

**For discussion
on 2 June 2020**

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Strengthening the Prevention and Tackling of Terrorist Activities**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest situation regarding the terrorist threat of Hong Kong, as well as how the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”) Government and members of the public can strengthen their prevention and response.

Background

2. At present, the Hong Kong legislation has clear definition on “terrorist act”. According to the United Nations (Anti-Terrorism Measures) Ordinance (“UNATMO”) (Chapter 575 of the Laws of Hong Kong), if any action or threat of action, which would have the effect of causing serious violence against a person, causing serious damage to property, endangering a person’s life, creating a serious risk to the health and safety of the public, seriously interfering with an electronic system, or seriously interfering with an essential service, facility or system¹, is carried out with the intention to compel the Government or to intimidate the public and for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause, it constitutes a “terrorist act”.

3. The HKSAR Government has been monitoring the actual situation to assess the risk regarding the terrorist threat of Hong Kong. A wide range of factors are taken into account, including local, regional and international situations, recent incidents, sources of threat, etc. so as to assess the threat of terrorist attacks faced by Hong Kong.

¹ In the case of creating a serious risk to the health and safety of the public, seriously interfering with an electronic system, or seriously interfering with an essential service, facility or system, the use or threat of action in the course of any advocacy, protest, dissent or industrial action does not constitute a “terrorist act”.

Latest situation

4. Currently, the terrorist threat level of Hong Kong is “moderate”. However, some ten cases involving explosives and firearms have taken place since July last year, which were extremely alarming in both destructive power and quantities. These cases are similar to overseas terrorist activities in terms of their modus operandi, showing signs of the breeding of local terrorism in Hong Kong. On this, there are three aspects which members of the public should be aware of –

- (a) First, the various types of explosives seized by the Police include TATP (triacetone triperoxide), ANFO (ammonium nitrate/fuel oil), HMTD (hexamethylene triperoxide diamine), DNT (dinitrotoluene) and black powder, which are explosives commonly used in overseas terrorist attacks. Examples are the bombing at a federal building in Oklahoma of the United States in 1995, the serial bombing of the underground and buses in London of the United Kingdom in 2005, the bombing at government buildings in Oslo of Norway in 2011, the bombing at Erawan Shrine in Bangkok of Thailand in 2015, the serial bombing at an airport and a metro station in Brussels of Belgium in 2016, the serial bombing at churches and hotels in Sri Lanka in 2019, etc. These terrorist bombings took place in different corners of the world and led to severe casualties. Members of the public must be mindful that bombs are indiscriminate and will, once exploded, harm people around by killing, causing physical disabilities and destroying buildings. No one in the vicinity can escape from the explosion should it occur;
- (b) Second, the detonation methods intended to be used by rioters resemble those commonly used in attacks by different terrorists around the world. For example, the Police seized a bomb made of a pressure cooker and nails; the same kind of pressure cooker bomb was used by terrorists in the marathon bombing in Boston of the United States in 2013, which resulted in 3 deaths and 264 injuries. Besides, the Police seized detonating devices made of mobile phones; similar remote devices made of mobile phones were used in the serial bombing in New York and New Jersey of the United States in 2016, which resulted in 34 injuries. The Police also seized pipe bomb (which could be hurled like hand-grenades), and similar bomb was used in the New York subway station bombing in 2017, which resulted in 3 severe injuries; and

- (c) Third, the raw materials seized by the Police were alarming in types and quantities. Such extremely toxic and highly flammable chemicals include potassium nitrate, ammonium nitrate, sulphuric acid, sulphur, acetone, strong acids, sodium bars, cyanide, ethanol, zinc cyanide, mercury dithizonate, etc. If these raw materials are used for launching attacks, they will cause severe injuries and deaths.

5. Besides explosives, the Police seized five genuine guns and a large quantity of bullets in their operations, including a semi-automatic rifle. The same kind of rifle was used in the mass shooting on a crowd of concertgoers in the Las Vegas Casino City of the United States, which resulted in over 50 deaths.

