



NEWS RELEASE

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Speech by Australian Defence Minister John Moore at opening ceremony of RSAF Helicopter detachment in Oakey, Queensland

20 Aug 1999

Deputy Prime Minister, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome you all today to the official opening of the Republic of Singapore Air Force's helicopter facility here at the Australian Army Aviation Centre Oakey. It gives me great pleasure to be here.

Australia and Singapore enjoy a very close and strategic defence relationship, both bilaterally and under the umbrella of the Five Power Defence Arrangements.

The relationship is very broad and close for a number of reasons:

Australia and Singapore face similar challenges in the regional security environment and we have an abiding interest in working together to promote basic principles of security in our region.

We both have small defence forces which therefore rely on the skill and creativity of military personnel and defence civilians to give us a combat edge. We therefore have a lot we can learn from each other across a range of defence activities.

For this reason, Australia and Singapore have a substantial program of activities with each other:

We send large numbers of our military personnel on individual training courses in each others countries, from technical courses up to senior staff courses. This allows us to learn particular skills and exchange information. Over time this has promoted strong personal links between members of the defence forces.

We also engage in military exercises together. For land forces there is the regular MATILDA exercise. Our Air Forces and Navies operate together at such exercises as SINGAROO and KAKADU.

These exercises are of great benefit to both nations because they allow us to test our high technology platforms and the skill of the personnel who operate them.

Of course one thing that Australia has that Singapore lacks are training areas and airspace.

We appreciate that without facilities for full and regular training, military capability is rapidly eroded. Since we believe that a highly capable SAF supports regional security we are pleased to be able to make facilities in Australia available to SAF to conduct unilateral training.

These facilities are currently:

RAAF bases at Darwin, Townsville and Rockhampton, where the RSAF deploys fighters annually.

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A new deployment, shortly to commence at Tamworth, where aspiring Singaporean pilots will be screened.

Shoalwater Bay Training Area, where a substantial exercise involving two armoured brigades occurs annually. This exercise will in the future be supported by Super Pumas from this new facility here at Oakey.

This full range of exercises and deployments demonstrates the importance we place on the relationship and our commitment to seeing it develop in ways which meet the interests of both countries. We see it as one of the critical defence relationships we have with regional nations.

I am also delighted however at a further benefit arising from the regular deployments to Australia conducted by the Singapore Armed Forces. That is of course the opportunity it offers to the communities nearby and to Australian firms to provide support services to the Singapore Armed Forces.

It is an important element of our defence policy that the presence of military personnel from other nations should benefit Australia, and I am pleased to acknowledge the substantial contribution that Singapore Armed Forces deployments make in this regard.

And finally, I would like to greet our Singaporean friends, the members of 126 Squadron and their families, to Oakey.

You are indeed most welcome here and I wish you well during your stay in Australia.

I would now like to invite Deputy Prime Minister Tan to say a few words.

News Release:

- Opening Ceremony of the RSAF Helicopter Detachment in Oakey, Australia (Document No: MINDEF_19990820001.pdf)

National Archives of Singapore