

Duty Pilots at the Vessel Traffic Centre

Purpose

This paper reports to members the result of the examination into the proposal of posting a pilot at the VTC and recommends that this proposal should be put on hold.

Background

2 In 1993, a consultancy study was commissioned by Marine Department to review the pilotage services in Hong Kong. The study made a number of recommendations to improve the pilotage services, one of which was to station a pilot in the VTC on a round-the-clock basis. The rationale behind that recommendation, as quoted from the consultant's final report, is :

“The VTC gives nautical advice for which pilotage knowledge and experience often are required. At present, pilot's advice and nautical VTS advice is basically separated. A close relationship between pilots and the VTS is necessary to efficiently and effectively respond to nautical problems”.

3. At its meeting held on 4 November 1993, the PAC endorsed the recommendations in the consultancy study in principle, but directed that the HKPA and MD should jointly examine the feasibility of posting a pilot at the VTC (notes of PAC meeting dated 4.11.93, para. III (i)(b)(16) refers).

4. The recommendation of posting a pilot at the VTC was also made by the two Boards of Investigation, following the two collision incidents, namely the M.V."DSR Atlantic" vs the M.V."Humanity" and the one between M.V."Tang He" and M.V."California Luna". The Boards considered that this would improve the communications between VTC and the pilots, thus enhancing navigation safety of the piloted vessel.

Current Situation

5. Following the instruction of the PAC, the HKPA and MD have been actively examining how the recommendation could best be implemented over the past few years, during which a number of administrative and technical issues had come to light. The most noticeable were in defining and delineating the responsibilities between VTC staff and the VTC pilot and the pilots' legal liabilities while stationing in the VTC. At one time, it was suggested that the VTC Pilot's liabilities could be absorbed by government through the issue of a 'Letter of Indemnity' to HKPA. However, this was considered inappropriate due to legal and administrative reasons.

6. Meanwhile, the VTC and HKPA have taken a number of measures to enhance their cooperation and mutual understanding. These include :

- a. enhanced training of the VTC operators and the pilots;
- b. creating direct communications channel between the HKPA and VTC for instant provision of technical advice and exchange of information;
- c. establishing direct access to each other's information systems on vessels' ETA/ETD and their movements; and
- d. cross familiarisation to promote understanding and update information between the two organisations at frequent intervals.

7. Apart from regular familiarisation attachments to vessels under the pilotage of the HKPA, on-going arrangements have also been made for VTC officers to attend pilotage training and simulation courses overseas to acquire pilotage knowledge, practical ship handling and other maneuvering skills, so as to give them a better understanding of the actual work of a pilot. On the other hand every new (apprentice) pilot is required to undergo an attachment programme to VTC to familiarise with the VTS operations. These arrangements have helped to improve the mutual understanding between VTC and the pilots.

View of the PAC Working Group

8. The posting of a pilot at the VTC was discussed at the PACWG meeting held on 5 November 1998. While noting the possible advantage of the proposal and realising that similar arrangements have been made in some other countries, the majority view of the WG was that this was not essential. The reasons are :

- a. as the responsibility for ensuring the safe navigation of a vessel lies with the ship master, the ultimate decision in ship handling and navigation rests with the master and the pilot on board;
- b. the role of the VTC is to provide necessary information to the master/pilot on board the vessel to facilitate their decision making. Thus the VTC Pilot's duty is only to provide the information, warning or advice, and not to make decisions on how the vessel should be navigated. The posting of a pilot at the VTC would not effectively improve the provision of such information or warning etc;
- c. as a result of cross-familiarisation and practical training, as mentioned in para. 7 above, VTC officers now have more knowledge about the pilots' job. Although not professional pilots, they have a fair understanding of the practical difficulties which the ship board pilot may encounter in the course of piloting a vessel. This generally fulfils the need for pilotage knowledge in giving nautical advice, as noted in the consultant's report (see para. 2 above).

9. The PAC WG was of the opinion that the proposal of posting a pilot at VTC has been overtaken by events. Implementation of the proposal would have no significant advantage but result in duplication of work of the VTC operators as well as a drain of valuable resources (i.e. the pilots).

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that the placement of a duty pilot at the VTC should be put on hold.

