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Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2) 1325/99-00
(These minutes have been seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/SE/1

LegCo Panel on Security

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 28 January 2000 at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present	:	Hon James TO Kun-sun (Chairman) Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong Hon Gary CHENG Kai-nam, JP Hon LAU Kong-wah Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Members attending	:	Hon LEE Cheuk-yan Hon NG Leung-sing Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Members absent	:	Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, JP (Deputy Chairman) Hon David CHU Yu-lin Hon Albert HO Chun-yan Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Public Officers attending	:	Item IV Mr David WONG Principal Assistant Secretary for Security B Mr LAM Chun-man, JP Acting Deputy Director of Fire Services

Mr MAK Kwai-pui, JP
Chief Ambulance Officer
Fire Services Department

Item V

Ms Mimi LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary for Security (Narcotics)

Mr S C LEUNG
Acting Assistant Government Chemist
Government Laboratory

Item VI

Mr Raymond WONG
Deputy Secretary for Security 1

Mr P E HALLIDAY
Assistant Commissioner of Police
Information Systems
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr CHAN Wai-ki
Chief Superintendent of Police
Crime Headquarters
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr J M H BICKNELL
Chief Superintendent of Police
Crime Support
Hong Kong Police Force

Mrs LEE CHAN Yuk-wah, Eliza
Chief Systems Manager
Information Technology Branch
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr LEUNG Wai-yee
Senior Systems Manager
Information Technology Branch
Hong Kong Police Force

Item VII

Mr Raymond WONG
Deputy Secretary for Security 1

Mr LEE Ming-kwai
Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police
Operations
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr CHEUNG Chi-sum
Assistant Commissioner of Police
Operations
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr P E HALLIDAY
Assistant Commissioner of Police
Information Systems
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr CHIU Yat-sing
Chief Telecommunications Engineer
Communications Branch
Hong Kong Police Force

Mrs LEE CHAN Yuk-wah, Eliza
Chief Systems Manager
Information Technology Branch
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr LEUNG Wai-yee
Senior Systems Manager
Information Technology Branch
Hong Kong Police Force

Attendance by invitation : Item IV

Hong Kong Fire Services Department Ambulancemen's Union

Mr NG Siu-ki
Chairman

Mr WAT Ki-on
Vice-Chairman

Clerk in attendance	:	Mrs Sharon TONG Chief Assistant Secretary (2)1
Staff in attendance	:	Mr Raymond LAM Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 5

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I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 11 November 1999 and matters arising
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 749/99-00 and 830/99-00(01))

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 1999 were confirmed.

2. Members noted the list of follow-up actions required of the Administration.

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 841/99-00(01))

3. Members noted that a paper provided by the Administration on the amalgamation of the Air Crewman and Air Crewman Officer grades in the Government Flying Service into a new Air Crewman Officer grade had been issued on 13 January 2000.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 830/99-00(02))

4. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting to be held on 2 March 2000 at 2:30 pm -

(a) Review on Integration of Auxiliary Police with Regular Police; and

(b) Computer-related crime.

Members agreed to invite members of the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting to attend the discussion of item (b).

5. Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed concern about the recent increase in crime rate in respect of soft drugs. Members agreed that the Administration be requested to provide an information paper on the crime rate and detection rate in respect of soft drugs in the past two years as well as measures taken by the enforcement authorities to tackle the crime, especially cross-border crime.

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IV. Review of response time and performance target for emergency ambulance service
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 830/99-00(03) and (04))

Meeting with representatives from the Hong Kong Fire Services Department Ambulancemen's Union (HKFSDAU)

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr WAT Ki-on presented HKFSDAU's further submission tabled at the meeting. He said that although there had been substantial improvement in the facilities of ambulances and paramedic ambulance service in the past 25 years, a good response time of ambulances was also important to the provision of quality emergency ambulance service (EAS). He stressed that many rescue tasks required ambulance crew to work as a team. The conveyance of patients/casualties to the hospital could only be carried out by ambulances. All these could not be performed merely with an ambulance-aid motorcycle. The use of the response time of ambulance-aid motorcycles in addition to the response time of ambulances in calculating the overall response time performance of EAS would not give a clear picture of the actual performance of EAS. He said that the Fire Services Department (FSD) had explicitly indicated its plan of an addition of eight ambulance-aid motorcycles alongside a reduction of three ambulances under its Enhancement of Productivity Programme (EPP) for 2000-01. He expressed concern that although the change would probably result in an improvement in the overall response time performance, the public would suffer from the reduction of three ambulances.

