

LCQ21: Details of flight missions by Government Flying Service

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (October 21):

Question:

At about 7.00am on August 23 this year, 12 Hong Kong people boarded a vessel at Po Toi O Pier, Sai Kung to leave the territory by sea. The vessel was intercepted by officers of the Mainland coast guard after it had entered Mainland waters, and the 12 people were put under criminal detention. It has been reported that a fixed-wing aircraft (Registration: B-LVB; Model: Bombardier Challenger 605) of the Government Flying Service (GFS) set off from Chek Lap Kok at 4.19am on that day and flew to the Sai Kung area. After hovering in the air above Po Toi O for about three hours from 4.30am, the aircraft flew to the south-easterly waters at 7.30am. Some members of the public have suspected that the flight operation was related to the covert monitoring conducted by the Hong Kong Police Force on the activities of the aforesaid people. In response to the relevant media enquiries, GFS indicated that it would not make public the details of the operation. However, in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on November 6 last year, the Government had provided, upon request, information about the flight operations conducted by GFS. In this connection, will the Government, according to the precedent, provide this Council with the following information about the aforesaid flight operation:

- (i) the government department(s) that requested for the deployment of the aircraft,
- (ii) the date and time when GFS received the request,
- (iii) whether the operation was of a routine or an emergency nature,
- (iv) the number of members on board, the government department(s) and rank(s) to which they belonged, as well as the duties assigned to them,
- (v) the nature of the duties (e.g. search, rescue and tracking) performed by the members on board in the air above Po Toi O, as well as the details, and
- (vi) the nature of the duties (e.g. search, rescue and tracking) performed by the members on board in the air above the south-easterly waters after they had left the air above Po Toi O, as well as the details;

if it cannot provide such information, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

According to the Government Flying Service Ordinance (Cap 322), the statutory functions of the Government Flying Service include conducting

search, fighting fires, supporting law enforcement agencies in carrying out their law enforcement duties, etc. In line with the established practice, daily aircraft deployment and navigation details involved in flight missions will not be disclosed to prevent criminals from acquiring information of value to them that would affect the effectiveness of department operations.

We may provide aggregate information on the total number of flights and total number of flying hours over a long period. For example, in responding to the question on November 6 last year, we provided aggregate information on the respective and total number of flights for the areas of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories, as well as the number of flights covering more than one of the above flight areas for the period of June to October 2019.