

**For discussion
on 5 January 2016**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

**Acquisition of Mobile Response and Command Platform for the
Marine Region of the Hong Kong Police Force**

Purpose

This paper consults the Panel on a proposal by the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) to acquire a second Mobile Response and Command Platform (MRCP) for its Marine Region in order to strengthen its capability in handling maritime rescue operations and in maritime law enforcement.

Background

2. In 2012, the Police began a review on maintaining and strengthening their capability in meeting present and future maritime challenges faced by Hong Kong. The review resulted in a launch replacement and acquisition programme that will meet the Police's operational needs while at the same time deliver value for money.

3. The first priority of the above-mentioned programme was accorded to fulfilling the Police's immediate need in replacing ageing craft that form the backbone of deeper water patrol, search and rescue capability in order to maintain the Police's current level of service. On this, the Police consulted the Panel on the proposal to replace 18 launches in May 2014, including replacing the Regional Training Launch by a MRCP (i.e. the first MRCP). The next priority is on addressing existing vulnerabilities and enhancing the Police's overall maritime operational capability in meeting future challenges threatening Hong Kong's maritime security. As part of this initiative, the Police consulted the Panel on the proposal to acquire a Barge Operating Platform for deployment in Starling Inlet and adjacent waters in February 2015. The Panel supported in principle both replacement and acquisition proposals.

4. The second MRCP proposed in this paper is another core component of the above-mentioned initiative. It will considerably strengthen the Police's on-scene command, search, rescue and response capability in inter-departmental maritime rescue operations and counter-terrorist operations. In respect of law enforcement, the second MRCP will significantly enhance the Police's operational effectiveness in interdicting

seaborne smuggling and illegal immigration in remote areas of Hong Kong waters.

Functions of MRCP

5. MRCP is a large-scale purpose-built vessel designed to serve as an on-scene command and operational centre for major operations at sea. It will function as a forward operational base at sea, from which other vessels, particularly fast interceptors, can be deployed. Such operations may include inter-departmental rescue and disaster relief operations, as well as counter-terrorism and anti-crime operations. Recent experiences show that the provision of a central command and control platform at sea nearest to the incident site is the key to the success of operations. Major functions and features of MRCP are as follows –

- (i) MRCP is about 40 metres long and has a displacement of about 300 tonnes. It can accommodate over 100 persons on board and provides sufficient deck space for advanced, bulky and specialist equipment; command suites; as well as briefing and staging areas for specialist units etc. MRCP will also be equipped with a variety of smaller support vessels for deployment in various operations.
- (ii) MRCP will provide significant assistance in inter-departmental maritime rescue operations. It will be designed to serve as a central casualty muster and triage station at or close to the incident site at sea. Medical and ambulance personnel can board MRCP and conduct initial handling of injured and affected persons aboard MRCP in areas designed for such purposes. Medical facilities for use by qualified personnel will also be provided on MRCP.
- (iii) MRCP is a forward operating base or mother ship for smaller support and interceptor vessels. In rescue operations, these smaller vessels can immediately take injured persons from accident-hit vessels to MRCP for initial medical handling. Fast vessels can then dispatch victims to land for transfer to hospitals. MRCP can also support helicopter operations in such scenarios. In law enforcement deployments such as anti-smuggling and anti-illegal immigration operations, smaller support vessels departing from MRCP can go into shallow waters, beach and foreshore areas to carry out intercept, arrest and seizure operations etc.

- (iv) MRCP with its catamaran or multi-hull design is a stable platform capable of dynamic positioning in rough seas, which is important for the handling of non-ambulant casualties. As such, initial medical handling and other operations can take place in a safe and secure environment.
- (v) MRCP has a top speed of 25 knots, allowing it to arrive at an incident site in a timely manner. With its built-in catering, rest and other support facilities, MRCP is also designed for protracted operations and with adequate supplies can remain on sea for as long as a rescue and recovery operation would require. Long-duration anti-crime operations that are currently not feasible due to limited range and endurance of existing police speedboats will become possible with the deployment of MRCP. As MRCP can be stationed in remote parts of Hong Kong waters for a long time, police speed boats operating from MRCP can spend more time patrolling such waters and save the time currently spent travelling from and to land bases, thereby enhancing maritime security and deterrence of crime.
- (vi) MRCP will be equipped with advanced thermal imaging, radar, night vision and navigation equipment, enabling commanders to make informed and timely decisions based upon real-time information. Modern control and navigation equipment on MRCP will provide greatly improved operational capabilities without the need for increased crew numbers. Live video and data feeds may be relayed to shore facilities for use by commanders on land where appropriate.
- (vii) MRCP will be equipped with in-built ballistic protection for the bridge, command suites and vulnerable areas.

