



SPEECH

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

Speech by Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and National Development Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman at the Committee of Supply Debate 2012

06 Mar 2012

Total Defence

Dr Intan Mokhtar asked about our Total Defence efforts, especially with schools, and about the relevance of Total Defence.

Sir, we have heard from Dr Ng that the threats to our peace and security have expanded in scope and complexity. Such threats have widespread repercussions and require a multi-sector response.

Total Defence - with its five aspects of military, civil, economic, social and psychological defence - provides this multi-sector response by bringing Singaporeans together in a united and integrated approach to deal with national crises of all kinds. For example, we were able to pull through the recent economic crisis, the worst since our independence, relatively unscathed through strong cooperation between the government, employers and workers.

For Total Defence to work, everyone has to play a part. This is the message of our annual campaigns since we first launched Total Defence in 1984. The response to our campaigns so far shows that Singaporeans understand this. For instance, Mr Jeremy Lim Hon Lee, an NUS student, said to *The New Paper*, "Every day is Total Defence Day, as we have to continue maintaining our strengths and enhancing our capabilities. It is the responsibility of every Singaporean to do so." Mr Lim, as some of you may know, was born with brittle bone disease. He has risen above adversity to now study at NUS and actively gives back to society - a true inspiration to all of us.

Sir, we now need to go beyond the "head" and "heart", to the "hands". MINDEF will work with other agencies that represent other components of Total Defence to encourage Singaporeans to build up and keep up-to-date skills for Total Defence. For instance, we will continue to work with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Singapore Civil Defence Force and

other partners involved in Civil Defence like the People's Association and its grassroots movement to ensure that Singaporeans know what to do in case of any emergencies.

The Total Defence campaign this year also reminds us that Total Defence is an effort that requires all Singaporeans of every generation to play a part. Carrying the theme "Total Defence - It's My Turn", the campaign centres on getting Singaporeans to take action in our own ways to strengthen Total Defence, including doing our part to help fellow Singaporeans by being involved in community work and at the same time strengthening our spirit of volunteerism and active citizenry. And we heard from Dr Intan how impressed she was with the students who came up with the theme song for this year's campaign.

Indeed, when Singaporeans reach out and help fellow Singaporeans, we are strengthening our Social Defence. A key component of this year's campaign is thus a series of ground-initiated community projects that see Singaporeans from all walks of life volunteering to do something for the community. For instance, local restaurateur Willin Low organised a three-course Chinese New Year lunch for elderly residents during the festive period, while Ngee Ann Polytechnic Film & Media Studies student Mr Chong Yu Lun organised a music video production workshop for youths especially those who lack opportunities - to equip them with the skills to express themselves creatively.

Sir, for Total Defence Day this year, the SAF also partnered with four schools - ITE College West, Raffles Institution, Singapore Polytechnic and Tampines Junior College - to jointly organise the Total Defence Day event held at these schools. Total Defence Day is one of the four core National Education events commemorated by schools every year. With this collaboration, this year's event, which showcased different aspects of Total Defence including a CPR training workshop, reached out to more than 15,000 students, sending the message that you are never too young to be involved in Total Defence.

We agree with Dr Intan, and have planned for more of such school centred events and activities to be rolled out. MINDEF will continue to work with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to explore how Total Defence can be better integrated with National Education in schools.

National Archives of Singapore

Commitment to Defence

Sir, Mr Sitoh Yih Pin asked how MINDEF reaches out to Singaporeans, especially women, to build commitment to defence, and how we use new media platforms to engage Singaporeans of all backgrounds.

First of all, MINDEF continues to engage different segments of society to enhance commitment to defence and support for National Service. We engage the grassroots leaders and a wide range of community stakeholders on defence issues through, for example, the Advisory Council for Community Relations in Defence, or ACCORD. We also work closely with employers to gain their support for their employees' NS commitments. Mrs Lina Chiam mentioned earlier that Singaporeans seem to be disadvantaged because of their NS obligations. I want to assure Mrs Lina Chiam that many employers do understand and support the need for NS. Over the years, many employers, both local and foreign MNCs and SMEs across various industry sectors, have been awarded the Total Defence Award for their

