



## SPEECH

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**SPEECH BY CHIEF OF AIR FORCE MG HOO CHER MOU  
AT THE CHIEF OF AIR FORCE CHANGE OF COMMAND PARADE  
ON 28 MARCH 2016**

1. Chief of Defence Force, Service Chiefs, former Chiefs of Air Force, distinguished guests, men and women of our Air Force, a very good afternoon. On behalf of Mervyn and myself, thank you all for taking time out to attend this Change of Command parade. Your presence here today means more than you know to both of us.

2. I must also thank Commander, Participation Command and his committee for organising today's parade, as well as all the men and women who are on parade today. This parade, this magnificent scene of our Air Force warriors standing as proud witness to our Change of Command, will always stay with both Mervyn and I in our memories.

### **Introduction**

3. As I was preparing this speech, I recall a quote by one of our Air Force's pioneer Aircraft Engineers. He said: "When I first opened the hangar doors in 1968, I was greeted by two Cessna aircraft. If either one

of the aircraft was down, it meant Singapore had only one aircraft to defend its skies.”

4. This was said by 1WO (Ret) Freddie Koh, Air Force Engineer, who joined the Singapore Air Defence Command at 19 years old and went on to serve with distinction for over 30 years. His words are now part of our Air Force's history in the recently re-vamped Air Force Museum. That was 1968. How far we have come from 2 Cessna aircrafts.

5. In 2013, when I took Command of our Air Force, we were already making significant strides in our 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation transformation journey. We were in a position of strength, but there remained significant work to be done to bring our transformation to fruition, and to realise the full potential of the new concepts, capabilities and structures. At the same time, having spent the past seven to eight years consolidating the transformation, we recognised the need to look at the next bound for our Air Force, in the next 15-20 years, so as to position ourselves well into the future.

## National Archives of Singapore

### **PRIORITIES AS CAF**

#### **Being Vigilant and Ready in the Present**

6. Besides homeland defence, we also participate in overseas missions and international relief efforts. Over the past three years, just to list a few, we successfully took part in the multinational coalition effort against ISIS and the counter-piracy effort in the Gulf of Aden.

7. Closer to home, our people took part in the search and locate operations for the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, the search and recovery operation for the AirAsia Flight QZ8501, as well as the fire-fighting operations in Thailand and Indonesia. In the immediate aftermath of the Nepal and Sabah earthquakes last year, our C-130 responded swiftly and brought the much needed relief to the affected victims and their families.

8. In fact, over the past two years, our Air Force has been involved in more than twice the number of HADR operations than in the preceding four years combined. The success of these missions demonstrates the professionalism and readiness of our airmen and women. As your Chief, I am honoured to have led such a professional and capable Air Force, and am immensely proud of all our people who have served with distinction and dedication in all these operations.

### **Staying Sharp for the Future**

9. As Chief, I am also responsible for ensuring that our mission success is sustained long into the future. This involves force structuring our Air Force for the long term, and continuously sharpening our warfighting edge.

10. Over the last three years, we have re-organised the UAV Command and set up 129 SQN to better deliver air intelligence for the SAF. We have also operationalised a range of key warfighting capabilities, including the F-15SG, Hermes 450 UAV, Heron 1 UAV, the SPYDER Air Defence system, as well as advanced radar systems. To better prepare our

people for the networked warfighting environment, we have set up 202 SQN to enhance our network management capabilities.

11. To better assimilate and support our increasingly sophisticated platforms, we have undertaken significant steps to strengthen our Air Engineering capabilities. We have re-organised the Air Engineering and Logistics Department and fully implemented the Integrated Maintenance Flight in our Squadrons. We have also set up 1 and 9 Air Engineering and Logistics Groups in the UAV Command and ADOC respectively. In addition, we have also restructured the Air Engineering Training Institute to revamp and strengthen our engineering and logistics training.

12. To fully translate the new warfighting concepts and platforms into capabilities, we have made significant strides in Enhancing Our Operational Training, so as to prepare our people for the rapidly evolving warfighting environment.

13. I am heartened to know that the hard work put in by our people over the past few years have started to reap dividends. Our day-to-day training has become more dynamic, realistic and mission-oriented. We have also created more opportunities for inter-Command and inter-Service training, both locally and overseas.

### **Engaging Hearts and Minds**

14. But beyond these, we have also continued to enhance our Air Force's public standing by securing mindshare and building deeper connections with both the wider public and our internal tribe.