(*Post-meeting note* : The further submission of HKFSDAU was issued to absent members vide LC Paper No. CB(2) 997/99-00(01).)

7. Mr NG Siu-ki said that there had been occasions on which an ambulance-aid motorcycle was despatched from an ambulance station of a district due to a lack of ambulance in the district. As the ambulance had to be despatched from another district, the arrival of the ambulance at the scene would be much later than that of the ambulance-aid motorcycle. He added that there had also been many occasions on which there was no ambulance in a district and the despatch of ambulance had to be deferred until an ambulance had returned to the station some ten minutes later.

Meeting with the Administration

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, Principal Assistant Secretary for Security (PAS(S)) briefed members on the Administration's review of response time and performance target for EAS. He stressed the following points -

(a) the role of ambulance-aid motorcycles was only a supplementary one. An ambulance was always despatched in response to calls for EAS;

(b) about 200 ambulances and 20 ambulance-aid motorcycles were deployed

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for providing EAS on each day. The effect of ambulance-aid motorcycles on the overall response time should therefore be minimal; and

(c) the use of the response time of ambulance-aid motorcycles in addition to the response time of ambulances in calculating the overall response time performance of EAS had been recommended in two consultancy studies conducted in the past. The two studies also confirmed that the use of ambulance-aid motorcycles would facilitate the provision of appropriate treatment to patients at the earliest opportunity.

9. In response to the Chairman, PAS(S) said that the response time of EAS was calculated on the basis of the arrival time of the ambulance or ambulance-aid motorcycle which first arrived at the scene of an incident. The Chairman considered that the arrival time of ambulance-aid motorcycles should not be used in the calculation of the overall response time performance of EAS.

A complaint about EAS

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he had received a complaint on the same day that there was a call at 12:28 pm for EAS to rescue an old man found to be in a coma in Cheung Hang Village. An ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene at 12:38 pm. As no ambulance arrived at the scene, further calls for an ambulance were made at 12:54 pm and 1:05 pm. The ambulance arrived at 1:08 pm and notified the hospital at 1:10 pm to reserve a bed for the resuscitation of a 90-year old man who had no pulse or breath. The ambulance finally arrived at the hospital at 1:18 pm. He said that although the ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene ten minutes after the first call, the ambulance did not arrive until about 40 minutes later. He questioned why the conveyance of the old man concerned to hospital had been delayed for such a long time. He considered that as EAS involved the saving of lives, the 12-minute response time target should apply to ambulance only and ambulance-aid motorcycles should not be included in the calculation of the response time performance. CAO undertook to look into the case and provide a response. He said that he had not received any complaint of a similar nature in the past. He stressed that FSD had pledged to respond to 92.5% of emergency calls within the response time target of 12 minutes, which meant that the remaining 7.5% of emergency calls would probably have a response time longer than 12 minutes due to various reasons. He added that in situations where an ambulance's arrival at a scene was delayed due to traffic congestion, the ambulance-aid motorcycle would be particularly useful in resuscitating the patient.

Adm

(*Post-meeting note* : The Administration's response was issued vide LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 1024/99-00 and CB(2) 1073/9-00 on 8 and 14 February 2000 respectively.)

Role and response time of ambulances and ambulance-aid motorcycles

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11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that most members had thought that the response time of EAS was based on the arrival time of ambulances. Members were not aware that the difference in the time of arrival of an ambulance and an ambulance-aid motorcycle could be as much as 40 minutes. He believed that the public expected the response time target to apply to ambulances only. He considered that FSD should not cut down the number of ambulances if there was an annual increase of 5% in the demand for EAS and some ambulances failed to meet the performance target. PAS(S) responded that as ambulance-aid motorcycles had a role in the resuscitation of patients, their response time should be taken into account in the calculation of overall response time performance.

12. The Chairman asked about the statistics on -

(a) the response time performance of EAS which had not taken into account the response time performance of ambulance-aid motorcycles;

(b) the occasions where no ambulance but an ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene of an incident; and

(c) the occasions where an ambulance and an ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene of an incident.

