

SBCR 1/2362/98

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8 January 2007

Clerk to Panel on Security
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

(Attn: Mrs. Sharon Tong)

Dear Mrs. Tong,

Alleged Abuse of Power by a Principal Ambulanceman

Thank you for your letter of 14 December 2006 requesting the Administration to provide information relating to the alleged abuse of power by a principal ambulanceman to make personal use of emergency ambulance. Our response to the points raised in the letter is set out in the following paragraphs.

Report on the Investigation into the Alleged Incidents and Actions Taken

2. Any member of the Fire Services Department (FSD) who abuses his / her power to make personal use of emergency ambulances may commit a disciplinary offence. Section 12 of the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95) (FSO) provides that “[a]ny member who commits any of the offences against discipline specified in the First Schedule shall be liable to be dismissed or otherwise dealt with as provided in the Ordinance and in regulations made thereunder.”. The First Schedule of the FSO sets out various offences against discipline. If a member of FSD makes personal use of emergency ambulances, he / she may commit the following disciplinary offences –

Paragraph 8(c) “improperly uses his position as a member”; and

Paragraph 12 “when on or off duty acts in a disorderly manner, or in any manner prejudicial to discipline, or likely to bring discredit upon the FSD or the public service”.

3. Pursuant to section 14(4) of the FSO, whenever it is alleged that an FSD staff has committed a disciplinary offence, investigation shall be made into the allegation in the manner provided for by Part I of the Second Schedule. If the staff is found guilty of the disciplinary charge, he / she may be awarded punishment (such as dismissal, reduction in rank, fine, reprimand, etc.) in accordance with the provisions of the Third Schedule of the FSO.

4. Without commenting on the press report enclosed to your letter, we can confirm that FSD has been processing allegations of abuse of power by a principal ambulanceman to make personal use of emergency ambulance, in accordance with the FSO and the relevant Departmental Orders. FSD has interviewed the principal ambulanceman concerned, his crew members and independent witnesses, and has reviewed the records of the Third Generation Mobilising System (TGMS) and other relevant documents. FSD has found some of the allegations unsubstantiated, and some substantiated or partly substantiated. The Department has been considering what disciplinary action should be taken against such substantiated / partly substantiated allegations, taking into account legal advice where necessary. The process has yet to be completed.

Monitoring the Use of Emergency Ambulances

5. The use of emergency ambulances is monitored by the Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC). The FSCC is responsible for dispatching fire / ambulance resources to respond to emergency calls, and then monitor the progress of the operations. FSD has put in place the TGMS since 2005 to facilitate console operators in the FSCC to carry out their duties. TGMS is a communication and mobilising system which makes recommendations to console operators in the FSCC to dispatch the appropriate fire appliances / ambulances requiring the shortest travelling time to the incident scene for each call. Frontline personnel are required to respond to the mobilising instructions of the FSCC.

6. As for monitoring operations, TGMS keeps details of each operation including its nature, location, the responding fire appliances / ambulances, and the times of various critical stages (such as the receipt of call, dispatch, arrival at scene, arrival at hospital and completion of task). The system also monitors and keeps track of the location of all fire appliances / ambulances, and records communications between the FSCC and officers in-charge of fire appliances / ambulances through radio or telephone. The information so collected by the TGMS helps FSD to monitor its operations, including whether there is any inappropriate use of emergency ambulances.

7. Furthermore, the management of the Ambulance Command also closely monitors the use of emergency ambulances through measures such as conducting checks and inspections of ambulances at ambulance depots and hospitals, riding on ambulances frequently to conduct supervisory checks on ambulance crews at work and checking ambulance journey records completed by ambulance crews.

8. In the light of the alleged abuse of power by a principal ambulanceman to make personal use of emergency ambulance, FSD has issued a standing instruction to all FSCC staff, reiterating that they should dispatch fire appliances / ambulances proposed by the TGMS unless they have strong justifications to cast doubt on the correctness of the proposals, and they should deny requests from operational members for their fire appliances / ambulances to be tasked to handle particular cases solely because the cases involve their family members. Any member of the FSCC who fails to comply with such standing instruction may commit a disciplinary offence.

9. FSD will continue to closely monitor the use of emergency ambulances to ensure efficient use of resources for meeting public demands for emergency ambulance service.

Yours sincerely,

(Charles Wong)
for Secretary for Security