15. 2015, in particular, was a momentous year for all of us, as we celebrated our nation's 50 years of independence. As members of our Air Force tribe, we can all be very proud of the key roles that our Air Force played in our Golden Jubilee celebrations. Our Black Knights put up sterling performances and inspired our fellow Singaporeans. Our aerial displays over the Padang during the National Day Parade excited and united Singaporeans.

16. I was fortunate to be amongst our fellow Singaporeans that day at the Padang to witness this significant milestone in our nation's history. As the '50' formation flew over the Padang, my heart swelled with pride – both as the Chief of Air Force and as a Singaporean. I was not alone – all around me, I saw the faces of Singaporeans, each in his or her own way realising the significance of that tremendous journey our country has taken in building up its air power since independence. A few days ago, we commemorated the first anniversary of the passing of our late founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. He firmly believed in the SAF as the foundation of our peace and prosperity, and our Air Force owes much to him. In 1968, then-Prime Minister Mr Lee told of the need 'to build up an air defence capability...that is both credible, and if put to the test, will not be found inadequate.' The Singapore Air Defence Command was set up that year.

17. That day, at the National Day Parade, I was reminded of this solemn and noble mission of our Air Force: to ensure Singapore's peace and security by defending our skies. And in fact, on that day, whilst Singaporeans were cheering the SG50 flypast, there was a different set of fighters, G550, control and Air Defence units working at full throttle,

watching over our skies as our nation celebrated. Our UAV and helicopter units were also on high alert to support our Special Contingency operations. That was a busy day for our Air Force.

18. Our large-scale engagement efforts such as the RSAF45@SA14 and RSAF45@Heartlands, as well as the recently concluded SA2016, have also resonated well and allowed us to reach out to hundreds of thousands of fellow Singaporeans, so that they can better appreciate what we do to secure Singapore's peace and security. Even the simplest of gestures in engaging Singaporeans goes far.

19. I know many of you were out there during these events, representing our Air Force, speaking of your work with passion, and inspiring the next generation of Air Force men and women with your sincerity and dedication. As can be seen on our Air Force Facebook page, these events as well as the everyday stories about our Air Force tribe touched many Singaporeans' heart, and have gained significant viewership and fans. We started our Air Force Facebook page in 2014. And in the short span of 2 years, we already have over 157,000 likes... and growing.

Thank you all for working hard and representing our Air Force so well, winning the hearts and minds of fellow Singaporeans.

### **People At the Heart of Our Air Force**

20. And truly, our achievements over the past 48 years would not have been possible without the professionalism, commitment and dedication of our airmen and women. It has always been my firm belief that our people are at the heart of our Air Force's success. No amount of

warfare technology can help us achieve our goals unless our people have the requisite training, skills, determination and commitment to achieve mission success. As an example, our aircrew and ground crew regularly do us proud in achieving the highest standards in international multilateral exercises and courses. In my regular unit visits, I always come away impressed and inspired by the dedication and commitment of our people.

21. And as Chief, strengthening our tribe, taking care of our people, and equipping each with the wherewithal to perform at his or her best, has been the work that has been the most fulfilling.

22. Today, undergirding our formidable warfighting capabilities is the quality of our people and our leaders. As an Air Force of a small nation, we have encountered many challenges and constraints. But it is our people and their attitude of being resilient and adaptable that allows us to constantly innovate, chart our own path, and turn our constraints into our strengths.

23. Indeed, our Air Force tribe is made up of ordinary Singaporeans achieving extraordinary things together, every day. Together, we have over the years built a culture of high standards, of safety, of innovation, and of tenacity. As we look toward the future, it is this Air Force culture and character that will enable us to forge ahead in confidence.

### **Appreciation**

24. We have not done all this on our own. As I often said, we stand on the shoulders of giants. Present today are members from the RSAF's

formative years, our pioneers. Let me thank all of you for your dedication and commitment in building the RSAF literally from scratch. We owe our success to your hard work and toil.

25. At this juncture, allow me to say a few words to thank the people who have supported me in my tour of duty over the past 3 years:

26. Firstly, I would like to thank the MINDEF and SAF leadership – Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, former and current CDFs – for entrusting the Air Force to my care and empowering me to do what I felt was right. Your guidance and support have been invaluable. You took a leap of faith to appoint me as the RSAF's first non-pilot Chief. I only hope I have lived up to your expectations.