13. Chief Ambulance Officer (CAO) responded that an ambulance-aid motorcycle would be despatched in the case of a heart attack or casualties which required treatment at the earliest opportunity. When an ambulance-aid motorcycle was despatched to the scene of an incident, an ambulance would also be despatched. The situation under which no ambulance but only an ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene of an incident would not exist. The increase from 13 to 23 ambulance-aid motorcycles was proposed in a consultancy report in 1995. Consultation on the proposal had been made with the former Legislative Council (LegCo). Consultation on the use of response time as the performance indicator of EAS had also been made with the current LegCo in November 1998. He added that ambulances and ambulance-aid motorcycles were both equipped with all life-sustaining equipment. All ambulance-aid motorcycle drivers had received extensive training in resuscitation and skills in handling the sick and the injured independently. Although ambulance-aid motorcycles could not be used for transporting the patient to the hospital, they could provide fast and immediate treatment to patient. This would shorten the treatment time by ambulance when it arrived and enable the patient to be conveyed to the hospital as soon as possible.

14. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that while he was not opposed to the use of ambulance-aid motorcycles as a supplementary aid in rescue, they could not be used for the conveyance of patients to the hospital. He considered that the statistics provided by the Administration could not reflect delays in the conveyance of patients to the hospital. He requested the Administration to seriously look into the suggestion of using the arrival time of ambulances only in calculating the overall response time performance.

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15. Deputy Director of Fire Services (Acting) (DDFS(Atg)) responded that FSD had not maintained separate statistics on the response time performance of ambulances alone. Nevertheless, a survey carried out from 1 to 15 January 2000 revealed that out of 20 100 calls for emergency ambulance service received during the period, there were only 150 calls, which only amounted to 0.7%, in which the ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene within 12 minutes while the ambulance arrived beyond the performance target of 12 minutes. He said that the Administration could compile such statistics for a longer period of time if members so wished.

16. DDFS (Atg) stressed that an ambulance would be mobilized when an ambulance-aid motorcycle was required to attend. The earlier arrival of an ambulance-aid motorcycle during traffic congestion, even only a few minutes before the arrival of the ambulance, could be very important especially in the cases of a heart attack or serious bleeding. In some cases, the driver of the ambulance-aid motorcycle could finish all the preparations for conveyance of the patient to the hospital so that the ambulance could start such conveyance immediately upon its arrival at the scene. He stressed that all the drivers of ambulance-aid motorcycles were very experienced in rescue and resuscitation.

17. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan requested the Administration to keep statistics on the number of cases in which the ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived within the targeted response time of 12 minutes while the ambulance arrived beyond the targeted response time. He considered that the inclusion of the response time performance of ambulance-aid motorcycles in compiling the overall performance would lead to a better overall response time performance for EAS.

18. Mr LAU Kong-wah asked whether frontline ambulancemen had the impression that the statistic cited by DDFS (Atg) where the ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene within 12 minutes while the ambulance arrived beyond the performance target of 12 minutes only amounted to 0.7% of the total number of emergency calls. Mr WAT Ki-on responded that such information was not available as frontline ambulancemen could only have access to the radio channel of the district to which they belonged. He said that his ambulance team had the experience of being despatched from Tsimshatsui East station to Shek Kip Mei while an ambulance-aid motorcycle was despatched from Pat Tin station. The ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene in one minute's time while the ambulance of his team arrived more than 15 minutes later. He added that the previous consultancy reports recommended the deployment of more ambulance-aid motorcycles to overcome the traffic congestion problem. Although the function of ambulance-aid motorcycles could not be denied, they could not replace ambulances. There were a number of rescue tasks which required ambulance crew to work as a team.

19. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that complaints about EAS had been received by the current and the previous legislatures. She expressed doubt about the degree of usefulness of ambulance-aid motorcycles. She considered that there should be separate statistics on the response time performance of ambulances and ambulance-aid motorcycles.

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20. PAS(S) responded that the Administration recognized the supplementary role of ambulance-aid motorcycles. It had no intention to exaggerate the function of ambulance-aid motorcycles. In fact, there were currently 29 ambulance stations but 23 ambulance-aid motorcycles only. The Administration maintained that it was appropriate in principle to include the response time performance of ambulance-aid motorcycles in calculating the overall response time performance of EAS.

Adm DDFS(Atg) agreed to provide separate statistics on the response time performance of ambulances and ambulance-aid motorcycles.

