THE POLICE

The Hong Kong Police Force has distinguished itself as one of the oldest, yet most modern, police forces in the world.

Formed in 1844, the Force evolved from an extremely broad-based role, embracing such matters as firefighting, prisons and immigration, to that of a traditional police service. As at April 30, 2020, the Force has a strength of 28,818, of which 17.8 per cent are female officers. It also has 4,289 civilian staff.

The Hong Kong Auxiliary Police Force (HKAPF) was originally formed in 1914 as a reserve to assist in times of natural disaster or civil emergency. As at April 30, 2020, the HKAPF comprises 2,909 volunteer citizens. The role of the Auxiliary Police has changed over time to keep pace with the changing environment. It is now a trained manpower reserve in support of the regular Force and is deployed in accordance with prevailing operational priorities as determined by the Commissioner of Police.

The Police operate within the traditional constabulary concept of preserving life and property, preventing and detecting crime and keeping the peace, with a strong emphasis on enlisting community support.

Structure: The Force is commanded by the Commissioner of Police who is assisted by three Deputy Commissioners.

One Deputy Commissioner supervises all operational matters and one is responsible for the direction and co-ordination of the management of the Force, including personnel, training and management services. The third one is tasked with safeguarding national security.

The Force Headquarters is made up of six departments: Operations; Crime and Security; Personnel and Training; Management Services; Finance, Administration and Planning; and National Security. For day-to-day policing, the Force is organised into six Regions: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon East, Kowloon West, New Territories North, New Territories South and Marine. The Regions are largely autonomous in their day-to-day operation and management matters, and each has its own headquarters which comprises administration and operations wings, and traffic and criminal investigation units. Each Region is divided into Districts and Divisions and in a few cases, Sub-divisions. Currently there are 24 Districts.

The policing of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the main towns of the New Territories follows a similar pattern.

Responsibility for law and order on the railway system, which runs through several Police Districts, is vested in the Railway District.

The Marine Police, with a fleet of 104 police crafts, patrols some 1,648 km² of waters within Hong Kong and 261 outlying islands. By adopting technologically advanced coastal security and radar systems and deploying high performance crafts, the Marine Police delivers effective and high quality services to the whole seafaring community in the territory. The Marine Police is also responsible for maintaining law and order within Hong Kong waters, including interdicting illegal immigration and cracking down on smuggling activities, conducting search and rescue operations, and engaging the seafaring community to enhance sea safety. The Marine Police also assists the Director of Marine in conducting security audits for the 35 International Shipping and Port Security facilities to effectively respond to terrorism or major maritime incidents. The Police fleet is currently undergoing a $3 billion-worth of modernisation programme that includes the adoption of a common situational awareness platform to enhance co-ordination.

Operations: Force operational matters are co-ordinated by the Operations Department, which comprises Operations Wing, Support Wing and six Regions. The department is charged with the formulation and implementation of operational policies, the monitoring of activities and the efficient deployment of personnel and resources.

Operations Wing co-ordinates counter-terrorism, internal security, anti-illegal immigration measures, bomb disposal operations, major public order events and contingency planning for major incidents and is also responsible for the Police Dog Unit.

The Police Tactical Unit (PTU) currently has an establishment of seven established companies (1,190 officers) and two training companies (340 officers). It provides an immediate manpower reserve for use in any emergency. PTU companies may also join other anti-riot and Crime Units to form Regional Response Contingents to provide rapid and effective response to public disorder situations. PTU companies are normally deployed to all land Regions and are available for internal security, crowd safety management, anti-crime operations and disaster response duties throughout Hong Kong. The PTU Headquarters is also the authority for providing training in internal security and crowd safety management within the Force.

The Anti-Illegal Immigration Control Centre is responsible for collecting intelligence and monitoring operations in respect of illegal immigrants mainly from the Mainland, Vietnam and South Asian countries.
Support Wing oversees the Support Branch, Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB) and Traffic Branch Headquarters (TBHQ).

The Support Branch is responsible for the formulation and execution of policies in relation to operational support and occupational safety and health for both the regular and auxiliary Forces. It is also responsible for various licensing functions of the Force and offering assistance to other relevant licensing authorities. Moreover, management of the Force fleet of some 2,500 vehicles and the driver cadre are also under its purview.

The PPRB plays an important role in enlisting public support in maintaining law and order by engaging the community and working in partnership with the media to foster good relations with all sections of the community. Information about police activities is disseminated to local and overseas media round the clock.

