

Inter-departmental counter-terrorism exercise successfully concluded

The first inter-departmental counter-terrorism exercise organised by the Inter-departmental Counter Terrorism Unit (ICTU) set up by the Security Bureau was held today (March 25) at Lei Yue Mun Park. The exercise, codenamed "Powersky", simulated an operation against a terrorist cell which was plotting an attack in Hong Kong using homemade explosives.

The primary objectives of the exercise were to enhance the co-ordination amongst various departments on counter-terrorism intelligence and response, and to heighten counter-terrorism awareness of the public.

Speaking to the media before the exercise started, the Under Secretary for Security, Mr Sonny Au, said that the ICTU was set up in April last year, with members from six disciplined services, namely the Hong Kong Police Force, the Immigration Department, the Customs and Excise Department, the Correctional Services Department, the Fire Services Department and the Government Flying Service.

He said that the ICTU is dedicated to monitoring the global terrorism situation trends and counter-terrorism measures, enhancing co-ordination and analysis of counter-terrorism intelligence, reviewing and improving counter-terrorism strategies in Hong Kong, developing specialised counter-terrorism training and improving various emergency response plans, and providing advice related to counter-terrorism to the Secretary for Security. The ICTU provides an inter-departmental counter-terrorism platform on top of the existing counter-terrorism framework to enhance Hong Kong's overall counter-terrorism deployment through enhancing the co-ordination among departments, and achieving synergy in various aspects such as counter-terrorism intelligence, emergency response and training.

The "Powersky" exercise was an intelligence-led operation exercise, involving about 270 officers from the six member departments. The exercise had three phases. The first two phases, focusing on intelligence development of the case, had just completed. The intelligence developed by the ICTU led to the third phase, which was a field exercise. Upon collating and analysing the intelligence, the ICTU confirmed the terrorist cell's intention to plot a bomb attack and located the hideout of the terrorists. The ICTU co-ordinated various operational units to mount an operation to smash the terrorist plot against Hong Kong.

The scenarios of the exercise included officers of the Customs and Excise Department conducting an examination on a freight vehicle with a mobile X-ray vehicle scanning system and an explosive detector dog to detect precursor chemicals for making explosives; the Special Duties Unit raiding a terrorist cell with the aerial support of the Government Flying Service; the Counter Terrorism Response Unit neutralising terrorists; the Explosive

Ordnance Disposal Bureau diffusing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear leakage; the Organised Crime and Triad Bureau and the Immigration Department's Counter Terrorism Operations Section conducting scene investigation; and the Hazmat Team of the Fire Services Department carrying out decontamination procedures for infected persons.

A spokesman for the Security Bureau said, "The 'Powersky' exercise concluded successfully. The Government will assess the outcome of the exercise with a view to enhancing law enforcement officers' counter-terrorism preparedness and responsiveness in handling counter-terrorism intelligence and incidents."