Prevention and response

Vigorous combat under the law

6. The Police is conducting full investigation into relevant cases, identifying sources of the items concerned and whether organized crimes were involved, and closely monitoring the risk regarding the threat of local terrorism. We will target against terrorist acts by handling and combating them with the most stringent laws. As mentioned in paragraph 2 above, there is a clear legal definition of “terrorist act”. The Police will handle the cases appropriately according to relevant legislation based on the actual circumstances and evidence collected. If sufficient evidence is found upon investigation, the Police and the Department of Justice will consider prosecution under UNATMO, and will also consider freezing assets involved in terrorist activities to cut off their funding sources and prevent them from recruiting members. Regardless of whether UNATMO is used, these cases of explosives and firearms per se are very serious criminal offences, which are punishable with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment under the Crimes Ordinance (Chapter 200 of the Laws of Hong Kong), the Firearms and Ammunition Ordinance (Chapter 238 of the Laws of Hong Kong) and the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance (Chapter 455 of the Laws of Hong Kong).

7. The HKSAR Government is keeping a close watch over the situation, and does not rule out the escalation of the terrorist threat level of Hong Kong. Once a terrorist attack occurs or the threat level is raised, the Police may have

to lock down high-risk locations, carry out high-profile patrols, search personal belongings and conduct security checks in public places to ensure public safety. Members of the public should cooperate in these operations to safeguard safety of their own and the society. We will closely monitor related developments, gather intelligence and stay vigilant at all times.

Enhancing internal preparedness against terrorism

8. In light of the numerous cases involving explosives and firearms, the HKSAR Government has enhanced the internal counter-terrorism (“CT”) preparedness. Departments and agencies concerned have devised relevant actions plans to ensure immediate and effective responses in the event of terrorist attacks.

Inter-departmental Counter-terrorism Unit

9. The HKSAR Government set up the Inter-departmental Counter-terrorism Unit (“ICTU”) in 2018, comprising members from the Hong Kong Police Force, Immigration Department, Customs and Excise Department, Correctional Services Department, Fire Services Department and Government Flying Service. The CT strategy of ICTU focuses on setting up an inter-departmental CT platform on top of the existing CT framework to strengthen the HKSAR Government’s overall CT capability. The current CT strategy covers four areas, namely prevention, preparedness, response and recovery –

- (a) Prevention: adopting an intelligence-led approach to enhance communication and cooperation between departments as well as among departments and public/private organisations, with a view to suppressing and preventing terrorist activities or related threat in Hong Kong;
- (b) Preparedness: conducting exercises and training to maintain high vigilance and to ensure that emergency and support service personnel are well prepared, sufficiently trained and equipped with necessary resources²;

² The Counter-terrorism Emergency Coordination Team has met so that representatives from government departments engaged in CT efforts can formulate and coordinate effective CT operational strategies on territory-wide security, ensure that vigilance is maintained at all local major transport facilities and boundary control points, and enhance Hong Kong’s tackling capability and preparedness.

- (c) Response: formulating effective response action plans to tackle and investigate terrorist activities or related threat in a professional, effective and efficient manner³; and
- (d) Recovery: ensuring in case of terrorist incidents in Hong Kong that law and order are maintained and that community recovery, restoration and reconstruction can be promptly carried out to restore social order and rebuild public confidence as soon as possible.

10. Under the aforesaid strategies, ICTU has collaborated with relevant departments to take forward a series of initiatives, which include establishing a CT intelligence exchange mechanism and work platform for various departments to enhance integration and analysis of intelligence; conducting inter-departmental CT exercises and training to ensure response and emergency services as well as supporting personnel are well prepared at all times, while focusing on strengthening the cooperation and synergy among various departments⁴.

11. Furthermore, ICTU coordinates the efforts of various departments in promoting CT awareness and education among the public. In order to enhance the awareness of the public to guard against suspected explosives, ICTU produced a promotion video⁵ and a leaflet (see Annex 1) entitled “Stay Vigilant to Bomb” in April 2020 to educate the public on identification and handling of suspicious objects, precautionary and response measures, facilitation of the work of the Police and rescue staff, and simple first aid procedures. In addition, since April 2020, ICTU has conducted training or briefing on many occasions for relevant industry stakeholders to enhance their awareness on the prevention and response against suspicious objects and bombs. The Crime Prevention Bureau of the Police also provides information leaflets to representatives of security companies during everyday work such as processing of applications for and renewal of security company licences and annual inspections, with a view to enhancing publicity and education.