The TBHQ is responsible for formulating Force priorities, policies and procedures on traffic matters, co-ordinating their implementation and monitoring their effects. It processes all traffic prosecutions and collects and maintains traffic-related data. The TBHQ offers advice on traffic management matters and monitors local traffic schemes. It also formulates, supports and monitors road safety educational and enforcement programmes.

In the six Regions, day-to-day regional police operations are co-ordinated at the four regional command and control centres which are computer-assisted. They serve as information centres, monitoring all events in the Regions and keeping Police Headquarters and other Government departments informed, and provide additional resources and specialist services when required. Regular patrols are carried out by Uniform Branch beat constables and vehicles of the Emergency Units. Response time in emergencies is kept to an absolute minimum by means of a beat radio system which enables close contact with regional controllers and all patrol officers.

Regional traffic units are responsible for road accident investigation, publicity on road safety and day-to-day traffic enforcement. The Traffic Warden Corps assists in enforcing laws relating to parking offences and idling vehicle engines as well as in regulating traffic.

Crime and Security: The Crime and Security Department is responsible for Force policies regarding the prevention and investigation of crimes and security matters. The Crime Wing consists of a number of operational bureaux and specialised support units. The operational bureaux deal with specific areas of criminal activities, whereas the specialised support units provide support services to various operational units in the Force and handle policy matters on issues including child abuse, domestic violence and witness protection. The Security Wing provides VIP protection, liaises with consulates and co-ordinates security operations, including counter-terrorism and related training.

The Organized Crime and Triad Bureau (OCTB) co-ordinates Force-wide resources in combating serious crimes such as human smuggling and trafficking in persons, syndicated vice, loan-sharking and unlawful debt collection, illegal bookmaking, firearms and explosives-related crimes as well as major public disorder situations, major disasters and terrorist attacks. It also investigates and targets all activities and crimes related to triad groups.

The Criminal Intelligence Bureau (CIB) is the Force’s central co-ordinating body for criminal intelligence. It works closely with the OCTB and other Crime Wing bureaux and provides support to Police Formations in targeting triads and organised crimes. To strengthen the criminal intelligence capability within the Force, the CIB also organises relevant training for frontline investigators.

The Commercial Crime Bureau investigates serious commercial and financial crimes, forgery of monetary instruments, identity documents, payment cards, currencies and coins. It collaborates closely with the Mainland and international law enforcement agencies on the exchange of intelligence and investigation requests in relation to relevant cross-jurisdictional crimes. It also adopts a strategic approach by engaging different sectors of the community through the enhanced use of social media and multi-agency co-operations on scam prevention initiatives. To step up combat actions against deception and raise public awareness of various scams, the Anti-Deception Coordination Centre was set up in July 2017 to provide round-the-clock instant advisory services for the general public. Furthermore, the Fraud and Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce was established in collaboration with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Hong Kong Association of Banks and a number of local banks to enhance detection, prevention and disruption of serious financial crimes and money laundering threats in Hong Kong through regular meetings and intelligence exchange.

Acknowledging the rapid growth of technology crimes and cyber security incidents in recent years, the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau (CSTCB) was established in January 2015 to strengthen the Force’s capabilities in key areas including operations, digital forensics, training, intelligence and research to effectively combat technology crimes and safeguard the cyber security of Hong Kong. The Cyber Security Centre under the CSTCB provides round-the-clock cyber security protection for critical infrastructures in the sectors of government, banking and finance, transportation, communications and public utilities.

The Narcotics Bureau (NB) investigates and gathers intelligence in relation to serious drug cases such as trafficking in and manufacture of illicit drugs. It also works in close partnership with overseas law enforcement agencies in a bid to combat international drug trafficking activities involving Hong Kong. The NB’s Joint Financial Intelligence Unit conducts financial investigations on reports about suspicious financial activities under the Drug Trafficking (Recovery of Proceeds) Ordinance, the Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance and the United Nations (Anti-Terrorism Measures) Ordinance. Echoing the Financial Action Task Force requirements, the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment

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Unit was formally established in the Bureau in April 2014 to conduct risk assessment on money laundering and terrorist financing.

The Liaison Bureau (LB) co-ordinates police-related inquiries from overseas law enforcement units and local consulates. It also maintains close liaison with the Mainland Public Security authorities, Police Liaison Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, Macau Police and Taiwan Police. The LB represents the Force as a Sub-Bureau of the National Central Bureau, China, in the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The LB also handles requests from overseas jurisdictions for mutual legal assistance and arrest and surrender of fugitives.

