



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Speech by Minister for Manpower Mr Tan Chuan-Jin at the 94/14 Officer Cadet Course Commissioning Parade**

18 Oct 2014

Graduands of the 94/14 Officer Cadet Course.

Parents,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

As I thought about what to share here today at your commissioning, I tried to recall the last time I attended this parade. After some time, I realised that the last parade I attended was in May 1989. That was my own commissioning parade at Sandhurst. I have no idea what was said that day, or even remember who was our reviewing officer. But what I do know now, as I look back, and to paraphrase Churchill, is that it was not the end, it was not even the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning.

From that day, it has been a lifelong journey of learning and growth, until today. And it continues. There have been ups and downs. There have been so many humbling moments where you find yourself inadequate as a leader and as a person. It will happen. But those are also the moments when I learnt the most. I also often wished that I had realised some of the things I did, and I do now, a lot earlier.

Allow me to share with you three perspectives to consider as you too embark on your journey. Remember our purpose, what it is to be a leader and to always build our nation.

Our Purpose

Firstly, we need to understand that above all, we are a profession of arms dedicated to the protection of our people and our nation. Wars may seem like a far-fetched notion. It seemed that way too to many countries that have been subjugated. It happened to Singapore when the Japanese invaded in February 1942 and subjected us to years of untold misery and suffering. It must not happen again.

We build and structure the SAF to deter and should deterrence fail, to achieve a swift and decisive victory. We must be clear, that if and when we are called into action, there is no second chance. There is no runner-up medal. There are no words of consolation, "Good effort, try again next time." There is no "semulah". For us as a small nation, we have no fall back option. This is why we build up the SAF the way we do. This is why we train hard. This is why we need to carry out our duties professionally. We owe it to our people to protect them. We owe it to our soldiers to make sure that they win and come back to their families.

This is why we must continue to learn and grow to ensure this. This is why we serve.

### Leadership

Secondly, do realise that our rank does not represent leadership. It does not make us a leader. We command because we have been given that authority and the weight that comes with that. But we lead because others follow. They follow because they trust us. They trust because of who we are, the values that we stand for. They trust us when we are able to put others before self. It is not just about what we say or what we do, important as that may be. But also what we don't say or don't do, and how we say it and how we do it.

This is why we must continue to learn and grow; to constantly put our values to practice, to learn to subordinate ourselves to the greater good of others, because that will shape who we are. That will determine if others will follow.

### Building our Nation

Thirdly, because we understand our purpose and our role as leaders, we need to build our nation. Whatever the capabilities we develop, it comes to nothing if we do not have the will to fight and defend what is our own. We must believe that our people and nation is worth fighting for.

This sense of a nation and as a people doesn't just happen. We need to nurture it. We need to build it. We all know from lessons learnt from wars that soldiers often don't just fight for flag and country. They do so for their buddies next to them, so as not to let them down, to fail them.

Clearly, while we can provide you a house we cannot provide you a home. A home is built on love and compassion, relationships that bind. Which is why we have to do what we can to build up these ties, in our families, in our communities, in our own networks, in your units. These relationships give being a nation meaning.

Which is why even as we train and serve, remember that we must also build our heartware and strengthen our bonds.

### Closing Thoughts

Let me end with my own personal journey as a leader in the SAF. I was the Commanding Officer of 3rd Battalion Singapore Guards, 10th mono-intake. In fact COL Seet Uei Lim, Commander OCS was my Company Commander. The men enlisted towards the end of 2000 and ORD-ed at the end of 2001. Over the years, they returned for In-Camp Training as 662 Guards.

We believed in training the men hard and to push the boundaries so that they will win in the event we do need to go to war. We volunteered and programmed for as much live firing as possible so that we train as we fight, and fight as we trained.

But we also tried to build up a strong sense of camaraderie and to also help our Guardsmen understand what is at stake and what it means to be Singaporean.

We also tried to work hard at developing our leaders so that they could be better people. And to also lead by example so as to inspire them to train harder and to also believe that there is purpose in this seeming madness. We had also hoped that we could develop responsible and committed citizens, sons and fathers.

662 Guards' last ICT started yesterday. Some of us will be marching these last steps alongside them. Our platoon commanders, company commanders and others.

Why do we do this?

Perhaps in some small way, we had woven bonds that bind, for a lifetime. And perhaps these bonds would be the foundation upon which our nation will continue to be built.

And perhaps these are the bonds that will commit us to keeping our nation forever strong and free.

To all the leaders standing before us, care for your people, protect our nation and lead well. Congratulations!

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