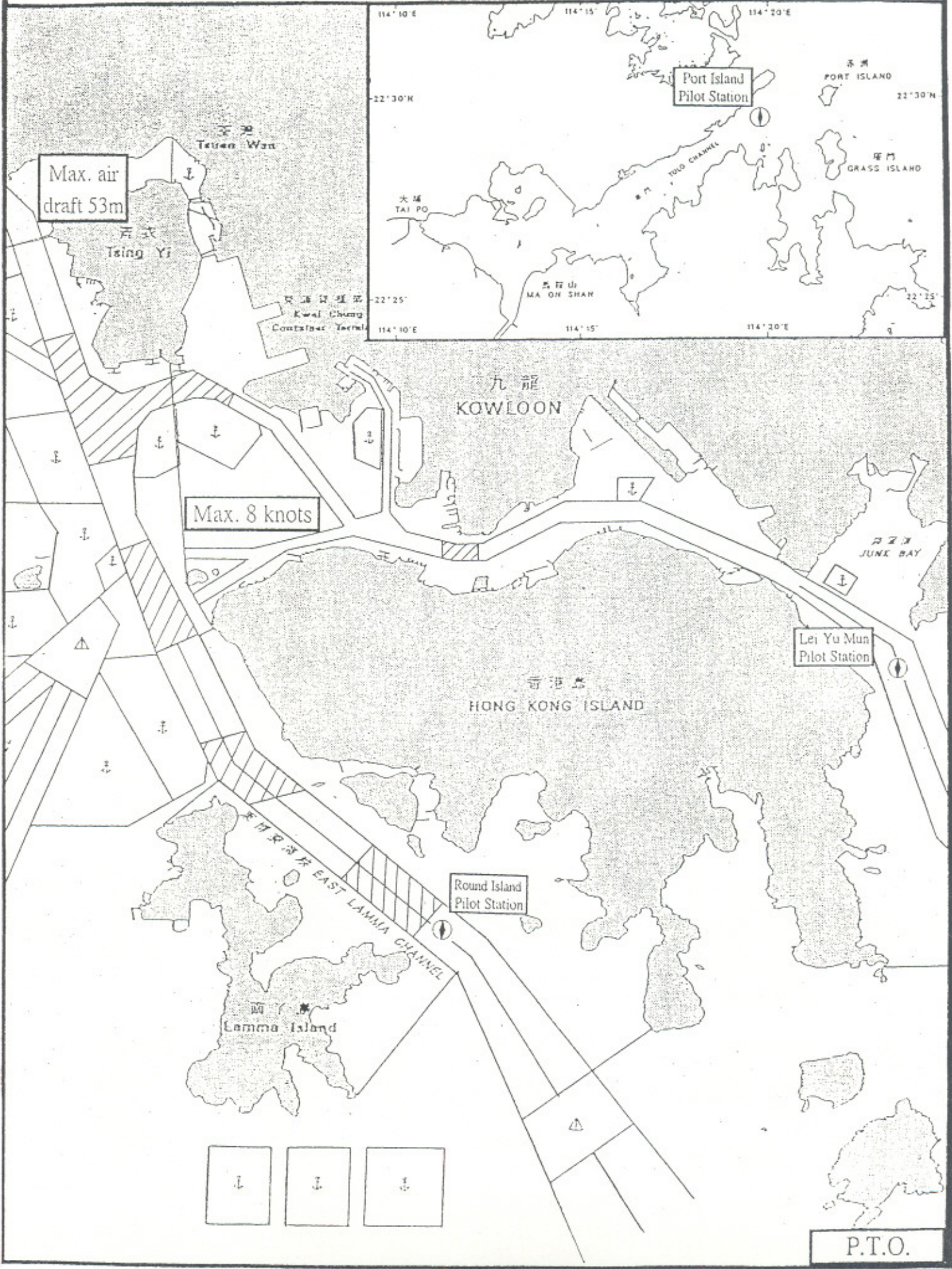
Presentation

11. This paper will be presented to members of PAC for their consideration at the PAC meeting scheduled to be held on 25 November 1998

Port Advisory Committee
Marine Department
November 1998

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Pilot's Passage Plan



Max. air draft 53m

Max. 8 knots

Port Island Pilot Station

Lei Yu Mun Pilot Station

Round Island Pilot Station



P.T.O.

Not to be used for navigation

Black Point
Pilot Station


屯門
Tuen Mun

龍鼓水道
URMSTON ROAD

赤鱘角機場
Chek Lap Kok Airport

Date: _____
Time: _____
Name of vessel: _____
From: _____ To: _____

Information to Master:-

1. Show intended route.
2. Advise Master any possible encounters.
3. Indicates most crossing traffic area. 
4. Master / bridge team to keep VHF watch on channel 12, 14 or 67 as required.

Signature: _____
Name of pilot: _____

Estimated Current

Berthing and tug arrangements

Anchor: Port / Starboard

Shackles: _____

First Line

For'd: _____

Aft: _____



Posn.

(A) _____

(B) _____

(C) _____