



NEWS RELEASE

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Speech by Outgoing Chief of Defence Force, Lieutenant-General Neo Kian Hong at the Chief of Defence Force Change of Command Parade

27 Mar 2013

Minister for Defence,
Acting Minister and SMS,
Service Chiefs,
Distinguished Guests,
Men and Women of our SAF,
Good Afternoon.

Let me first thank all our men and women who are on parade today. Your fine bearing and discipline reflect the pride and confidence, of all Singaporeans in our SAF.

Since the announcement of my retirement from the SAF, the most common question that I have been asked, is "How do I feel, about leaving our SAF, after 3 years as the CDF, and 30 years of service?" My answer is simple. I feel proud, confident, and thankful.

First, I feel proud that our SAF continues to be operationally ready.

In the past decade, we have contributed to peacekeeping operations in Timor Leste; ensured homeland peace and security post-9/11; answered the nation's call during the SARS crisis; conducted disaster relief operations in our region; served in the reconstruction and stabilisation operations in Afghanistan; and led counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. Throughout all these operations, our people have served with pride and distinction. The UN Special Representative Sergio De Mello in then-East Timor summed it up best. He said, "Where Singaporeans are, things work".

Next, I feel confident about our future, given the transformation that our SAF has made to stay ahead.

The past decade saw the remarkable transformation of our SAF. Our Army became more mobile, protected, lethal, and urban-capable, with the addition of Leopard Main Battle Tanks, Terrex Infantry Fighting Vehicles, and HIMARS. Our Air Force re-organised from bases to commands, and introduced new capabilities such as the F-15SGs, Gulfstream 550s, and Apache attack helicopters. Our Navy also moved forward, with new submarines and stealth frigates equipped with naval helicopters. With the creation of the C4I community, we strengthened our intelligence, information and connectivity. To support our SAF better, we also established the Combat Service Support Command and Personnel Command, and introduced mobile devices using LEARNet to update our training system.

Our SAF is now an integrated and networked force, one that is full spectrum, adaptive, and resilient. In 2011, Jane's Defence wrote that "Our SAF is by far the most advanced military in Southeast Asia.. and only a handful of the world's armed forces would have the ability to cross that line of deterrence provided by our SAF".

Third, I feel thankful for the opportunities to work with our people, and for our nation.

In my years of service in our SAF, I have come to realise that the true strength of our SAF lies not in our equipment, nor our ability to conduct operations. Instead, our strength lies in the readiness, of every able-bodied male citizen, to defend our nation. Over the past thirty years, I saw soldiers with heavy backpacks on endless marches, moving through the night, assaulting battle positions without complaint. I saw determination in their eyes. I saw sailors in rough seas, their eyes ever-watchful and spirit unwavering. I saw the look in our airmen, professional and always bent on winning. It is in those eyes, that we know that Singaporeans can remain confident in our SAF.

At independence, all Singapore had was the belief that we could succeed, and the will to overcome our challenges. National Service and our SAF gave substance to that belief, and nurtured the will of our people. Over the years, our SAF has grown together with our nation and enjoyed strong support from our society. This collective will gave us our SAF, and more importantly, it forged a nation. At the NS45 celebrations last year, Prime Minister Lee said that National Service is a defining part of Singapore's identity. Through National Service, our people have a shared experience and a common bond. We must value the contributions and harness the collective will to build our future together.

A senior Australian civil servant once observed that Singaporeans were able to overcome the SARS crisis, because "The people trust their leaders, and the people trust one another". Indeed, this is the simple secret of our success. We must be ready, through sweat, sacrifice, and tears, to serve our nation. We have done well, but the work continues.

As I pass the baton on, I feel happy to hand over to Major General Ng Chee Meng. He is fiercely loyal, highly professional, and cares deeply for our people. I am confident that we will all rally to his leadership, and our SAF will continue to grow to greater heights, just as we have done for the past 46 years.

At this point, I want to thank the families of all our soldiers, sailors and airmen, for your love, care and support all these years. You are instrumental in allowing our people to serve our nation, with full attention and without worries on the home-front. Whenever I look at my wife Jane and my three sons, I am reminded of the sacrifices made by the families of all our men and women in the SAF. I will also like to thank our Minister for Defence and MINDEF, as well as our key defence partners, for their strong support of our SAF.

It has been my greatest honour and privilege, to serve side-by-side with men and women of the SAF, over three decades. I am extremely proud to be a part of the SAF. We love our country and our people, and we will continue to serve with pride and dedication, to ensure that our SAF is an institution that our nation is proud of.

Thank you.

More Resources:

- New Chief of Defence Force for the SAF (Document No: MINDEF_20130327001)
- Speech by Incoming Chief of Defence Force, Major-General Ng Chee Meng at the Chief of Defence Force Change of Command Parade (Document No: MINDEF_20130327002_1)

National Archives of Singapore