27. To my Chiefs of Staff – Yeong Kiat and Tuang Liang – thank you for your strong partnership, friendship and for complementing my abilities and checking my six.

28. Thank you to all my FCC members past and present – the Commanders: Mervyn, Tuang Liang, Kelvin Khong, Tommy, Siak Kian, Chee Wee, Sarbjit, Hong Keat, Yee Peng, Jonathan, Kum Luen, Peng Shin, Kok Siong, Benedict and Simon; the Department Heads: Wai Mun, Kok Siong, Kum Wah, Anil, Siow Huang, Hong Keat, Tuang Liang, Kelvin Khong, Ling Wee, Francis, Kelvin Fan, Gaurav, Yung Peng, Tan Yik, Kwee Siong, Philip, Robin and Wee Hoe.

29. It's often said that it can be lonely at the top. And at times, the challenges have appeared daunting. But I have never felt alone, as I had

this great band of brothers and sisters to walk this journey with me. Thank you for so generously sharing your wisdom and counsel, and for standing by me through it all. There is indeed strength in unity.

30. To my Air Force Command Chiefs, Andrew and Mike, and the rest of the Air Force Command Chief Council members, thank you for working hand-in-hand with the Air Force senior leadership to accomplish our mission and move our Air Force forward. Your efforts have gone a long way towards forging and strengthening our Air Force tribe.

31. To all the men and women of our Air Force, thank you for your dedication, hard work and sacrifice for our country. You have kept our skies safe, and contributed to the peace and security of this little island we call Home.

32. To my current and former secretaries - Patricia, Karen, Stella and Jiaxin, as well as the 2 SAs who have served with me – John and Jinfeng, thank you for being so invaluable to me in my work.

33. To our friends from the Army, Navy, Joint Staff, as well as our DSTA, DSO and ST partners – thank you for doing all that was possible to support and strengthen the Air Force, making sure that we always stayed ahead of the challenges.

34. Last but not least, to my wife Julie, whose support and love has been unwavering, the last three years have been possible because I have you by my side.

**The New Chief: BG Mervyn Tan**

35. As I step down as Chief, it is with great confidence that I hand over command of our Air Force to BG Mervyn Tan. He is no stranger to all of us, having served as Head Air Plans, Comd ADOC and Director Military Intelligence. He is a distinguished Commander and has proven himself to be a very capable and effective leader. Mervyn, I look forward to seeing you bring our Air Force to greater heights as Chief and I wish you all the best for your watch.

**Conclusion**

36. It has been a great honour and privilege for me to serve you and our nation as Chief of Air Force over the last 3 years. In fact, it has been a tremendous journey for me in my RSAF career. Growing up in our Air Force is growing up in a place where people believe in duty, honour, country.

37. I will leave with very few regrets and with a deep pride in the men and women who I have been honoured to work with for over 30 years. It has given me countless fond memories and shaped me as a leader and as a person. I am who I am because of the RSAF. Looking at our Air Force today, I am immensely proud of how far we have come in the short 48 years of our existence, from just two Cessna aircraft. Today, we are a strong and respected Air Force in the region and beyond. Personally, I am honoured to have contributed and played my part in shaping our Air Force's development, and in achieving mission success. Most importantly, it has been a great privilege to serve alongside such a dedicated team of

professionals, united in the purpose to protect our nation's skies, every day.

38. Saying good-bye is always difficult. It is an unsettling mix of both happiness and sadness. My wife said something to me this morning when I told her that it would be tough saying goodbye today. She said, "Well, how lucky you are to have something that makes saying goodbye, so hard." As usual, my wife is right.

39. I would like to thank you for all the support, help and friendship that you have given to me. I could not have asked for 3 happier and more fulfilling years. As I hand the stewardship of our Air Force to Mervyn, I know you will give the same support to him.

40. Let me end with these words from our latest Air Force corporate video, which captures the spirit of our Air Force well:

We measure precision in nanometres, memory in terabytes, thrust in pounds, and altitude in feet.

We measure load in tonnes, distance in nautical miles, speed in mach numbers, and response time in split seconds.

Then we take all these things that we measure, and we add dedication, teamwork, perseverance and courage to turn it all into something beyond measure ..... Peace.

One mission. One Force. Above All.

41. Thank you.

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