



SPEECH

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Speech by Chief of Defence Force Singapore Armed Forces LG Ng Yat Chung at the Opening Ceremony of Exercise Bersama Padu 2006

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Chief of Defence Force, LG Ng Yat Chung

It has been 35 years since the inception of the Five Power Defence Arrangements in 1971. The original purpose of the FPDA was for the external defence of Malaysia and Singapore. Over the years, the FPDA has since evolved to remain an important part of the regional security architecture. It remains a platform for high-level dialogue on issues of regional security, and a means of building capacity and to interoperate among FPDA forces to deal with new emerging security challenges. As we look ahead, the FPDA will continue to remain as an important regional multilateral arrangement with a strong professional focus by fostering security dialogues and military exchanges.

As the security environment changes, the FPDA members must ensure that the FPDA activities remain relevant to contemporary needs. FPDA started from basic air defence exercises in the 1970s to separate naval and air exercises in the 80s. In the mid-1990s, the air and naval components were combined in a single exercise. Military modernization of each of the armed forces of FPDA members has allowed the scope and complexity of conventional warfare in FPDA exercises to become more sophisticated in concept and execution. The exercises have progressed from developing common procedures to planning and executing more complex scenario-based exercises. In addition, there is the joint element growing, an element that requires advanced information technologies and elaborate joint military planning

processes.

FPDA members have looked beyond conventional warfare to tackling non-conventional threats such as terrorism and maritime security. More than 90% of the world's trade is transported by sea and roughly a quarter of that passing through the Malacca and Singapore Straits. Maritime security will continue to be a key concern for the region. Since 2004, maritime security serials have been successfully interwoven into exercise play of the FPDA exercises. The FPDA will continue to build on its capabilities to handle threats to maritime security.

Looking ahead, the FPDA will also explore ways to cooperate even more in the area of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that devastated the region near to the Indian Ocean, together with major earthquakes in Pakistan and Indonesia, have demonstrated the value of inter-operability in enhancing the military's contribution to humanitarian assistance disaster relief. Better inter-operability established among the FPDA forces in this area could enhance their effectiveness should FPDA countries have to work along side each other in relief missions in the future.

This year's inaugural Exercise Bersama Padu, which means "United Together" marks a significant milestone. Other than bringing together probably the largest amount of equipment and personnel, comprising some 21 ships, 85 aircraft and 1 submarine for combined joint operations in a multi-threat exercise scenario, there are two significant highlights for this year. First, full land and logistics components will be exercised for the first time. Secondly, the scope of participation by Other Government Departments (OGDs), such as the International Community of the Red Cross (ICRC), has been expanded as part of the non-conventional operational training. The maritime security component of the exercise will feature the interception and boarding of target vessels, while a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) CPX will be introduced to strengthen inter-agency coordination. These augmentations to the exercise, on top of realistic and demanding exercise play at the operational and tactical levels, will enable the FPDA to strengthen its conventional capabilities while building capacity to handle a wider range of non-conventional operations.

Exercise Bersama Padu builds upon the experience gained together and lessons learnt from earlier FPDA exercises. Paya Lebar Airbase will serve as the headquarters for this year's exercise. The facility will come with an action information system that will help provide a near real-time comprehensive surface and air picture that will be shared extensively across tactical units, players, planners and exercise decision makers. Staffed jointly by personnel from all five member countries, it will help level up the operational level play and handle the increased complexity that we have introduced in the exercise.

Along with my friends and colleagues from the FPDA countries, I look forward to a successful exercise. I declare Exercise Bersama Padu 2006 opened.