

150 HK sailors to lose Navy jobs

About 150 Hongkong-based sailors will be seeking re-employment here in early May when they are sacked by the Royal Navy due to cuts under the new defence agreement.

The sailors will be the first locally-enlisted personnel to be laid off under "phase one redundancy."

Under the 1975 defence White Paper, a total of about 560 Hongkong sailors are to be withdrawn from United Kingdom-based ships by the end of this year.

A Joint Services spokesman said yesterday that the extent of "phase two redundancy" would not be known until the assessment of future requirements is completed.

"Future force levels in Hongkong have been agreed between the British and Hongkong Governments and resultant manpower requirements are now being assessed.

"It is unlikely that any further announcement on phase two redundancy can be made for some weeks," he said.

The spokesman noted that individual ratings selected for phase one redundancy have been told personally through their commanding officers - and that about one-fifth of

those selected had volunteered for redundancy.

Redundant sailors will get at least six months' notice, including terminal and accrued leave, along with compensation for the loss of expected employment. Exact terms will depend on rank, length of service and terms of engagement.

Men who have completed 12 years' service will receive a pension which they may commute, receiving 10 years' pension in one lump sum, a terminal grant of three times the annual pension rate, and a special capital payment reflecting their years of service and normal expectation of service.

Men with less than 12 years' service who do not qualify for pension will receive a special capital payment.

Explaining the duties of the 560 locally-enlisted sailors, the spokesman said that about half were employed as cooks and stewards on seven UK-based ships and on ships of the Hongkong Squadron.

"They normally alternate 18 months in a UK-based ship and six months in HMS Tamar.

"The remainder, among them technical tradesmen, boat

crews, medical assistants, stores staff and mess assistants, are employed at HMS Tamar."

He said that redundancy among locally-enlisted personnel would be proportionally greater than among UK servicemen, though it would be kept to a minimum.

On the prospects of those laid off obtaining re-employment, the spokesman said:

"They are highly trained, skilled and experienced, and we expect they will find good civilian jobs.

"Enquiries from prospective employers will be welcomed by the Resettlement Officer at HMS Tamar."

Regarding the layoff of 400 civilian employees of the services, the spokesman said that commanding officers had held meetings with various staff associations and talks would also be held individually with the employees concerned.

However, the Secretary of the Government, Armed Forces and Hospital Chinese Workers Union, Mr Chan Kam-lau, said that the union had not been informed of such meetings.

He also said that the union would soon call for a meeting to find out from members the extent of the layoffs.