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Speech by Senior Minister of State (Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs), Mr Masagos Zulkifli, at the 18/2013 Specialist Cadet Graduation Parade

28 Mar 2014

Graduates of the 18/2013 Specialist Cadet Course,
Parents,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
A very good evening.

To the graduands on parade, let me congratulate all of you on successfully completing the Specialist Cadet Course. It was a tough and rigorous course which tested your physical and mental abilities. You are here today because you have passed this test. All of you have shown the ability, drive and determination to push the limits and excel.

At the same time, I also want you to recognise all the people who have helped you to reach this milestone - your parents and loved ones who have stood behind you throughout this journey. I am sure their strong support and encouragement have significantly contributed to your fine achievements.

Your graduation today marks the end of a key phase of your training but more importantly, it signifies a new beginning of your service to the nation as a Specialist of the SAF. You are now entrusted with heavy responsibilities of defending our nation and our people. The generations before you did their part in keeping Singapore safe and secure. It is now your turn to step up and continue the responsibility of guarding our country, our families and our homes.

Indeed, history has taught us that we can only rely on ourselves to defend our country.

Our forefathers had gone through much turmoil and turbulence during the Japanese Occupation in the Second World War, the Konfrontasi Campaign and the Communist insurgency, and their experiences forged a visceral and deep conviction of the need for a strong military.

Recent events in Ukraine and the Crimea also remind us of the heavy price that small states pay when they do not have a strong defence. Such events serve as a poignant and timely reminder that we cannot take our peace, stability, prosperity and progress for granted. In the final analysis, no one but Singapore's own Armed Forces can be counted on to guarantee our sovereignty and safeguard our way of life.

The security challenges today are wide-ranging, ever-evolving and unpredictable, ranging from terrorism to piracy and cyber attacks. To stay ahead of these threats, the SAF has over the years broadened and deepened its capabilities by leveraging new technologies, weaponry and platforms. There will be greater decentralisation of operations and more autonomy given to our ground troops to enable them to fight more effectively and efficiently. With these changes, it becomes even more crucial to have strong leaders among our junior ranks and this includes each and every one of you on parade today.

While modern weaponry and advanced equipment have transformed the SAF, it is the mettle and fighting spirit of our people that makes the SAF strong. Our Officers, Military Experts, Warrant Officers and Specialists Corps bring their unique strengths and value-add, and their close partnership help ensure mission success for the SAF.

We will count on you to engage the soldiers under your charge. Train them well and help them maximise their strengths. Unlock their potential and motivate them to give their best during training, but always, always, have their well-being and safety in mind. Be genuine in your actions and words to earn the respect and trust of your men. Spend time with them, and be their guide, friend and mentor.

Lead with conviction and be a good role model for the men and women under your charge. Always do what you expect your soldiers to do, and help them achieve the standards that you set for them. Lead them with pride and uphold the values of soldiering - duty, honour, country.

This generation of men and women under your charge will come from all walks of life and bring with them varied perspectives. They will need your leadership to help them understand the importance of NS. But you are not alone in this endeavour. Since 2013, MINDEF convened the Committee to Strengthen National Service last year to consult Singaporeans on how we can strengthen Singapore, the SAF and NS. The Committee has been consulting widely with over 40,000 stakeholders from all backgrounds to find out

how we can strengthen commitment to NS and support our National Servicemen. Arising from a recommendation from the CSNS to strengthen our training systems, MINDEF/SAF and the Home Team will be employing more than a thousand additional regulars to be full-time professional trainers as a career path.

The role of the Warrant Officers and Specialists in particular will be pivotal to strengthen training in our units, providing developmental coaching and leadership training.

On this note, allow me to once again congratulate all of you for your fine achievements. The rank that you are about to wear is an affirmation of the nation's trust and confidence in you. Perform your duties to the best of your abilities and live up to the Specialists' creed of excellence, leadership by example and dedication to Singapore. I welcome all of you as Specialists of the SAF, and wish you all the best as you serve our country to the best of your abilities.

WITH PRIDE WE LEAD

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