³ ICTU members have particularly enhanced preparedness for tackling bombings which are absolutely likely to happen.

⁴ In this connection, ICTU has organized two large-scale inter-departmental CT exercises since its establishment to enhance coordination among various departments on CT intelligence and response, and to heighten CT awareness of the public.

⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=3j7W0_JPCIA

Strengthening CT preparedness by the Police

12. Strengthening CT work is one of the Commissioner of Police's Operational Priorities 2020. As the frontline CT agency, the Police maintains high vigilance against terrorist activities at all times and makes appropriate deployment and preparation in light of the current threat assessment.

Response strategy of "Run, Hide and Report" for the public

13. In addition to the prevention and vigorous combat against terrorist acts by law enforcement agencies ("LEAs"), members of the community should join efforts by staying vigilant to guard against the breeding of local terrorism by heightening alertness, reporting to the Police under safe conditions, and cooperating with the Police in their law enforcement duties. LEAs will strengthen publicity and education, and educate the public through exercises on the strategy of "Run, Hide and Report" –

- (a) "Run" means staying away from the attacker's visual range as soon as possible and leaving the scene via a safe route. More importantly, members of the public should not stay at the scene for taking photos or videos. They should leave immediately to avoid danger;
- (b) "Hide" if leaving the scene is impossible. Members of the public should hide at a sheltered place or in a lockable room, mute the phone and turn off the vibration function. They should not use any items that give out light and sound. They should stay calm and wait for rescue; and
- (c) "Report" means calling 999 to report to the Police under safe conditions or when personal safety is secured (such as after making a successful escape and being away from the scene under attack).

14. The Police has produced a promotion video⁶ and a leaflet (see Annex 2) entitled "Run, Hide and Report" to remind the public of the strategy in response to terrorist attacks or danger.

⁶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjJ0RJ81VFU

Conclusion

15. The HKSAR Government believes that only a small number of acts have involved local terrorism. But in view of its lethality and destructive power, we must always stay vigilant. The Government is endeavoured to curb the breeding of local terrorism. Through the ICTU platform, the Police and other disciplinary forces will minimise related risk under a multi-pronged approach by strengthening the gathering of intelligence, taking proactive actions, making full use of the existing law, enhancing inter-departmental collaboration, etc.

16. The combat against terrorism requires the community's concerted efforts and vigilance, opposition to terrorism, as well as reporting to the Police under safe conditions by members of the public and their support to the actions and measures of the Police and LEAs. As always, the HKSAR Government will remain vigilant at all times and keep enhancing Hong Kong's capability and preparedness in the prevention and response against terrorist attacks.

Security Bureau
May 2020

Publicity leaflet on “Stay vigilant to Bomb”

Introduction



Hong Kong is a densely populated city with heavy traffic flow. Recently, criminals or violent extremists possess, manufacture or use improvised explosive devices in dwellings, factories, community facilities and public transport etc. so as to advance their causes, constituting serious danger to life and property of the public.

Therefore, members of the public should stay vigilant against the threats of explosives and suspicious objects. Meanwhile, security/property management personnel of public or private premises are advised to take appropriate precautionary measures to identify any suspicious objects. Call the Police once suspicious objects are found.

I) Identifying Suspicious Objects

Although there is no clear definition for suspicious objects, the following factors can be taken into account:

- Is the appearance of the object unusual?** (e.g. Exposed electrical wirings or contained unknown powder, unusual packing including excessive wrappings with adhesive tapes or aluminum foils)
- Is the existence of the object foreign to area?** (e.g. A pressure cooker placed on a bench in a park)
- Can the owner of the object be identified?** (e.g. Any reported loss? Any identification name tag or label attached?)

