



# SPEECH

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## **Speech by Mr Peter Ho, Permanent Secretary (Defence), at the First Frigate Keel-Laying Ceremony at Lorient, France**

14 Nov 2002

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to officiate at the Republic of Singapore Navy's first frigate keel laying ceremony.

The strong defence relationship between France and Singapore is founded on many common strategic interests. This convergence of interests is the basis for the multi-faceted relationship that has grown in recent years to include defence technology collaboration, military co-operation and policy dialogues.

The scientists and engineers from DGA, the Defence Science and Technology Agency and DSO National Laboratories meet regularly to advance our defence R&D co-operation in many areas of mutual interest. The frigate programme is one element in the defence technology collaboration between our two countries.

Military cooperation between the French Armed Forces and the Singapore Armed Forces has also expanded in recent years. The Republic of Singapore Air Force's fighter detachment in Cazaux Air Base underscores the strong ties between our two armed forces, where Singapore fighter pilots have been training since 1998. The goodwill and rapport built up through working together serve our two armed forces well.

And the regular forum between our two Defence Ministries in annual policy talks allows for a very useful exchange of views on global strategic issues and the security landscape in our respective regions. This allows us to better understand each other's perspectives and frame the context for our defence cooperation.

The frigate programme is a key element in the defence relationship between our two countries. It signifies the strong cooperation between our defence establishments and industries - France's DGA and DCN, and Singapore's Defence Science and Technology Agency, and the Republic of Singapore Navy.

I congratulate the Programme Teams from France and Singapore for reaching this important milestone on schedule. To be able to lay the keel within twenty months of contract signature reflects the excellent working relationship among our engineers and naval officers. ST Marine has already begun the construction of the second and third of the remaining five frigates in Singapore. Last month, ST Marine began the plate cutting for the two frigates.

When completed, the frigate programme will considerably expand the capabilities that the Singapore Navy can employ in the defence of Singapore. It will also showcase the technology and engineering capabilities of France's and Singapore's defence industries, and the close working relationship between our defence technology agencies. This will also allow our two navies to enhance their bilateral cooperation in the form of training and exercises.

As construction progresses in L'Orient and Singapore, the volume and pace of activities will surely grow and intensify. Judging from the impressive achievements that have been made, I am confident that all the parties involved will continue to work toward ensuring the timely completion of the frigate programme. Once again, congratulations on achieving this milestone. We look forward to the arrival of the first frigate in Singapore in early 2005.

Thank you.

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