



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Speech by Mr Matthias Yao Chih, Minister of State for Defence, at the CCC Chairmen's Visit to Naval Diving Unit**

15 Aug 1998

### **CCC Chairmen's role in fostering community support for defence**

First, I would like to thank all of you for attending this morning's visit to the Naval Diving Unit. Today's visit is organised to provide you with a better understanding of the naval divers' role and the Navy's mission of safeguarding Singapore's sea lines of communication.

We are going through a difficult period now. We are faced with a regional, economic turmoil. However, given our strong foundation and capable leadership, we will weather the crisis and come out stronger than before. This episode has also reminded us that peace and prosperity that we have been enjoying, can never be taken for granted. Singaporeans must understand that a credible defence force is the bedrock for continued peace, progress and prosperity. A strong SAF will provide stability and a climate of confidence. As key opinion leaders in the community, you are our crucial link with the community. Through you, MINDEF's efforts in reaching out to the community will be enhanced. The community must understand the need for a strong SAF and the rationale to maintain high standards of combat readiness. Ensuring national commitment for defence is a long and arduous task. We are glad to know that the SAF is not alone and we can count on you to encourage the community to take a more active and participative interest in defence matters.

### **The vital role played by the Republic of Singapore (RSN) in the defence of Singapore**

The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) is entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding Singapore's sea lines of communication (SLOC), ensuring that it remains safe and secure for Singapore's economic survival and prosperity. In order to achieve its mission in the seaward defence of Singapore, the RSN ensures that it is well-equipped to face the modern naval warfare and multi-dimensional threats. The Navy strives to have the best equipment and

manpower, investing in cutting edge technology to maximise their operational capabilities. This is evident in the Navy's acquisition of the Sjoormen class submarine and the LST. The Navy also works very closely with the Army and the Air Force, as part of a formidable and well-integrated SAF.

### **The role of Naval Diving Unit (NDU)**

The Naval Diving Unit (NDU) is home to the RSN divers. They are the Navy's elite force and can be deployed in a moment's notice. NDU offers one of the most rigorous training regimes in the SAF. NDU trains military divers to undertake various underwater operations, like salvage operations, search and rescue operations as well as mine clearance operations and disposal of unexploded bombs. Naval divers also serve the community at large, conducting search and rescue operations in the waters around Singapore, enhancing Singapore's status as a major regional Search and Rescue (SAR) Centre. A most recent example would be NDU's involvement in the search and recovery operations of the MI-185 Silkair crash in Musi River, Palembang, Indonesia in Dec last year. The Naval divers also successfully participated in a bilateral exercise with the US Navy in July this year. This is a testimony of the RSN's capabilities in operating with world-class Navies.

The SAF is committed towards providing first class training facilities for its servicemen. Among the specialised training facilities at NDU are the 10 meter deep diving training pool that provides depth simulation for naval diving operations, an indoor firing range and a multi-purpose confidence tower and agility trainer which provides the divers with the best physical environment to maintain high standards of fitness and agility.

Besides ensuring that the servicemen of NDU receive the best training, NDU is also committed to providing its servicemen with first class medical care at the Naval Medical Hyperbaric Centre. The centre is a first of its kind in Singapore. It is equipped with specialist departments which conduct research on preventive management and treatment of diving related conditions. It also provides medical services to divers who suffer from gas gangrene or ailments caused by water-water pressure such as decompression sickness. These services are first class and comprehensive.

### **Conclusion**

I would like to thank you once again, on behalf of MINDEF, for your continuous support for defence and your efforts in helping the Singaporean community realize the need for national solidarity and commitment. I look forward to our joint efforts in reinforcing the message that all Singaporeans are responsible for Singapore's defence, in the hearts of each and every Singaporean.

**News Release:**

- Naval Divers' Training - Tough, Vigorous and Psychologically Demanding (Document No: MINDEF\_19980815001.pdf)

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