Reduction of three ambulances alongside the addition of eight ambulance-aid motorcycles in 2000-01

21. In response to Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, DDFS(Atg) confirmed that FSD had planned to acquire eight additional ambulance-aid motorcycles with the reduction of three ambulances at the same time in 2000-01.

22. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that the response time performance of ambulances would probably worsen with the reduction of three ambulances if separate statistics were maintained for the response time performance of ambulances. Mr LAU Kong-wah questioned why three ambulances would be reduced despite an increasing population in Hong Kong. He considered that it would be a very serious issue if the addition of eight ambulance-aid motorcycles alongside the reduction of three ambulances was planned solely for an improvement in the overall response time performance.

23. PAS(S) responded that the addition of eight ambulance-aid motorcycles alongside the reduction of three ambulances was not solely for the purpose of improving the overall response time performance. The improvement in response time performance was due to a number of improvements made by FSD, including the strategic redeployment and distribution of ambulances, the construction of more ambulance stations and increases of 10, 19 and 22 ambulance shifts in 1997, 1998 and 1999 respectively. He said that the reduction of three ambulances alongside the addition of eight ambulance-aid motorcycles was only a redeployment of resources to provide the best possible service to the public under existing resources. DDFS (Atg) added that an increase in the number of ambulancemen from 1 800 plus in 1996 to about 2 200 in 1999, the strengthening of management control, and the strategic redeployment and distribution of ambulances had all contributed to a better performance in response time.

24. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that it was clearly stated in an internal paper prepared by FSD on the EPP for 2000-01 that the addition of eight ambulance-aid motorcycles alongside the reduction of three ambulances was for an improvement in the response time performance.

Way forward

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25. At the suggestion of Miss CHAN Yuen-han, members agreed to form a subcommittee to examine in detail issues relating to EAS.

Adm

26. The Chairman requested the Administration to -

(a) consider deferring the reduction of three ambulances alongside the addition of eight ambulance-aid motorcycles; and

(b) provide statistics on the number of occasions on which the ambulance-aid motorcycle arrived at the scene within 12 minutes while the ambulance arrived beyond the performance target of 12 minutes for the months of December 1999, January and February 2000.

Mr Andrew CHENG suggested that the Administration should also provide information on the average time spent on conveyance of patients to hospitals. The Chairman stated that the Department would not have information on time spent on conveyance of patient to hospitals as it was not a performance indicator of EAS.

V. Proposed creation of a Chief Chemist Post in the Government Laboratory
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 830/99-00(05))

27. At the invitation of the Chairman, Principal Assistant Secretary for Security presented the Administration's paper on the proposed creation of a Chief Chemist post in the Government Laboratory. She highlighted the following points -

(a) the combined effect of the creation of a permanent Chief Chemist post and the deletion of two permanent Chemist posts would result in a net saving of $106,800 per annum;

(b) the proposal would remove an operational bottleneck and improve service quality; and

(c) while the computerization of operations had solved some of the operational problems, a Chief Chemist was needed for the Drugs and Texicology Group to vet, verify and interpret findings and decide on the need for further investigations.

28. Members made no comments or queries on the proposal.

VI. Replacement of the Criminal Intelligence Computer System and Enhanced Police Operational Nominal Index Computer System of Hong Kong Police Force
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 830/99-00(06))

29. Members noted the brief notes tabled at the meeting on the replacement of the

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Enhanced Police Operational Nominal Index Computer System (EPONICS) and Criminal Intelligence Computer System (CICS) of Hong Kong Police Force (the Force).

(*Post-meeting note* : The brief notes tabled were issued to absent members vide LC Paper No. CB(2) 997/99-00(02) on 1 February 2000.)

30. Mr Andrew CHENG asked about how CICS and EPONICS compared with similar systems in other countries. Assistant Commissioner of Police (Information Systems) (ACP(IS)) responded that CICS and EPONICS compared favourably with similar systems in other countries. The existing systems were starting to age in terms of their functionality, speed, inability to process Chinese text and lack of connectivity with other systems.