Treat the object as suspicious if you are not sure of the answers to the above questions or in case of any doubt.

Notes for security/property management personnel:

II) Handling Suspicious Objects

- Keep calm and report to the Police immediately
- Do not touch or move the object and keep others away from it
- Refrain from using walkie-talkie or mobile phone at scene
- Do not cover the suspicious object
- Note down the location and the features of the suspicious object (e.g. size, shape, any characters/words on it, packing) as well as the condition (e.g. sign of explosion, emission of smoke, etc.)
- Pay attention to any suspicious person in the vicinity
- Beware of any other suspicious object in the vicinity
- Consider evacuation, and stay away from windows and glass curtain walls
- All witnesses and those who are familiar with the area should stay at a safe place and assist the Police in the follow-up and assist the subsequent investigation

When reporting to the Police, please clearly provide the location and features of the object etc. to the 999 operator and police officers at scene.

Self Help and Help Others

Under safe conditions and where practicable, security/property management personnel or members of the public may render initial assistance to the injured person. The following are some recommendations:

- Burns/scalds** - Rinse the burned/scalded area with plenty of running water and cover it with dressings or cling film
- Bleeding** - Cover and compress the wound with dressings, gauze or a clean, dry cloth/hardkerchief
- Unconsciousness** - If an injured person is confirmed to be unconscious and not breathing properly, perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) immediately and use Automated External Defibrillator (AED) until the arrival of responding rescue team

For more information, please visit the following website:

- "Stay Vigilant to Bomb" video clip
- Three basic skills on emergency preparedness
- General security of premises and personnel



On spotting any suspicious object or an explosion occurred, before the arrival of police officers and rescue personnel ...

Security/property management personnel could facilitate police officers and rescue personnel by performing the following actions:

- Provide information as far as possible about the explosion and the casualties:
 - Is there a fire?
 - Has the building collapsed or been damaged?
 - What are the numbers and conditions of casualties?
- Keep Emergency Vehicular Access clear
- Do not obstruct fire service inlets, sprinker inlets, fire hydrants and their ground valves
- Make available a comprehensive floor plan for the Police and rescue personnel
- Designate a contact person to communicate with the Police and rescue personnel
- Assist in the evacuation and head counting

III) Prevention and Response

Recommended measures in security/property management:

- Enhance Access Control & Perimeter Security**
 - Enhance patrol to ensure all exits (including emergency passages) are closed properly, as well as locks and security alarm systems are functioning well
 - Take appropriate access control measures at both vehicular and visitors access points and keep proper logs
 - Install high resolution CCTV's with recording functions
- Strengthen Response Capabilities**
 - Conduct regular checks/inspections on all security, fire-fighting systems and first aid equipment to ensure their proper functioning
 - Conduct regular fire drills or emergency response exercises to ensure security/property management personnel are familiar with the environment and the relevant response plans, as well as the operation of fire-fighting equipment
- Reduce Security Risk**
 - Adopt a **RR** approach (Reduce, Redesign and Relocate) in vulnerable locations where suspicious objects might be placed, such as rubbish bins in public places, public lockers, free newspaper stands
 - REDUCE** - Reduce the number of these facilities
 - REDESIGN** - Redesign these facilities for ease of inspection (e.g. use transparent plastic bags instead of metal rubbish bins)
 - RELOCATE** - Relocate these facilities to areas covered by CCTV
 - Keep common areas and exits clear with adequate lighting



STAY VIGILANT TO BOMB

Publicity leaflet on “Run, Hide and Report”

[In the event of an attack incident]
you should assess the situation and consider :



1. RUN

- Stay out of view of the attackers.
- Consider the safest route.
- Don't take photos but leave immediately.

2. HIDE

- If you can't run, take cover or stay in a room with lock.
- Switch your phone to silent mode and turn off the vibrate function. Do not use any objects which may emit any light or sound.
- Stay calm and wait for assistance from police.

3. REPORT

- Call 999 once you are safe.
- Report your location, location of attackers (where you last saw them and moving forward), total number of attackers, weapons being used, appearance or other characteristics of attackers, etc.