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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Dr Lee Boon Yang, 30 Jun 2000, 10.30am

Singapore Government

MEDIA RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY DR LEE BOON YANG
MINISTER FOR MANPOWER
AT THE SAF REDEDICATION CEREMONY
HELD ON FRIDAY, 30 JUNE 2000 AT 10.30AM
AT THE REVENUE HOUSE, MULTI-PURPOSE HALL**

1 We are gathered here to mark SAF Day and to renew our pledge to defend Singapore. This rededication ceremony is a timely reminder of the importance of national defence and our personal commitment to safeguard Singapore's security. I am heartened to see the strong turnout of NSmen and employers today. Is a clear signal of your dedication and commitment towards national defence. To your families and friends, your presence is a strong assurance that you are always ready to defend Singapore.

2 Over the last 35 years, the SAF has developed into a credible defence force fully capable of deterring threats and defending Singapore. Today, the SAF is a well-established national institution. Our soldiers are well trained and equipped for their missions. The SAF stands out as a modern and forward-looking armed force. Through the years, the SAF's development has focussed on two key areas :

Operational Readiness and Capability. These are the attributes that make the SAF an integrated and potent fighting force.

3 To be credible, the SAF must be in a high state of combat readiness at all times. This will deter any aggressor from contemplating an attack against Singapore. In peacetime, the SAF's operational readiness is tested by its ability to respond promptly and effectively to civil emergencies and international peacekeeping missions. This was demonstrated by the quick response of the SAF to the East Timor crisis, the Taiwan earthquake in September last year, and more recently, the earthquake that shook the Indonesian province of Bengkulu. In all these operations, whether to help restore peace or to provide humanitarian aid, our soldiers have displayed professionalism, courage and a strong sense of duty. These contingents included regulars, Full-time National Servicemen and Operationally Ready NSmen who together demonstrated the readiness of the SAF.

4 Strong capabilities lie at the heart of the SAF's defence strategy. The SAF will continue to expand its defence capability to deal with a wider range of security threats. In this era of rapid technological change, the SAF's future strength will depend on its ability to exploit technology for military advantage. The SAF will constantly study and evaluate new technologies applicable to military forces and which could change the nature of warfare. It will invest resources to develop those technologies which will enhance our ability to deal with present and future threats.

5 Even in peacetime, the SAF's capabilities against the threat of terrorism and other forms of subversion must be sharpened. Hence, over the years, the SAF has developed a wide range of capabilities to counter terrorist and other threats. The Navy's COSCOM, for example, has capabilities to tackle the entry of illegal immigrants and piracy in our waters. Our Commandos are trained and equipped to deal with terrorists and hijackers. Such capabilities of the SAF, together with other law and order agencies, can be employed to swiftly counter terrorism and other subversive threats against Singapore.

6 While we enjoy a prolong period of peace and security, we must be aware that the strategic environment is constantly changing. We cannot take peace and security for granted. An Operationally Ready SAF, suitably equipped, is the best deterrence and insurance for Singapore's security. Our strategy in the 21st century is to build on the basics that have made the SAF the potent force it is today and develop new solutions to deal with new challenges.

7 However, the efforts of MINDEF and the SAF will not be sufficient. While

technology can be an effective force multiplier, it can never be enough to ensure the security of Singapore. Ultimately, we depend on the courage, fighting spirit and determination of our citizen soldiers to ensure that the SAF is an effective deterrence in peacetime, and that the SAF will win decisively if armed conflict cannot be avoided. There must be no doubt that should the need ever arise, every citizen soldier will rise and defend Singapore with his life.

8 This is what gives the SAF's operational readiness its strength and effectiveness as a deterrence. The capabilities of the SAF are due to your commitment and dedication to the task of national defence. Each one of you has helped to build the SAF and elevated it to its present stature.

9 We need to nurture and deepen these commitments and attitudes towards national defence. Our security cannot be a matter of chance. There is no guarantee that we will always have peace, security and stability. It is up to us to defend our stake in Singapore. We cannot depend on others to defend us. We only truly own what we ourselves can defend. I am confident that with the commitment of our National Servicemen, their families and employers, we can and will defend Singapore.

10 On behalf of the Government and people of Singapore, I thank all of you for your unwavering support and selfless contributions towards national defence. Your commitment and dedication have made the difference to ensure that Singapore is safe and secure, not just for now, but also for future generations.

11 Thank you.

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