



# SPEECH

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## Speech by Mr Matthias Yao Chih, Minister of State for Defence, at the National Service Medal Presentation Ceremony

08 May 1997

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to officiate at this ceremony. Tonight, we honour the contributions of a group of National Servicemen who have contributed 10 years or more of operationally ready national service to the SAF and the nation. You and many other NSmen have made personal sacrifices to build a strong and credible SAF.

### Why The Need For NSmen?

Operationally Ready NSmen are a vital part of the SAF. Singapore does not have a standing army comprising a ready force of regulars to look after the defence of our country. Instead, we have a citizen's army made up of national servicemen, a system which was started 30 years ago. Singapore's survival was, is, and will continue to be dependent on our NSmen who form the fighting force of the SAF.

Each year, our NSmen are called up for in-camp-training for two to three weeks to maintain their individual proficiency as well as to build unit cohesion. Such training ensures the highest level of operational readiness in the SAF. NSmen are also activated regularly for mobilisation exercises. The response rate, which was already high at 93% in 1992, has improved further to 95% in 1996. This result demonstrates clearly that the NS force is operationally ready.

MINDEF understands that your attendance of in-camp-training and quick response to mobilisation exercises entails personal sacrifices, inconvenience and disruption to your daily routines and those of your families.

### Recognising the contributions of NSmen

It is for this reason that MINDEF spares no effort in taking good care of our NSmen and in recognising their contributions in both tangible and intangible ways. The most significant step taken recently was the adoption by MINDEF of all the recommendations made by the 2nd Committee to Recognise the Contributions of Operationally Ready NSmen to Total Defence or RECORD II for short.

RECORD II's recommendations enhanced the recognition of our NSmen's contributions. The key recommendations already implemented include the NSmen Asset Enhancement Scheme in which active NSmen were given additional CPF Top-Ups of up to \$500 and an enhanced monetary award for marksmanship which was increased from \$100 to \$200. Other recommendations are in various stages of implementation.

The giving of a Medal to honour a soldier who has contributed significantly to military service is a long tradition in the armed forces of the world, including the SAF. The National Service Medal is awarded to all NSmen who have served at least 10 years of Operationally Ready National Service. Each year some 11,000 NSmen receive the National Service Medal in the SAF. This goes to show the high level of commitment from our NSmen in discharging their sacred duty of protecting our nation.

The Medal is an award which all NSmen receiving it can be proud to wear. However, RECORD II recognised that very few of our NSmen has the opportunity to wear the Medal in public. For this reason, it recommended a tangible gift which the NSmen could use should be given to those who receive the Medal.

MINDEF accepted the recommendation. The gift would allow the NSman to be readily acknowledged as one who gave of his best to the nation and is truly deserving of the honour bestowed on him by the award of the National Service Medal. The gift is also a gesture of MINDEF in further expressing its appreciation to our NSmen. It is a token to recognise the sacrifices that you and your families have made in the last 10 years or more, which far outweigh the monetary value of the gift.

MINDEF has decided to present this gift in the form of a personalised watch to each NSman who receives the National Service Medal this year. Each watch has a unique Service logo, that is, it is either the SAF Crest, the Air Force Crest or the Navy Crest so that each NSman can identify with the Service in which he served. The watch will bring pride to the NSman as his service to the nation is apparent for all to see. Each watch also has the rank and name of the NSman inscribed on it as a symbol of the dedication and commitment made by the NSman to Total Defence.

You are the first group of NSmen to be given the watch together with the medal. It is especially significant as this year is the 30th anniversary of national service. You can wear the watch proudly to show your children, friends and colleagues your decade of commitment to the SAF and the nation. I hope your examples will spur other NSmen to contribute to Total Defence in an even greater way.

I would like to thank in particular the wives of our NSmen who are here this evening. Your understanding and support to your husbands had made it possible for them to perform their noble task of defending the nation by attending in-camp-training both locally and overseas. Without your strong support, they would not have the peace of mind to train hard and the dedication to concentrate on their soldiering skills. You have made the difference and we appreciate it.

In conclusion, I would like to assure all NSmen that MINDEF will continue to examine ways to improve the system of training and administration. Your contributions to Total Defence are a pillar to the survival and success of Singapore. Some of you will have several more years of in-camp-training to fulfil while others may have completed the requirements. To everyone receiving the medal, I extend to you my congratulations, and I wish you and your families happiness and peace in the years ahead.

**News Release:**

- ▬ MINDEF Recognition of Vital Role of NSmen (MINDEF\_19970508001.pdf)

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