our continuous and uninterrupted service to the Community, as we did, with flying colours, for the past 35 years.

The three hectares or less of open space essential to our survival would only constitute less than 1% of the Kai Tak Development Plan. As it would only involve 1/3 of the open space of the planned Sung Wong Toi Park, we would not be an obstacle to any of the OCPs. Granting the 4,000 air cadets a continuing presence will not interfere with anyone or any capital project. With a planned maximum of 160,000 people living and working in the future Kai Tak (per “City in the Park” scenario), would four thousand patriotic Air Cadets, who have always called Kai Tak a home for the past three-and-a-half decades, who are making definite contributions the Hong Kong and her Economy, not deserve to be allocated a breathing space, a very small tract of land already declared as Open Space, a mere 1%, perhaps less, of the 328 hectares which will come under the Kai Tak Master Plan?

The growing uncertainty is already starting to undermine our overall operational effectiveness.

Since the release of the Kai Tak OCPs, the question every one asking is: will the HKACC be no more?

Please help the Air Cadets.

Yours faithfully,

(Len K P LEUNG)
Commanding Officer