



SPEECH

Visit <http://www.mindef.gov.sg> for more news and information about MINDEF and the SAF

Speech by Chief of Defence Force, Lieutenant-General Lim Chuan Poh at the Chief of Defence Force Change of Command Ceremony

28 Mar 2003

Deputy Prime Minister, 2nd Minister, Minister of State, Parliamentary Secretary, Permanent Secretary, distinguished guests, members of the SAF, ladies and gentlemen, a very good afternoon to all of you.

Let me first thank Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence for officiating at this Change of Command Parade. I would also like to thank all the distinguished guests for your presence here today. To Commander 9 Division and his parade organizing committee, to the Parade Commander and to all of you on parade today, my deepest appreciation for your tremendous efforts.

I was appointed the Chief of Defence Force on 1st April 2000. In these three years, the world and our region have seen some very fundamental changes to the security environment.

Today, we live in a very uncertain world. Concerns about the political and security implications arising from the Asian financial crisis in the late 90's have given way to fears about global terrorism. Sep 11th 2001 was a wake up call for the entire world. It reminded us that terrorism can strike anyone, anywhere and anytime. In Singapore, we followed the events of 911 on television in our living room. Horrible as the scenes were, they seemed far away. Soon after, Singaporeans were rudely awoken with the uncovering of Jemaiah Islamiya network operating right here in Singapore, and as part of a larger network in the region. As if to drive home the point about global terrorism in this region, we witnessed the very tragic Bali Bombing incident on Oct 12 last year. And now, the war in Iraq is in its 9th day. The events of the last 18 months are stark reminders that, now more than before, we simply cannot take our peace and security for granted.

The changing security environment in the last three years presented the SAF with many new challenges. First, the SAF was being called upon to play a larger role in peace keeping and humanitarian efforts as a responsible member of the international community. In 1999, at the

invitation of Indonesia and the United Nations, the SAF participated in peacekeeping operations in East Timor as part of INTERFET. Since then, at the request of the United Nations Peacekeeping Office, the SAF have steadily increased our level of participation. Today, our commitment in Timor Leste comprises a Company Task Force and a detachment comprising four UH-1H helicopters, making a total of more than 250 people. Timor Leste is our largest ever commitment to any UN peacekeeping operation and also the first time that we commit combat troops.

Another first is the selection and appointment of MG Tan Huck Gim as the Force Commander of the Peace Keeping Force (PKF) in Timor Leste. The security environment in Timor Leste remains uncertain and operations there are not risk free. However our people have acquitted themselves well so far and I am confident that they will overcome any challenges that may arise in the future.

In Feb 2000, DPM launched the book entitled "Defending Singapore in the 21st Century" or DS 21. This book outlines the blueprint for ensuring Singapore's security in the 21st century. The key thrust of DS 21 is for the SAF to continue to focus on sustaining and enhancing our current core capabilities. At the same time, the SAF was to expand the capabilities to deal with a wide spectrum of operational scenarios; ranging from conventional operations to operations other than war.

To meet this challenge, the SAF had to work closely with various other ministries and government agencies, especially in developing responses to non-conventional threats. Our efforts were soon put to the test in the aftermath of the Sep 11th attacks. With the framework developed under DS21, the SAF was able to quickly and effectively integrate with other home-front agencies to put in place appropriate security measures against possible terrorist attacks to Singapore. On the ground, our soldiers were deployed to protect key civil and military installations; in the air, our airmen maintained constant vigilance; and in the water, our sailors scanned the horizon.

While this prolonged and sustained operation of vigilance has stretched our mental and physical limits, it has also helped to foster greater camaraderie, strengthen cohesion and generate professional pride within the SAF. Here, I would like to commend all the commanders, staff and soldiers, sailors and airmen involved for all your leadership, efforts and sacrifices in the last three years.

On 1st July last year, the SAF commemorated 35 Years of National Service at the National Stadium in conjunction with the SAF Day Parade. In spite of inclement weather, the parade proceeded as planned. The adverse weather condition experienced during the parade was strangely appropriate. It reflected conditions under which the SAF operates. Be it on land, in the air or out at sea, our soldiers, sailors and airmen carry out their missions regardless of night or day, fair or foul weather and 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

The Parade demonstrated the determination and commitment of the SAF and our people, both Regulars and NSmen alike. Indeed, it is precisely when the going gets tough that we, the SAF, must be the one that gets going. The increased intensity and scope of our operations in the face of new threats underscores the importance and contribution of our National Servicemen. National Servicemen continue to form the bulk of the SAF and will remain vital as the SAF rises to meet the challenges posed by the new security environment.

Singapore is a small country and we cannot afford a large defence force. National service is therefore fundamental to our defence and security. In my years in the SAF, I have never failed to be impressed by the commitment and dedication of many of our NSmen. In more recent years, our NSmen have also responded to our operational calling whether for UN missions, Post Sep 11 security requirements or ad hoc responses to humanitarian missions.

Looking back at my tour of duty, I am heartened by the tremendous sense of dedication and commitment that each and everyone of you have demonstrated in the discharge of your duties. The leadership and professionalism you have shown is a constant source of inspiration, and I am encouraged and proud to have led you. I urge you to continue to uphold the high standards that you have set. In these uncertain times, the SAF must remain vigilant. To do so, you must remain agile and alert. Only then can we effectively carry out our assigned missions and safeguard the security of our nation.

In conclusion, I would like to thank DPM and Minister for Defence for his guidance and MINDEF HQ for their support over the last 3 years. I also want to thank them for their confidence and trust in me and in the SAF. To my Service Chiefs and the Joint Staff, let me thank you for your efforts in fostering greater integration and cohesion across the three services and for achieving your respective missions. To DSTA (Defence Science and Technology Agency), DSO (Defence Science Organisation) and the defence Industry, let me thank you for giving us operationally advanced and cost effective capabilities and providing us with the force multiplier effect.

To all the other agencies, thank you for your support and cooperation especially in the last 18 months as we worked very closely together to provide security to our homeland. To all my foreign counterparts represented by the respective Defence Attaches present here, I thank you for your invaluable contribution in enhancing bilateral relations between the SAF and your Armed Forces.

Last and certainly not least, to every member of the SAF present here today and to many, many more who cannot be here, to all the commanders and warriors, to all the regulars and NSmen, to all the Officers, Warrant Officers, Specialists and enlistees, let me thank you for your tremendous dedication, efforts and sacrifices to achieve the SAF mission in the last three years.

It is with great satisfaction that I am handing over the responsibility of the Chief of Defence Force to Major General Ng Yat Chung. MG Ng is well known to all of you. He has had a distinguished career in the SAF and has excelled in all his endeavours. As the Chief of Army, he is familiar with all significant developments in the Army and the SAF. Under his leadership, and with your full support, I have every confidence that the SAF will grow from strength to strength. I wish him and all of you the very best as you meet the challenges of the future.

News Release:

- Chief of Defence Force Change of Command Parade (Document No: MINDEF_20030328001.pdf)

National Archives of Singapore