

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT TONY TAN KENG YAM, AT THE SINGAPORE
INTERNATIONAL MARITIME REVIEW PARADE 2017 HELD ON MONDAY, 15 MAY
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Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs

Navy Chiefs

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

Mrs Mary Tan and I are delighted to join all of you at the inaugural Singapore International Maritime Review (or IMR). The Singapore IMR is of special significance to the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) because it is part of the RSN's Golden Jubilee celebrations and marks the coming of age of the RSN.

The gathering of navies around the world for the first Singapore IMR is also a testament to the strong friendships and extensive network Singapore enjoys across the world. Attending the Singapore IMR today are more than 30 Navy, Vice-Navy Chiefs and Coast Guard Director-Generals, more than 40 flag rank officers, as well as 46 ships¹ and four aircraft participating from 44² countries.

Let me first extend a warm welcome to all of you!

¹ This figure includes the number of participating foreign warships, RSN and PCG vessels.

² These 44 countries include the countries which have sent ships, as well as the countries which are represented by a delegation.

A Maritime Nation in a Maritime Region

Throughout history, the seas have facilitated trade and cultural exchanges between countries. Cities and countries flourished because of seaborne trade. Today, over 90 per cent of global trade is carried by sea. Seaborne trade continues to expand³, providing cargoes of all kinds for people around the world.

As a maritime nation in a maritime region, Singapore's security and success are all the more inextricably linked to the sea. We rely on freedom of access to the sea for economic prosperity and progress. In this regard, the role of the RSN is critical to Singapore's survival as a nation.

Growth of a Navy

The RSN had a humble beginning and started with only two wooden ships. 50 years on, the RSN is now an advanced and integrated naval force comprising frigates, submarines, naval helicopters and other vessels, capable of defending Singapore's waters and the region's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).

When I visited the RSN last year, I personally witnessed how it has developed and strengthened its capabilities over the years. For instance, the acquisition of the frigates has expanded the RSN's operational reach and capabilities. Up to the 1990s, the RSN operated largely within the immediate region, occasionally deploying beyond Southeast Asia. With the frigates, the RSN is now able to engage Singapore's strategic partners in high-end exercises farther away from our shores.

Other platforms, such as the RSN's Landing Ships Tank, participated in key bilateral exercises such as Exercise *Trident* in Australia, as well as the search and rescue operations of the AirAsia flight QZ8501 in 2015. And to ensure the safety and security of our waters round the clock, the RSN's Patrol Vessels are deployed in the waters around Singapore every day.

One of the highlights of my visit to the RSN last year was the visit to the Archer class submarines. I was pleased that the RSN has built up its submarine capability so quickly. I am confident the RSN will continue to enhance its capabilities to address the evolving security landscape we are facing.

³ According to a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report in 2016, world seaborne trade volumes have expanded every year since 2009, exceeding 10 billion tonnes for the first time in 2015.

RSN's Cooperation with Other Navies

In the challenging and uncertain security environment today, having only good hardware and strong capabilities is not sufficient. Most of the security threats we face today are transnational in nature. No single country can effectively manage these threats on its own. To ensure a stable maritime order as well as safe and secure seas, multilateral cooperation is key.

The RSN has built up a strong and well-connected network of partnerships with like-minded navies. One platform which has facilitated constructive dialogues among the Navy Chiefs is the International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (IMDEX) Asia. I am glad that this year's edition of IMDEX is held in conjunction with today's IMR. IMDEX will once again bring together naval leaders and senior practitioners to exchange views on topics of common interests and how they can enhance maritime cooperation.

The RSN and other navies also collaborate closely to combat challenges such as piracy. The RSN's stealth frigates and Landing Ships Tank have participated in multinational counter-piracy task forces, including the Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 in the Gulf of Aden. In fact, the RSN has taken command of CTF 151 four times, leading key partners in contributing to global maritime security.

Within the region, the RSN works closely with Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand in the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP), to protect a critical waterway for the world and the region. The RSN's Information Fusion Centre (IFC) also works closely with global partners in information sharing, contributing to the fight against piracy.

Naming Changi Naval Base as RSS Singapura – Changi Naval Base

In this context, the venue for today's Singapore IMR, Changi Naval Base, is significant. Changi Naval Base is located along vital sea lanes connecting the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea, and plays a critical role in regional security. Changi Naval Base hosts more than 100 foreign warships a year, and it is here where Singapore develops strong friendships with other navies.

Today, I am very pleased to announce that Changi Naval Base will be named as RSS Singapura – Changi Naval Base. RSS Singapura was the name of RSN's first headquarters. Naming Changi Naval Base as RSS Singapura – Changi Naval Base will serve as a reminder to our sailors of RSN's heritage and the RSN's vital role in defending Singapore.

Conclusion

I congratulate the RSN on its success and achievements over the last 50 years. The RSN can be very proud of its achievements. I am confident the RSN will continue to grow, forge invaluable friendships with navies from around the world and contribute to the safety of the global maritime environment.

I wish the RSN every success in the years ahead. I now declare the Singapore International Maritime Review open.

Thank you.

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