

LCQ7: Manpower of the Police for tackling technology crimes

Following is a question by the Hon Duncan Chiu and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, in the Legislative Council today (July 17):

Question:

In order to combat increasingly sophisticated technology crimes more effectively and maintain a safe cyberspace for Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) upgraded its Technology Crime Division in 2015 to the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau (CSTCB). There are four sub-divisions under the CSTCB, namely, the Technology Crime Division, the Cyber Security Division, the Cyber Intelligence Division as well as the Forensics and Training Division. In 2023-2024, the establishment of police officers in the CSTCB increased to 395. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective staffing establishments and strength of the four sub-divisions under the CSTCB, with a breakdown by employment modes (i.e. civil servants and various types of contract) and posts; of the respective numbers of staff in the strength with professional backgrounds such as technology and finance;
- (2) of the average wastage of the CSTCB staff in each of the past three years and the respective key positions involved;
- (3) of the respective ratios of vacancies filled by the CSTCB through internal redeployment and open recruitment in the past three years; whether it will consider increasing the ratio of open recruitment to attract more professionals in the community with relevant knowledge such as technology and finance to join the CSTCB;
- (4) whether the HKPF has encountered difficulties in conducting recruitment exercises for the CSTCB; if so, of the details (including the posts involved and the reasons for the recruitment difficulties), and of the specific corresponding measures adopted by the HKPF and the effectiveness of such measures; and
- (5) whether it has studied in depth if the remuneration packages of officers of various ranks in the CSTCB (in particular those posts requiring professional backgrounds such as technology and finance) are attractive and competitive; if it has, of the findings of the study; the specific measures in place (including whether it will consider adjusting the remuneration packages of the relevant staff) to enhance the attractiveness of the posts in the CSTCB?

Reply:

President,

The Security Bureau (SB) and the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) are committed to combatting crimes. To further prevent the occurrence of technology crimes and strengthen the capability in handling cybersecurity incidents, the HKPF established the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau (CSTCB) in January 2015. Specifically tasked with computer forensic examinations and prevention of technology crimes, the CSTCB also establishes close liaison with local and overseas law enforcement agencies for combatting cross-border technology crimes and exchanging intelligence. The CSTCB recruits officers through the HKPF's centralised open recruitment and does not conduct open recruitment exercises on its own. Its manpower is mainly provided by internal redeployment within the HKPF or through various measures including extension of service and the Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme. Since its inception, the establishment of police officers in the CSTCB has been increasing to tackle the challenges brought by technology crimes.

In consultation with the HKPF, our consolidated reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1), (3) and (4) The establishment of police officers in the CSTCB has gradually increased from 180 at its inception in 2015 to 395 in the 2023-24 financial year, and is expected to reach 403 by the 2024-25 financial year. A breakdown by position is tabulated below:

Breakdown of the establishment of police officers in the CSTCB by position in the 2024-25 financial year	
Rank	Strength
Gazetted officer (Note 1)	7
Inspectorate officer	58
Rank and File	338
Total	403

Note 1: Gazetted officers are officers of the rank of superintendent or above.

The HKPF is unable to disclose other figures mentioned in the question as it may affect the Police's deployments and operational efficacy.

As mentioned above, the CSTCB recruits officers through the HKPF's centralised open recruitment. It does not conduct open recruitment exercises on its own and its manpower is mainly provided by internal redeployment within the HKPF. When vacancies arise, they will be filled up by internal redeployment or through measures such as extension of service. As for the recruitment of police officers in general, the HKPF has adopted a proactive

recruitment strategy and launched a series of recruitment and publicity campaigns, with a view to attracting high calibre candidates who possess the competences required of a police officer.

The CSTCB has also formulated detailed human resources and strategic plans to strengthen its efforts on staff training and career development. Serving and newly redeployed police officers of the CSTCB receive regular professional training on technology crime investigation, digital forensics and cyber intelligence gathering. In addition, officers of the CSTCB regularly attend the Financial Investigation Course and the Professional Certificate for Commercial Crime Investigation Course provided by the Financial Intelligence and Investigation Bureau and the Commercial Crime Bureau respectively. Therefore, all CSTCB officers possess professional knowledge relating to technology and finance.

To enhance the professional knowledge and operational efficacy of its officers, the CSTCB has set up various advisory panels comprising experts in the relevant fields, with the aim of integrating the professional knowledge and different perspectives of experts and leaders. In particular, the Cybercrime Policing Advisory Panel (CPAP) of the CSTCB, comprising 12 panel members who are experts and leaders from various sectors such as the information technology sector, was set up in December 2022. The CPAP assists the Police in formulating strategic directions in order to strengthen the Police's digital policing capabilities in coping with technology crimes.

Furthermore, the CSTCB took the lead in setting up the Cyber Security Action Task Force in March 2023. The Task Force brings together the expertise of renowned local and overseas cyber security companies. Through the exchange of cyber intelligence and the sharing of professional knowledge, it further enhances Hong Kong's capability in coping with cyber threats. The CSTCB has also been reviewing the latest technological developments worldwide. Appropriate equipment will be introduced in a timely manner based on actual needs to further enhance the operational efficacy of its officers.

The HKPF will continue to keep in view its manpower needs and put in place an effective mechanism to plan and assess its overall and future manpower situation. The establishment of police officers will be regularly reviewed to meet the community's demand for the Police's service.

(2) The HKPF does not maintain statistics on the wastage of police officers in individual formations. That said, based on the situation of officers in the CSTCB in the past few years, it is roughly estimated that the attrition rate of the CSTCB officers is broadly similar to that of the HKPF as a whole.

(5) In October 2018, the Chief Executive in Council conducted a grade structure review for the disciplined services (GSR), and decided that it would be conducted once every 10 years in future to ensure that the grade structure and remuneration packages of the disciplined services can effectively attract and retain talents.

Various recommendations were made in the GSR conducted in 2018, covering

matters relating to overall remuneration, starting salaries and conditions of service as well as the new functional requirements of the Police. The recommendations on salary and increment were approved by the Financial Committee of the Legislative Council and came into effect on September 1, 2021. The Government will review the remuneration packages of the HKPF and other disciplined services as appropriate in accordance with the existing mechanism.

Furthermore, the HKPF attaches great importance to the remuneration and welfare of police officers. Depending on their job nature, officers of respective ranks are eligible for various special allowances. For instance, officers performing regular and frequent detective duties (including officers of the CSTCB) will receive detective allowance.

The SB and the HKPF will continue to co-ordinate resources in an effective manner, and further heighten the public's vigilance in order to combat technology crimes and rise to the challenges brought by cyber security and technology crimes.