

'007' scooters head police buying spree

JAMES Bond-style underwater "scooters" are at the forefront of a multi-million dollar spending spree which aims to make the Royal Hongkong Police one of the best equipped forces in the world.

The hi-tech order, worth more than \$500 million, will give the 26,000-strong police force access to some of the most advanced apparatus available.

Approval has been granted for two military-style divers' propulsion units to enhance the counter-terrorism capabilities of the crack Special Duties Unit (SDU), known as the *Fei Foo Doi* or Flying Tigers.

The units are worth about \$250,000 each and the police have the option to acquire another two.

Although no decision has been made on which model to buy, one of the units being considered is the "subtug".

Similar propulsion units are used by special forces and counter-terrorist units around the world, including Britain's elite Special Air Service and Special Boat Squadron.

The propeller-driven units, which would be used to approach ships moored out of swimming range or in a strong current, travel at about four knots and can tow two divers.

Full details of the tugs, which a police spokesman described as "secret", have not been released because they will be used in covert operations.

Earlier this year the SDU was granted funding for six rigid inflatable fast patrol craft.

Police spokesman Chief

By CHRIS DOBSON



One of the new "scooters" in action.

Superintendent Eric Lockyear would not comment on the proposed submersible tugs but said the other equipment being sought was part of the "force IT [Information Technology] strategy" which would meet police needs for the next five years.

"We already have the best radio system and RCCC [Regional Command and Control Centre] computer back up," he said.

"This is the most modern

and comprehensive system of any police force on earth."

A funding request for almost \$100 million for a new radio system for 357 police motorcycles and a number of patrol cars is due to go before Friday's finance committee meeting for approval.

The money will also cover new repeater systems to be stationed on hill tops and tall buildings, and the radios to be fitted to the machines and in police stations.

If granted, the equipment will be installed in February 1995 at the earliest.

Approval will also be sought early next year for a \$400 million computer systems package to be installed in stations territory-wide to improve overall efficiency and do away with repetitive form filling.

Superintendent Lockyear said the installation of a number of different systems would be ongoing over a period of years.

He said the "force IT strategy" would cover communal information, criminal investigation and operational and administrative support, and would be set up at station, district, regional and headquarter levels.

Another piece of equipment needing funding is a \$5.6 million petrol management system which will take the place of 30 civilian employees over two years.

According to Senior Superintendent Ian Tyzzer of the force's transport branch, the new equipment uses an infra-red identification system and automatically transmits information back to police headquarters.

"We can satisfy security requirements without having a person there," he said.