commitment and support to MINDEF. This Award serves to recognise employers who have demonstrated their strong support for defence. From a 2011 survey conducted by MINDEF, over 80% of NSmen said that their employers were supportive of their NS commitments. We also work closely with educators to equip them to be effective interlocutors on defence issues. In collaboration with MOE, MINDEF/SAF rolled out the SAF-School Partnership Programme in 2011 to the Junior Colleges, Schools with Integrated Programmes, Polytechnics and ITEs. 29 out of 30 of these Post-Secondary Education Institutions signed up, partnering with SAF units to co-organise meaningful activities to expose students, both boys and girls, to defence issues and also prepare the male pre-enlistees for NS. We also sought new ways for families and friends of our servicemen and members of the public to support our servicemen on overseas deployments. One example is the Navy's Sea of Support microsite, where messages of support can be posted.

Sir, Mr Sitoh is absolutely right that women are very much part of our NS journey. They are critical in sustaining our national commitment to defence and supporting our servicemen's commitment to NS. Some of you may have seen video clips made by students for our current *N.E.mation!* competition that make this very point. If you have not, I encourage you to have a look, at www.nemation.sg. Additionally, since 2007, MINDEF has been regularly conducting dialogue sessions with representatives from various women's groups to seek their views, concerns, suggestions and support for NS and our commitment to defence. MINDEF has recently also embarked on various initiatives to reach out to the wider population of Singaporeans, including women. For example, we produced a 12-part web mini-series called "*Basic Military Talk*". This mini-series aims to inform viewers from all walks of life, but particularly women, on different facets of military life in an entertaining manner. In January, our *PIONEER* magazine also hit the newsstands bundled with entertainment weekly *8 Days*, so as to allow us to reach out to more Singaporeans, beyond our traditional NSman audience. We are looking to extend this initiative to other magazines in the months ahead, so keep a lookout!

Secondly, MINDEF's engagement approach has shifted towards a more "participative" form of engagement, using new media platforms. For example, through the annual *N.E.mation!* competition, we encourage young Singaporeans to reflect on the importance of Total Defence and the Singaporean identity through the creative medium of animation. More recently, the inaugural [ciNE65](#) short-film competition last year asked aspiring film-makers to share what Singapore means to them through the medium of film.

Thirdly, MINDEF has established a vibrant and expanding online presence and is reaching out via new social media platforms to engage Singaporeans. People have been regularly "liking" and sharing our content on our [MINDEFSG Facebook](#) page, while our [MINDEFSG YouTube](#) channel now has over 300 videos and about 6.4 million views. The TV-adaptation of the reality-style web-series "*Every Singaporean Son*" or "*ESS*" started screening on the National Geographic Channel in March 2011. Based on its ratings then, "*ESS*" was the No. 1 programme on Singapore Cable TV over the last two years, across what the media industry calls 'factual entertainment channels'. Entertainment aside, these efforts help to deepen the public's understanding of and support for NS and enhance their commitment to defence.

Sir, we are heartened that Singaporeans' commitment to NS and defence remains high. Our survey conducted in 2011 showed that more than 90% of our respondents - comprising NSFs, NSmen and members of the public - agree that NS is necessary, Singapore is where they belong and they would defend Singapore should it come under threat. But what is just as

heartening as the survey results are the many examples of NSmen who time and again have proven their strong commitment to serve. For example, MAJ (NS) Tan Tze Hian of 434 SAR, has been coming back for ICT every year since 1998 and has now completed 13 ICT cycles in total. In another example, CPT(NS) Edzra Bin Iskandar, the Battalion 2IC of 806 SIR, who graduated from the 12th NS Command and Staff Course last October, is currently serving another high-key ICT within the same work year. Both MAJ (NS) Tan and CPT (NS) Edzra are examples of NSmen with unwavering commitment to our NS system and will go the extra mile for their ICT.

I will conclude my response by showing you all the winning entry of this year's *N.E.mation!* competition where students were asked to produce a video based on the theme "*NS: From Fathers to Sons*". It is titled "*More than Words*" and I think when you see it, you will realise it is more than words. It is produced by a team who call themselves the Hungry Monsters of Dunman High School. Please enjoy.

National Archives of Singapore