31. Referring to paragraph 15 (e) of the Administration's paper, Mr Andrew CHENG asked how intelligence analysis would be carried out by the systems. Chief Superintendent of Police (Crime Headquarters) (CSP(CH)) explained that data collected would be analyzed by the new system and graded according to their intelligence value. With the analyzed results, the Force would be able to identify the time and location where most crimes occurred, the weapon used and the bank involved. The Force could then mobilize police officers to combat such crime. Officers of the Crime Prevention Bureau of the Force could also provide suggestions to the banks concerned on methods to strengthen security. He added that the existing systems were text-based and not user friendly. They were not able to accept and process Chinese text or handle graphical data such as maps which were very useful for Police operations. The new systems would have sufficient processing power and capacity to enable direct data updating by users.

32. In response to Mr Andrew CHENG's question on the reliability of analyses produced by the new systems, CSP(CH) said that the reliability of different analyses would usually be different. Although no analysis would be 100% reliable, the analyzed information would enable the Force to better utilize its resources in combating crimes.

33. Referring to paragraph 16 of the Administration's paper, the Chairman asked about the basis for estimation of the total cost of $66.17 million for CICS and EPONICS. He asked whether the estimations were based on initial quotations or the cost of comparable systems in other countries. ACP(IS) responded that the method of costing adopted was highly scientific, having regard to the nature of the task and manpower needed. A process known as function point analysis, which involved breaking down the project into components, had been adopted. As regards the costs of hardware and software, the figures represented the best estimates based on the current prices of the commodities in the market. Requirements such as machine requirement and functions required were identified. Accepted international standards were used for costing.

34. Mr LAU Kong-wah said that the systems were needed from a security point of

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view. However, the Administration should provide more detailed breakdown of the major figures provided, such as that for "data conversion services". The Chairman shared the same view. ACP(IS) undertook to provide the detailed breakdown of the major figures provided.

Adm

35. The Chairman concluded that subject to the provision of the detailed breakdown of major figures, members supported the proposal in principle.

VII. New Command and Control Communication System for Operations Wing of Hong Kong Police Force

(LC Paper No. CB(2) 830/99-00(07))

36. Members noted the brief notes tabled at the meeting on the third generation Command and Control System.

(*Post-meeting note* : The brief notes tabled were issued to absent members vide LC Paper No. CB(2) 997/99-00(03).)

37. Members noted the Administration's paper on its plan to acquire a new command and control communications system to replace the ones currently used by front-line officers of the Operations Department of the Police.

38. The Chairman asked the Administration to provide a breakdown of the estimated cost of $360 million for subscriber radios with data encryption capability. Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (Operations) (SACP) responded that the estimate was based on a total of 12 000 subscriber radios at $30,000 each. The 12 000 radios would be allocated to beat officers, officers of the Traffic Branch, Police Tactical Unit and Emergency Unit. He added that the cost of a beat radio for the second generation command and communication control system, which deployed analogue technology, was also in the region of $30,000.

39. The Chairman considered that the cost of $30,000 for a radio unit was rather expensive. The use of the price of a beat radio for the existing system for comparison might not be appropriate, as there might have been less competition in the past. He said that to his knowledge, there had been a substantial decrease in the price of mobile phones over the past few years. SACP responded that the new subscriber radios differed from ordinary mobile phones in that they could function as a radio and a mobile phone. They also featured data encryption technology. There were also stringent requirements on the reliability and durability of the radio units. He added that the estimated cost of $30,000 per radio unit was based on the actual price of similar units procured for the Marine Police three months ago. Chief Telecommunications Engineer (CTE) said that public tender for similar radio units for the Marine Police was invited in April 1999. According to the bids received from six international manufacturers, the price of a radio unit without data encryption capability ranged from $20,000 to $40,000. The median cost of $30,000 was adopted for estimating the cost of a radio unit with data encryption capability and accessories

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including three pieces of batteries. He informed members that the cost estimates in respect of items (a), (b) and (c) were also based on bids for the same tender. SACP added that the cost for the second generation command and communication control system, which involved a smaller number of radio units and much inferior capability, was already $450 million in 1987.

40. In response to the Chairman, CTE said that the estimated cost for items (f), (g) and (h) of paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper included the cost for both hardware and software. The cost of $66.5 million for the Automated Vehicle Location System and the Geographical Information System included the cost for 500 portable computers and the costs for hardware as well as software.

Adm

41. At the request of the Chairman, SACP undertook to provide more detailed breakdown of major figures. He informed members that the Administration planned to submit the proposal to the Finance Committee in early March this year.

42. The Chairman concluded that subject to the provision of the detailed breakdown of major figures, members supported the proposal in principle from the security point of view.

43. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:35 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
3 March 2000