



SPEECH

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Speech by Minister of State for Defence Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman at the SAF Senior Military Expert Appointment Ceremony

28 Jul 2015

Service Chiefs,

Senior Commanders,

Graduates of the 9th SAF Senior Military Experts Course,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good evening.

Let me begin by congratulating the graduating cohort of the 9th Senior Military Experts Course. A total of 125 of you will be appointed as Senior Military Experts today and I am told that this is the largest number of servicemen and women to receive the ME4 rank since the inaugural course in 2011. Conducted by experienced instructors, I am assured that the course has prepared you well for the challenges in your future leadership appointments.

In many institutions, graduation ceremonies are known as commencement ceremonies as they mark the beginning of a new phase for the graduands. Indeed, today marks a defining point in your careers and I am very pleased to be able to be part of it. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in congratulating the graduates of the 9th Senior Military Experts Course.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all the family members who are here with us tonight. Without you and your support, our men and women in uniform would not have been able to do what they do for the SAF and for Singapore. Just as the SAF gives strength to our nation, it is you, our family members, who give strength to the SAF. Your selfless sacrifice has not gone unnoticed. Please join me in expressing our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to our family members and loved ones. Without them, the SAF

would not be what it is today. Thank you.

To the graduands, your graduation comes at a momentous time in our nation's history. This year, we celebrate our 50th year of independence. It is by no coincidence that the SAF also turns 50 this year. Our pioneers have lived through the dark days of Japanese occupation and the turmoil after separation, recognised the harsh reality that "you do not own what you cannot defend". Our independence could only be guaranteed by a strong and credible defence force and it was upon this belief that our pioneers laid the foundations for the SAF.

As a nation struggling to survive, we had very little resources to devote to the SAF in the early years. What we lacked in resources, our pioneers more than made up for in spirit, smarts and resolve. They were sustained by their whole-hearted belief in the defence of Singapore. They had the steel and resolve to give blood and sweat to build-up the SAF, soldier-by-soldier, brick-by-brick.

As we count down towards the SG50 celebrations on National Day in less than two weeks' time, I thought it would be fitting for us to think back to our pioneers, and learn from these "giants" upon whose shoulders we stand today.

Let me begin by saying a bit about having a pioneering spirit - this willingness to push boundaries, break new ground and innovate.

This spirit of innovation, of finding effective solutions to tackle problems and overcome our constraints has long been in the DNA of the SAF. When we started out 50 years ago, our SAF Pioneers learnt fast, adapted and innovated to transform the SAF into a modern and capable force. Today, the need for this pioneering spirit within the SAF is as great as any time in our history.

The recently launched Littoral Mission Vessel Independence has been described as "smarter, faster and sharper" and this new class of ships was designed and conceptualised locally. It is a uniquely Singaporean design and operated by a crew of only 23. This is less than half what similar vessels in other navies require. With an Integrated Command Centre that allows most tasks to be carried out in the same space, the design of our LMVs is also a radical departure from the norm. How did the Navy manage to do this?

This was made possible in no small part by the Navy's Military Experts who shaped the ship's design to meet our operational requirements in a more manpower-efficient manner. Military Experts like ME6 Toh Tee Yang and ME5 Tang Chee Meng, principal engineers of the LMV programme, worked closely with our local defence industry to push the limits and make this possible.

On the 25th of April this year, the SAF activated Ops Swift Lion to support humanitarian and disaster relief operations in Nepal following a devastating earthquake. One of your colleagues, ME4 Rezel Brian Luke, then Flight Engineer Leader of the C-130 squadron, led his team at short notice to prepare for the detachment of 3 aircraft. Beyond the challenges posed by operating at high altitude and weather conditions, the air crew also

faced the problem of air traffic congestion at Kathmandu, where they were diverted and made to taxi for long hours. To conserve fuel, Rezel shut down the engines at the taxiway as the supplies were unloaded, and when further delays surfaced on the ground, he recommended that our aircraft refuel in Phuket instead of flying directly home. ME4 Rezel demonstrated strong engineering expertise which enabled the detachment to respond swiftly and effectively to changing operational circumstances on the ground.

Meanwhile, Military Experts from our Army have also developed innovative technical solutions for our armoured vehicles. One example is the implementation of an additional parking brake warning indicator on our BRONCO vehicles to reduce the risk of fire if the vehicle moves off while its parking brake is still engaged. Our Military Experts also worked tirelessly with the suppliers of the BIONIX vehicle in an effort to reduce the emission of black smoke in its exhaust. Both of these innovative solutions will be fielded in this year's NDP mobile column.

This ability to push the envelope to achieve the best outcome for Singapore's defence, which is so crucial for a small country like us, would not have been possible without our people's deep expertise and specialised knowledge. As senior Military Experts, you anchor the deep domain expertise in the SAF in niche areas such as engineering, intelligence and military medicine. At the same time, because all of you also possess extensive operational experiences, it allows you to bring to the table a unique blend of expertise and operational experience which will play a key role in the SAF's continuing transformation journey.

Our Military Experts have proven themselves over a wide range of operational deployments - from peace support operations in Afghanistan, to humanitarian and disaster relief operations across the region, to search and locate missions following the crashes of Malaysian Airlines MH370 and Air Asia QZ8501, to being part of the international counter piracy coalition in the Gulf of Aden. It now falls to all of you, as the next generation of senior Military Experts, to pick up the gauntlet and pursue your own breakthroughs in your areas of work. We must always be ready to overcome the unexpected with our wits. As the threats and challenges we face become increasingly complex, we will look to you, our Military Experts, to bring in a constant flow of new and better ideas to ready the SAF for the future.

I note that there are a number of mid-careerists amongst your cohort, previously coming from the private sector as well as our own local defence industry. What you have brought to the SAF is a wealth of experience, knowledge and more importantly, fresh perspectives. As a Military Expert community, you should leverage these new perspectives so that together, you can bring innovation within the SAF to new heights.

Just a few moments ago you received your swords and certificates of appointment. These are symbols of your responsibility, that you are part of the leadership corp of the SAF. Looking back at the example set by our pioneers, it was their strong and visionary leadership that carried the SAF through the difficult early years. The resolve that they demonstrated in the face of adversity moved their soldiers, imbued them with the belief that Singapore could be defended, something that was hard to imagine back then.

As leaders of the 3rd Generation SAF, it falls upon all of you to continue to carry that flag, to lead the men and women under your charge with integrity, conviction and heart, and to inspire them with the same kind of

passion and commitment that you yourselves have to defend Singapore.

In closing, I call upon all of you, as leaders of the SAF, to never stop learning, to continue to innovate and adapt for your mission, and to lead your people with dedication and passion. The SAF pioneers have laid a solid foundation for a strong SAF. As part of the leadership corp, you must ensure that the SAF continues to give strength to our nation, inspiring every Singaporean with confidence that peace and security are theirs as citizens. I have every confidence that all of you will discharge your duties with distinction.

Once again, my heartiest congratulations to all of you, and all the very best in your future endeavours.

Thank you.

News Release:

- 125 Appointed as SAF Senior Military Experts (MINDEF_20150728001_1.pdf)

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