

香港特別行政區政府
保安局



The Government of the
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Security Bureau

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30 November 2012

Miss Betty Ma
Clerk to Panel on Security
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss Ma,

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Follow-up to Meeting on 6 November 2012**

I refer to the letter from the Secretariat dated 9 November 2012. As regards a member's concern about the procurement of Long Range Acoustic Device ("LRAD") by the Police, the Administration's reply is as follows.

To maintain their operational and response capability, the Police Force regularly review and renew their equipment with reference to such equipment used by their counterparts around the world. The LRAD procured by the Police Force is a broadcasting system. It can effectively help the Police to convey important messages over a long range in a noisy environment, in a bid to preserve public safety, public order and prevent injury to life and property.

In line with the circumstances and operational needs, various police districts and formations currently use sound devices of different types and models, including portable and floor-type broadcasting devices as well as public announcement (PA) systems on police vehicles (such as patrol vehicles and motorcycles). According to the Police's actual

operational experiences, the effective transmission range of the PA systems on police vehicles is estimated to be around 50 metres. As the sound quality, volume and transmission range of such systems are comparatively inferior to those of the LRADs, they are not in a position to competently achieve the effect of making long range public announcements in a noisy environment.

In procuring armoured vehicles in 2009, the Police Tactical Unit Headquarters also purchased two LRADs with an effective transmission range of about 300 metres. The two devices can only be used together with the armoured vehicles in circumstances such as serious disasters, counter-terrorism operations or severe security incidents for broadcasting purposes in a noisy environment with an aim to effectively convey messages to the crowd over a long range or to facilitate evacuation exercises, etc.

In addition, subsequent to the incident of Hong Kong residents being taken hostage in the Philippines in 2010, the Police Negotiation Cadre (PNC) reviewed measures of handling critical incidents of similar nature. At the time the incident took place, the distance between the local police officers who were handling the incident and the coach on which the hostages were being kept was over 100 metres, rendering it difficult for the officers to communicate with the abductor. In the light of this incident, the PNC considered it necessary to procure a sound device for effective communication over a long range. Two portable LRADs were then purchased for handling critical incidents. For instance, in hostage-taking incidents whereby the Police are confronted, for the security of on-spot officers, negotiators may use such a device to initiate a conversation with the abductor(s) at a safe distance. In cases of attempted suicide whereby the person attempting to commit suicide is at a dangerous location, such as the Tsing Ma Bridge, negotiators may start a conversation by means of this device for the purpose of life-saving. The effective transmission range of the two portable LRADs is about 250 metres.

The four LRADs go with an "alert tone" function. According to the manufacturer's information, the "alert tone" is similar to the siren used by the Police and the Fire Services Department. Its frequency is within our normal hearing range and it can easily draw public attention. It is also indicated in the manufacturer's information that, unlike what is said in some of the reports, the LRADs do not generate ultra-low frequency which will cause dizziness, nausea or loss of sense of direction to the recipients. The Police stress that the purpose of procuring the LRADs is to convey important messages over a long range in a noisy environment.

So far, the Police have not used the LRADs in any one of their operations, while reiterating that the LRADs will not be used in public meetings and processions.

According to the safety guidelines provided by the manufacturer, as the LRAD can produce significantly loud sound, any improper use of the device (i.e. continuous broadcasting with maximum volume range from an unsafe distance and angle) may cause hearing impairment. In this connection, there are stringent rules and operational guidelines on the use of this kind of devices. The operational guidelines were compiled with strict adherence to the manufacturer's safety guidelines. Officers operating the LRADs must receive prior operational and safety trainings, and they should strictly adhere to the operational guidelines. Any use of LRADs shall be approved by the highest officer-in-charge of the formation concerned (i.e. an officer of Superintendent to Chief Superintendent rank), and its on-site use shall be approved by an officer of Inspectorate rank or above. The LRAD must be operated by designated officers who have received prior trainings. In case the highest volume range shall be used, another trained officer must be present to assist in observing the actual surroundings to ensure that the operator achieves the objective of the operation in a safe manner without causing impairment to any persons around.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs Millie Ng)
for Secretary for Security

c.c.

Commissioner of Police

(Attn: Assistant Commissioner of Police (Operations)) Fax: 2294 0002