

Police professional law enforcement to safeguard national security

Nine men and one woman were arrested yesterday (August 10) by officers of the National Security Department of the Hong Kong Police Force in a law enforcement operation in several districts across the territory for suspected collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security, contravening Article 29 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law), and conspiracy to defraud etc.

In respect of yesterday's operation, the Police had applied from the court a search warrant in accordance with the legal requirements and procedures, and conducted searches at various locations to collect evidence against the illegal acts in accordance with the authorisation of the search warrant. As the workplace of the arrested persons was a media organisation, the Police conducted evidence collection at the media organisation. During the process, the Police displayed the search warrant multiple times for examination by the media organisation's personnel and legal representatives. The Police stressed that the operation was targeted at the alleged offenders' unlawful acts, but not individual media organisation.

Freedom of the press is an important cornerstone of Hong Kong and the Police always respect the freedom of the press, speech and publication. Prior to yesterday's operation, officers have been specifically reminded to avoid going through news materials during the evidence collection process, which was also conducted in the company of the media organisation's personnel. The Police expressed regret that some media had deliberately discredited the Police's search operation.

The Police stressed that yesterday's operation was conducted in accordance with the law to safeguard national security. Regardless of the identity or background of the suspects involved, the Police will enforce the law professionally in accordance with the relevant legislation and the actual circumstances.

On press arrangement, the Police reiterated that they always respect press freedom and the rights of the media in reporting. Without compromising operation effectiveness, the Police has all along endeavoured to facilitate media's reporting work. To meet operational needs, the Police will set up cordoned-off zones during law enforcement operations and it will facilitate media in performing their reporting work outside the cordoned-off areas.

In recognition of the public's concerns about a law enforcement operation in Tseung Kwan O yesterday, the Police Public Relations Branch actively communicated with the frontline commander in charge of the operation and through the co-ordination of the Force Media Liaison Cadre at scene, some media organisations, including television, radio and newspapers, gained access into the cordoned-off zones to cover the operation from a more vantage

point, thereby enhancing the transparency of police work.

The Police fully acknowledged that some media organisations or reporters have different views on this trial arrangement, and will review and improve the measures in the future after fully listening to the views of the media.