



SPEECH

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Speech by Mr Matthias Yao Chih, Minister of State for Defence, at the SAF Day Rededication Ceremony at SAFRA Toa Payoh Clubhouse

01 July 1997

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you this afternoon for this Armed Forces Day Rededication Ceremony. This year is especially significant for we celebrate 30 years of National Service. Since our first batch of NSFs was enlisted in 1967, and later became our country's first Operationally Ready National Servicemen, we have seen 30 years of contributions to Singapore's defence by our citizen soldiers.

As a small island with a small population, located in an uncertain region of the world that had a turbulent past, Singapore has certainly come a long way. Overcoming the odds against us, we have emerged as a vibrant and economically successful nation. Singapore has been consistently ranked highly by international research organisations. Singaporeans today enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world.

Amidst these achievements and the robust economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region, it is easy to forget that our success will vanish overnight if we cease to have peace and security.

We must never take peace and security for granted. We must remember that we live in an uncertain world. To deal with uncertainty, we must be prepared. Singaporeans must always remember that a strong defence capability remains the only guarantee of our independence and continued peace, progress and prosperity.

Through your contributions to National Service, you have helped to make the SAF the integrated and formidable defence force that it is today. Backed by an equally effective Total Defence capability drawing widespread support from all sectors of our nation, we now have this strong defence capability. This acts as a deterrent force and underpins our economic success and achievements. It ensures peace and security and gives investors the confidence to put their money and business in Singapore. As Operationally Ready National Servicemen, you have and will continue to play a vital role in providing the peace and security foundations for Singapore.

Singapore must and will continue to take its defence seriously. Over the years, the SAF has invested heavily into enhancing its capability and readiness through higher levels of operational exercises and training standards, augmented by more sophisticated and potent military weaponry, technology, and force multipliers. But this alone is not enough for the defence of our nation rests not only on the shoulders of those in uniforms. Everyone, including employers and families of NSmen, play a crucial role in defence.

We recognise that National Service causes disruption and inconvenience to the lives of NSmen, their families and employers. MINDEF and the SAF will continue to minimise the disruption and inconveniences caused. We will look for new and better ways to improve NS training, operational readiness and administration, and to recognise your contributions as NSmen. One such move was MINDEF's acceptance of all the recommendations made by the 2nd Committee to Recognise the Contributions of Operationally Ready NSmen to Total Defence or RECORD II.

Over the years, National Service has become a part of our way of life. I am happy to note that Singaporeans today understand its importance and necessity. This is clearly manifested by the seriousness in which NSmen discharge their in-camp training and NS duties. Families and employers of NSmen have also adjusted to the disruption and inconvenience that come with their NS obligations. Indeed, the presence of some many of you, NSmen as well as employers, here today bears testimony to the strong sense of identity and purpose shared with the SAF. This augurs well for the defence of our nation.

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to all our National Servicemen for your sacrifices and contributions to the defence of Singapore. I also thank your families and employers for their strong support and encouragement. Finally, I wish to thank Times Publishing Limited for organising this ceremony.

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