



# SPEECH

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## **Speech by Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Mr Masagos Zulkifli Bin Masagos Mohamad, at the 100/15 Officer Cadet Course Commissioning Parade**

09 Apr 2016

Graduands of the 100/15 Officer Cadet Course,  
Parents, Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my pleasure to join all of you this evening to honour this significant occasion. To all of the young men and women on parade today, your hard work over the last 38 weeks has finally come to fruition. I am glad to see you all stand tall and proud on this parade square. The commissioning signifies your taking on of the solemn responsibility, as an officer of the SAF, to train and lead the people under your charge.

Your learning journey does not end with your commission. Indeed, never stop learning. Never stop growing; for your responsibilities thrust upon you will not diminish. We entrust the defence of our nation, the safety of our loved ones and the security of our way of life upon you. And you must inspire nothing less than the highest standards of professionalism and discipline in the men and women under your charge, even as you hold yourself to these high standards.

This is not a simple undertaking. It requires a tremendous amount of energy and motivation. You will experience times when the mission seems impossible, your men are tired and your equipment weighs heavily on your back. In times like these, where do you draw strength from? On this very important occasion, allow me to share three sources of motivation you can turn to in times of need.

First, draw strength from knowing that the work of keeping our home safe rests in your young but competent hands. We must never take our present peace and prosperity for granted. Our security environment is complex and volatile. Just last month, suicide bombers carried out attacks on Brussels airport and a metro train. These attacks, claimed by ISIS, left 35 people killed and 300 injured. Closer to home, in January this year, a group of gunmen launched ISIS-inspired attacks in the heart of Jakarta; 4 civilians were killed and 20 were wounded.

So the menace of terrorism is clear and present in Singapore, just as in Brussels and Jakarta. ISIS is a well-organised and well-resourced army that has significant financial resources. They have recruited and trained

thousands of fighters. ISIS has named Singapore as a target, and is encouraging its Southeast Asian fighting unit, the Katibah Nusantara, to strike right here. We are an attractive target because our multi-racial, multi-religious society defies their worldview. Terrorists do not discriminate in their mission to cause fear. They target civilians, of all races and religions. They threaten not only our existence, but the way we lead our lives. They tug and tear at our strong multi-racial social fabric that we have knit over the years.

The SAF is a key pillar in our country's fight against the scourge of terror. The SAF's multinational reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2013 helped prevent extremists from using Afghanistan to export terrorism to the rest of the world, including our region. Singapore continues to tackle the threat of terrorism at its source by contributing assets to the global fight against ISIS. The SAF will also strengthen their joint counter-terrorism response plans with the Home Team. These will give our forces an edge against any terrorists who attempt to strike Singapore.

A strong defence, a vigilant society, and a resilient people will all make terrorists think twice about possibly causing harm here. Generations of national servicemen have stepped forward to respond to the call of duty, honour, country. Henceforth, you will bear the same responsibility of defending our country. So when heads are down or spirits are flagging, draw strength from the knowledge that as leaders in the SAF, you have a direct and important role to play in deterring the threats that face our nation today.

Second, draw strength from our pioneers. They never regarded Singapore's peace and prosperity as a certainty. In fact, no one gave Singapore a fighting chance when we gained independence 50 years ago. But our SAF pioneers persevered with a can-do spirit that transformed the SAF into the professional, ready and respected armed force that it is today.

That is no small feat, considering the SAF's humble beginnings of two infantry battalions, two missile gunboats and no air force. Today, the SAF is capable of conducting a wide spectrum of missions with highly complex and multi-layered operational scenarios.

So draw strength from this can-do spirit from our pioneers. You only have to look at the SAF today to see the results of their spirit and perseverance. The SAF is well-regarded and respected by established militaries worldwide. We exercise with some of the most advanced militaries, and our people perform very well. In times of need, the SAF has deployed swiftly to provide assistance to others, such as in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake last year. In the coming months, the SAF will lead the multinational Combined Task Force 151 for the fourth time, as part of the international coalition effort to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

In the midst of a high tempo last year, the SAF gave Singaporeans our Golden Jubilee NDP, with a spectacular parade and our air, land and sea assets on full display. The SAF also helped Singaporeans to bid farewell to our founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, with a State Funeral befitting of the late Mr Lee.

Nothing is impossible with vision and hard work.

Finally, draw strength from the people you love and protect. Today, you stand proudly in front of your loved ones and family. You also stand beside your friends, whom you have trained and toiled with as cadets over the past nine months. Draw strength from the knowledge that one day, you may be called upon to defend their lives and livelihood, and of those who call Singapore home.

So train hard; and train the way you will fight. Because above all, it is the quality of leadership in the SAF that will decide whether a mission is won or lost. You will set the example for many others under your charge. Train safe, for safety is the key enabler for realistic and tough training.

Remember these three ideas, as they can be your pillars of strength in times of need. Draw strength from your mission, your pioneers, and your loved ones.

I would like to make special mention at this juncture of the two foreign officer cadets who have trained alongside you. One from the New Zealand Army, and one from the Royal Thai Army. Over the duration of the course, you have forged enduring bonds and friendship. Your presence here is testament to the warm and close ties our nations share.

Let me conclude by congratulating each and every single one of you. You have proven your worthiness and readiness to be appointed as officers of the Singapore Armed Forces. Discharge your duties without fear or favour. Uphold the SAF's Core Values and live by the Officer's Creed. Always remember the OCS motto "To Lead, To Excel, To Overcome."

I wish you the very best.

Thank you.

**News Release:**

- 335 Commissioned as SAF Officers (MINDEF\_20160409001.pdf)

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