The Crime Support Group consists of specialised units which provide technical and professional services to support criminal investigation. These units include the Criminal Records Bureau, the Identification Bureau, the Forensic Firearms Examination Division, the Major Incident Investigation and Disaster Support System Unit, the Witness Protection Unit and the Family Conflict and Sexual Violence Policy Unit. In addition, the Crime Prevention Bureau provides security advisory services to the Government, the private sector and the general public. It promotes crime prevention initiatives through both conventional and social media. It also conducts crime prevention seminars, and closely liaises with the security industry and other stakeholders. The Crime Support Group also represents the Force in liaising with the Forensic Pathology Service of the Department of Health and the Forensic Science Division of the Government Laboratory.

The Crime Statistics Office under the Crime Wing Headquarters is responsible for collating and analysing crime statistics, and distributing relevant information to frontline and Headquarters units for their monitoring of the overall and specific crime trends and formulation of corresponding crime prevention strategies. In addition, the Crime Wing Headquarters also works closely with other bodies like the Legislative Council and the Security Bureau in formulating related policies and responding to relevant queries.

Personnel and Training: The Personnel Wing (P Wing) is responsible for all core human resources management functions, including recruitment, promotion, career development, conditions of service, discipline, staff relations and welfare matters.

People are the most valuable asset of the Force. To attract candidates of a high caliber to join the Force, the Recruitment Division of P Wing organises recruitment and publicity events of different nature, which include the Education & Careers Expo, Police Recruitment Days and careers talks.

The Recruitment Division launches different youth engagement projects, such as the Police Mentorship Programme and the Auxiliary Undergraduate Scheme to provide young people with the opportunity to meet serving police officers and understand the diversified nature of police work. The Recruitment Division also launches the Police Mentorship Programme (Outreach) to inspire high caliber Hong Kong students with global vision, who are studying or graduated from the Mainland/overseas tertiary institutions, to join the Force.

The Recruitment Division also makes use of the electronic platforms and the social media to disseminate recruitment messages to wider community, including the Mainland/Overseas Students’ Corner on the recruitment homepage, which aims at attracting qualified people graduated on the Mainland and overseas and facilitating their applications.

In addition, the Recruitment Division launches the Non-ethnic Chinese (NEC) Referral System, which refers NEC applicants who have yet to pass the recruitment selection process to join the engagement programmes organised by different Police Districts. It aims at better equipping the applicants for joining the Force by enhancing their confidence and competency.

The P Wing is at the forefront in the promotion of a healthy and a caring culture both within and beyond the Force. In 2020, the Force was awarded the 15 Years Plus Caring Organisation Logo from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in recognition of its on-going commitment in caring for its employees, the community and the environment, and thereby demonstrating good corporate social responsibility.

With regards to community work, the Hong Kong Police Volunteer Services Corps once again received the Gold Award for Volunteer Service (Organisations) and the Award of 10 000 Hours for Volunteer Service from the Social Welfare Department for the contributions of its volunteer teams. Currently, there are 33 police volunteer teams with over 5 000 members.

The Hong Kong Police College (HKPC) comprises headquarters and three schools, namely the School of Foundation Training, the School of Professional Development and the School of Specialised Learning.

The School of Foundation Training provides a wide range of training from basic recruit training to professional training, which meets frontline operational needs. With robust and comprehensive Quality Assurance Mechanism, 10 training programmes in the HKPC have been accredited under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF), with the highest at QF level 6, which is equivalent to a Master Degree. Starting from January 2020, HKPC has reached a new height in the Vocational and Professional Education and Training sector by becoming the first non-tertiary education institution and government department with Programme Area Accreditation status to operate QF recognised learning programmes in the Programme Area of Law Enforcement and Security Studies up to Level 5.

The School of Professional Development provides local and overseas training programmes on leadership, management and information technologies. Over the years, the HKPC has been keen to seek collaborations with other law enforcement agencies and institutions, such as
Canadian Police College and University of Cambridge, to enhance training experience. The School of Specialised Learning comprises three functional Divisions and four Centres, providing a wide variety of specialised and competency training such as detective training, police driving and traffic training, instructor training, language training as well as psychological competency training. With strong strategic partnership, the HKPC renders continuous support to various research and development institutes to experiment the development of new learning technologies and uses self-developed mobile applications to optimise training capacity.