Justifications for and benefits of the second MRCP

6. The justifications for and the benefits of the second MRCP proposed in this paper are as follows –

- (i) The area of Hong Kong waters is very large. Crime activities such as smuggling and illegal immigration or maritime incidents can and do occur concurrently in different parts of Hong Kong waters. Recent overseas terrorist attacks also highlighted that such atrocities may be specifically planned to

happen simultaneously at various locations. To provide effective coverage to the entirety of Hong Kong waters and ensure the required 365 days-a-year readiness for emergency and rescue operations, two MRCPs are the minimum requirement. The two MRCPs can be deployed in separate strategic locations of Hong Kong waters for maintaining maritime security and enhancing coverage for timely arrival at incident sites, or deployed together during major incidents. The second MRCP can cover those parts of Hong Kong waters that the first MRCP cannot cover at any one time. This is particularly crucial if two major incidents happen at the same time in different spots of Hong Kong waters. The second MRCP will also enable simultaneous anti-smuggling and other operations at two different locations.

- (ii) Recent incidents in Hong Kong and overseas have shown that the number of injured persons in a maritime incident can be significant. All these affected persons would need immediate rescue, treatment and further processing, and thus a considerable amount of deck space on vessels would be required. Two MRCPs, each capable of accommodating over 100 persons, when deployed together will provide much greater space for accommodating a large number of injured persons as well as rescue personnel and for handling victims. More deck space would also enhance efficiency in handling victims. The second MRCP will double the accommodation capacity and enhance efficiency in a single large-scale and possibly protracted maritime rescue operation.
- (iii) The second MRCP will be equipped with advanced communications, command and control, and navigation equipment designed to provide the level of situational awareness and communications that are needed for effectively dealing with life-and-death situations, where efficient management of available resources can significantly reduce the level of fatalities. This equipment will also be able to transmit real-time information, images and videos of marine operations or incidents to police commanders at sea or in shore-based command centres for operational decision-making, briefing and public information purposes. Currently, police officers aboard launches at scene can only provide on-scene information over voice radio to police commanders. The above-mentioned integrated information

solution will greatly enhance the command capability in maritime incidents by providing more comprehensive information for decision-making, thus significantly improving efficiency, effectiveness and co-ordination in maritime operations.

- (iv) It is expected that, in common with other large patrol craft, each MRCP would be potentially unavailable for up to two months every year due to docking maintenance, servicing and repairs. Having only one MRCP would mean that no MRCP could be deployed for about two months each year. The second MRCP is essential in order to enable year-round operational viability.

7. The second MRCP will be of approximately the same size and basic hull shape of the first MRCP so as to allow operation from current Marine Police operational bases. In terms of equipment, the second MRCP will feature the above-mentioned integrated information system and will incorporate technological advancements of other systems, such as navigational system, dynamic positioning system, and vessel launch and recovery systems appropriate to both its intended day-to-day roles and major maritime incident response duties.

8. Hong Kong is a major international port. The second MRCP is necessary in order to strengthen the Police's capability in handling maritime rescue operations, maintain a robust maritime law enforcement capability and keep Hong Kong waters free from the threat of crime and terrorism. It should be stressed that the two MRCPs will be deployed in inter-departmental operations such as rescue, disaster relief and law enforcement operations involving the Fire Services Department, Customs and Excise Department, Immigration Department, Marine Department and Government Flying Service etc. The capability of the Government as a whole in handling maritime incidents will therefore be greatly strengthened.

Financial Implications

Non-recurrent cost

9. The Police estimate that the acquisition of the second MRCP and its associated small support craft will incur a total non-recurrent cost of \$144,385,000. The amount would be reflected in the Estimates of the relevant years.

10. The estimated cash flow requirement is as follows –

<u>Year</u>	<u>\$'000</u>
2016-17	6,500
2017-18	34,470
2018-19	27,576
2019-20	27,576
2020-21	41,369
2021-22	<u>6,894</u>
Total:	144,385

Recurrent cost

11. The Police estimate that the recurrent cost of the second MRCP and its associated small support craft will be \$7,287,000 per annum from 2020-21 onwards. The required recurrent expenditure will be reflected in the Estimates of the relevant years.

Implementation Plan

12. Subject to Members' views on the proposal, the tentative implementation plan is as follows –

<u>Item</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Expected completion date</u>
(a)	Detailed design research and critical systems layout preparation	August 2016
(b)	Preparation of tender documents	December 2016
(c)	Tendering, evaluation and approval	July 2017
(d)	Award of tender	August 2017
(e)	Inspection and delivery	July/ August 2020
(f)	Training and commissioning	September 2020

Advice Sought

13. Members' views are sought on the above proposal.

**Security Bureau
Hong Kong Police Force
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