

Asia's finest lead the region into era of e-policing

HONG KONG POLICE FORCE

The crime statistics over the past decade are testament to Hong Kong's status as one of the safest cities in the world. The five-year comparison before and after the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is dramatic. Overall crime was down 13.9%; violent crime, down 15.2%; rape, down 10%; burglary, down 30%; murder, down 22.7%; robbery, down 47.2%; and robbery with firearms, down 57.9%.

The trend runs contrary to speculation before the 1997 transition that Hong Kong's crime situation would deteriorate following reunification with the Mainland. More importantly, it demonstrates the significant achievements of the Hong Kong Police Force in preserving Hong Kong's unique low crime rate and good public order against a backdrop of increasing border traffic and fast growing international crime. In fact this is reflected in a Political and Economic Risk Consultancy survey, released in November 2003, which found that Hong Kong was rated the safest and most stable place among 14 countries and places polled in Asia Pacific.

But the police are not resting on their laurels. They are aware that local crime can have global implications. The tragic smuggling case in which 58 men and women died inside a container truck in June 2000 in Dover, England, was just the tip of the iceberg showing the world how crime could easily cross national or regional jurisdictions.

"If crime crosses all borders, so must law enforcement," United Nations Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan said at the signing conference for the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. "If the rule of law is undermined not only in one country, but in many, then those who defend it cannot limit themselves to purely national means. If the enemies of human rights seek to exploit the openness and opportunities of globalisation for their purposes, then we must exploit those very same factors to defend human rights, and defeat the forces of crime, corruption, and trafficking in human beings."

With the same global vision, Hong Kong Police's drive for stronger international co-operation to combat the scourge of transnational crime by hosting the first multinational crime conference was met with overwhelming support from law enforcement agencies all over the world. The conference, entitled "Bridging the Gap – a Global Alliance Perspective on Transnational Organized Crime", was attended by over 500 delegates from 41 jurisdictions and international agencies in Hong Kong in March 2002.

*Opening Ceremony
of the Transnational
Organized Crime
Conference.*



Communications network wins world recognition

The Hong Kong Police Force is recognised internationally not only for its active role in fighting transnational crime, but also for its constant search for better technology and equipment to improve its preparedness to respond to any situation.

Hong Kong's Marine Police was the first law enforcement agency in Asia to adopt the Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) system, with the voice and location sub-systems completed in 2003, followed by the crime and security department's sub-system by the first quarter of 2004.

Senior Superintendent, Marine Region, Mr Alfred Wong Sui-fat, said the TETRA system handled much more than voice transmission. "We manage to make use of the TETRA wireless radio network to transmit data through the Internet Protocol (IP) so that our system can handle both data and voice transmission."

The innovative application of IP in the Marine Region Communications System (MRCS), which is believed to be the most advanced automatic vessel location and messaging system in the world, helped Hong Kong Police beat off five other strong competitors, including the police forces of Western Australia and the United Kingdom, to win the "Most Innovative TETRA Service Award" at the TETRA World Congress 2001 held in Nice, France.

"The implementation of the system marks an important step forward in the Hong Kong Police Force's march into the e-policing era," explained Senior Telecom Engineer Mr Ronald Chan.

"TETRA is an open standard allowing us to use equipment from more than one vendor. It also has the advantages of interoperability and better spectrum efficiency," Mr Chan said.

Communication between operation control and the launches can now be transmitted in word documents and photographic images up to 50k bytes via the wireless network. It is a big leap forward from the previous analogue voice-only system.

Mr Wong added that the system had greatly enhanced the efficiency of Hong Kong Police. With 46 assigned talk-groups, signal interruptions and jams among different channels are avoided.

"We are more efficient in deploying resources. It only takes seconds now to deploy launches close to an incident; and instead of describing the incident and subject vessels in words, information and photographs can be exchanged immediately. This is crucial to the speedy handling of emergencies," Mr Wong said.

TETRA to unify police services

The Hong Kong Police Force is the first police force in Asia to implement the TETRA system. It has led to many experience-sharing visits to Hong Kong by other advanced countries like Australia. Beijing Police, preparing for the demanding security services needed for the Olympic Games in 2008, also adopted the system in 2003.

Senior Telecom Engineer Mr Jolly Wong Chun-kau receives the TETRA award on behalf of Hong Kong Police from Sir Ranulph Fiennes.



A Marine Police officer uses the TETRA system to communicate with Marine launches.

The successful application of the system in the Marine Police operations paves the way for the TETRA network to be extended to other formations within the force. This is scheduled to happen at the end of 2004, when the land element joins the network; the TETRA framework will become a vital part of the Third Generation Command and Control system. This will eventually unify Hong Kong's public security services under one structure, linking Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, and bringing in other operational departments such as Fire Services and the Government Flying Service.



The TETRA system has greatly increased efficiency.

Hong Kong Police keeps lid on crime rate

Equipped with modern technology, Hong Kong Police is confident it can meet the challenges ahead. Equally it is keen to foster a spirit of partnership in the community. Its outstanding achievements in fight crime publicity campaigns are recognised in the many international awards it has won. Take year 2002 as an example. The force's public relations efforts with its community partners attracted international accolades at the 2002 Asia-Pacific Public Relations Week Awards, a Gold World Medal at the 2002 New York Festivals, and a Gold Award at the Quester Award 2002 in New York City.

The force's hard work has paid off. Hong Kong's overall crime rate in 2001 was 1,086 per 100,000 head of population. This is one of the lowest in the world and compares favourably with other major cities of a similar size.

Force gains public support

The force is quietly winning the hearts and minds of the people of Hong Kong. This is evident in the findings of a number of surveys conducted by independent researchers.

The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups surveyed 2,013 people aged 15 and over in August and September 2002. The poll showed that the respondents in general gave the force a mark of 7.2 out of a possible 10 in terms of their trust in the organisation. This was the highest mark achieved by any of the organisations covered in the survey.

A Gallup International survey, the Voice of the People, showed that, among the 17 institutions identified in the poll, Hong Kong's health system and the Police Force were the top two institutions in which the Hong Kong people had a strong trust.

The poll, conducted in July and August 2002, found that 68% of the Hong Kong population believed that the police operated in the best interests of society, far higher than the global average of 20%.

Another survey conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Education, in which over 1,200 secondary seven students in Hong Kong were interviewed, ranked the police the fourth most respectable out of the 20 selected professions.

Built on this solid foundation, Hong Kong Police is committed to continuous improvement and to being a more professional, modern and caring force.