The College Headquarters is responsible for administrative and human resources matters, as well as coordinating the appointment of reputable academy and experts as the Honorary College Advisors to provide independent advices in different areas of policing related matters.

In recent years, the HKPC has won a number of local and international awards, including the 2018 and the 2019 Training Top 125 Awards, the Top Winner of the 2018 Global Most Innovative Knowledge Enterprise (MIKE) Award, Gold Award of 2017 Brandon Hall Group Excellence in Technology Award, Elite Change Management Award in the HKIHRM HR Excellence Award Scheme 2017/18 and the Global Independent Operating Unit Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise (MAKE) Award 2016. The Force has also been awarded the Manpower Developer by the Employee Retraining Board since 2013.

Management Services: The Information Systems Wing is comprised of the Business Services Bureau, Innovation and Solution Lab (ISLAB), Information Technology Branch and Communications Branch.

The Business Services Bureau, consisting of the Business Services Division, E-Police Division, Security and Support Division and Major Systems Division, coordinates information technology and communications business needs of the Force and is responsible for information security. The E-Police Division supports the Force social media and provides citizen-centric services through delivery of the e-Report Centre, Police Public Page and HK Police Mobile App.

The establishment of the ISLAB in October 2019 was a concrete step to equip the Force in coping with rising challenges brought about by rapid technological development. The ISLAB is responsible for strengthening the Force’s innovation and e-policing capability in the digital age. Through working with various stakeholders by establishing common goals by co-creation, it concentrates its work in five key areas, namely digital transformation, data analytics, software and system technology, mobile technology and mobile application, and emerging technologies to drive innovation and embrace the use of technology.

The Information Technology Branch is responsible for the planning, development, implementation and maintenance of information technology application systems to support the daily operation of the Force. The Branch is consolidating information technology applications on an enterprise architecture framework to provide service-oriented information technology through an extensive Police data network. The Organisational, Management and Operational applications provide excellent support to all Force members.

The Communications Branch designs, acquires, maintains and develops all Force communications networks and equipment including radio, video, navigational aids, speed detection radar, mobile phones, office telephones and firing range equipment. It also runs the Information and Communications Network Management Centre, which provides 24/7 emergency support to the Force information and communications facilities.

The Service Quality Wing is responsible for spearheading initiatives to improve services provided to both the public and members of the Force and steer excellence in service delivery and quality management Force-wide. The Wing comprises three branches: the Performance Review Branch (PRB), Research and Inspections Branch (RIB) and Complaints and Internal Investigations Branch (C&IIB).

The PRB is responsible for developing the Force Strategic Management Framework, staffing the cyclic Strategic Directions and Strategic Action Plans, promoting the Force values and implementing the Force Strategy on Quality of Service.

The RIB is responsible for co-ordinating all general inspection activities as well as conducting thematic studies on issues that may impact on the operation, management and image of the Force.

The C&IIB includes the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO), the Internal Investigations Office (IIO) and the Integrity Audit Action Group (IAAG). CAPO oversees the investigation and resolution of all complaints made by the public against members of the Force. The work of CAPO is closely monitored by the Independent Police Complaints Council to ensure that all complaints against the Police are fully and impartially investigated. The IIO is responsible for the investigation and monitoring of allegations of serious misconduct and corrupt activities against members of the Force, as well as the promotion of the Force Integrated Integrity Management Framework to reinforce the Force values. The IAAG conducts proactive investigation against serious misconducts and illegal activities involving Force members, timely identifies and rectifies duty-related systemic risks, and enhances the supervisory accountability.

Finance, Administration and Planning: The Finance Wing is responsible for the financial management, forensic accounting and support services, stores management and internal audit of the Force. The Administration Wing looks after the management of civilian staff and Force establishment matters. The Planning and Development Branch (P&D) is responsible for the strategic property planning of the Force. The P&D plans and develops existing and future Police buildings and facilities to meet public expectation and promote sustainable development through monitoring the territory’s

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infrastructural development, population growth and the operational needs of the Force. It also oversees large-scale maintenance and improvement programmes for all existing Police buildings and facilities to ensure proper maintenance and to enhance their quality, standards, security and operational efficiency.


According to Article 17 of the Hong Kong National Security Law, the six main duties and functions of the department are collecting and analysing intelligence and information concerning national security; planning, coordinating and enforcing measures and operations for safeguarding national security; investigating offences endangering national security; conducting counter-interference investigation and national security review; carrying out tasks of safeguarding national security assigned by the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the HKSAR; and performing other duties and functions necessary for the enforcement of the law.