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Panel on Security

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 3 January 2017**

**Replacement and enhancement of
the closed-circuit television systems at correctional institutions**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the replacement and enhancement of the closed-circuit television ("CCTV") systems at correctional institutions and summarizes past discussions of the Panel on Security ("the Panel") on the subject.

Background

2. According to the Administration, most of the correctional facilities in Hong Kong are either aged or converted from buildings originally used for other purposes. Therefore, a reliable and secure CCTV system is necessary for each correctional facility to monitor the behaviour of individual persons in custody, support the operation of institutions, ensure the safety of correctional staff and persons in custody and maintain institutional security.

3. In an inquest into the death of a person in custody conducted in 2012, the Coroner's Court recommended that the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") should, without intruding into personal privacy, enhance the coverage of CCTV systems within the areas of correctional institutions, improve the image resolution and introduce the use of coloured images. In addition, during an investigation into a complaint, the Office of The Ombudsman ("The Ombudsman") commented that the 14-day retention period for audio or video recordings was not adequate, and recommended that CSD should review its procedural guideline on retention and disposal of files and records and retain the video recordings for not less than 30 days.

Deliberations of the Panel

4. The Panel had been briefed on the funding proposals for replacing and enhancing the existing CCTV systems at various correctional institutions with higher resolution and storage capacity at a number of meetings. Members expressed general support for the proposals and their major views and concerns are summarized below.

Privacy concern arising from installation of new CCTV systems

5. Some members expressed concern about whether the installation of high resolution CCTV cameras at correctional institutions would have any impact on the privacy of staff and persons in custody. Concern was also raised as to whether images captured by the proposed CCTV cameras would be accessible by senior officials at other locations.

6. The Administration advised that the proposed CCTV cameras would not be installed at offices and specific areas such as shower rooms, toilets, sick bays and X-ray rooms of the correctional institutions concerned. The locations of new CCTV cameras would provide a better coverage of all areas accessible by persons in custody while protecting the privacy of individuals inside the correctional institutions. Besides, the images captured by the CCTV cameras would only be accessible at the control room of the respective correctional institution, which was operated round the clock.

7. Members were also advised that the video recordings of the new CCTV systems could be retained for up to 31 days. According to the Administration, CSD had made reference to the practice adopted by the Hong Kong Police Force in retaining CCTV data obtained at police stations and also the standards stipulated in the guidelines provided by the police of the United Kingdom for users of CCTV systems. In deciding on the retention period of 31 days, CSD had given due consideration of the recommendation made by The Ombudsman with regard to retaining the recordings for not less than 30 days.

Replacement schedule for the existing CCTV systems

8. Some members enquired about the Administration's schedule for replacing and enhancing the existing ageing CCTV systems in various correctional institutions in the light of the recommendations of the Coroner's Court and The Ombudsman. They also expressed concern as to whether there were any contingency plans to deal with the breakdown of the existing ageing CCTV systems before they were replaced.

9. The Administration advised that while the existing CCTV systems at some correctional institutions had been in operation for a long time, the

procurement of replacement parts or substitutes was still possible. CSD would take into account the information obtained from annual inspections of existing CCTV cameras carried out by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department as well as security and operational needs of individual correctional institutions when scheduling the replacement of existing CCTV cameras.

10. The Administration will brief the Panel on its proposal of replacing and enhancing the CCTV systems at Tai Lam Correctional Institution, Tong Fuk Correctional Institution and Tung Tau Correctional Institution at the meeting on 3 January 2017.

Relevant papers

11. A list of relevant papers available on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

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Legislative Council Secretariat
23 December 2016

Appendix

Relevant papers on replacement and enhancement of the closed-circuit television systems at correctional institutions

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Security	8.4.2014 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	12.7.2014 (Item No. 22)	FCR(2014-15)26 Minutes
Panel on Security	12.4.2016 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	6.5.2016 (Item No. 2)	FCR(2016-17)12 Minutes

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