



# SPEECH

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## **Speech by Senior Minister of State for Defence Mr Ong Ye Kung at the 11th SAF Senior Military Expert Appointment Ceremony on 22 July 2016 at SAFTI Military Institute**

22 Jul 2016

Good evening

Chief of Defence Force,

Service Chiefs,

DS(T),

Senior Commanders,

Graduates of the 11th SAF Senior Military Experts Course,

Family members,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today is a proud and momentous occasion for 121 of you, who are now Senior Military Experts of the Military Experts Corps in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). Congratulations to all of you.

I would like to make special mention of our top graduate, ME4 Alvina Tao. Congratulations to her for receiving the Sword of Honour. Today it is natural, even customary, to recognise the fact that you are our first female Military Intelligence Expert to receive the Sword of Honour. But with better education, learning and career opportunities opening up to all, regardless of gender, women are increasingly making your mark in every fields – political leadership, we just had a female Prime Minister in the UK, business, academia, military etc. I am sure not too long for now, it will become unnecessary to make such special mentions – because there will be simply too many instances of women making such breakthroughs in traditionally male-dominated areas, and it will become more gender-neutral.

To all the family members present with us this evening, thank you for your unwavering support to the graduates. You have given them the needed support and peace of mind to focus on serving the nation. Mostly important, what you may not realise is that you are the reason why our servicemen are committed to serve and defend

Singapore. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a round of applause to express appreciation to all your loved ones.

### **Your Responsibilities**

Today's ceremony marks a significant milestone in your military profession and your journey as a military leader. The ceremonial sword that you have received earlier is a sober reminder of the honour, dignity in serving our nation and defending Singapore. It represents the tremendous responsibilities you will now assume as a Senior Military Expert.

First, you are entrusted with the authority and responsibility to care for and develop those under your charge, inspiring them towards the highest standards of excellence.

Second, you will uphold the core values of leadership and professionalism of the SAF, as the men and women of the SAF and the general public will look to you as role models and ambassadors of the SAF Corps.

Third, you will imagine and shape the SAF for tomorrow. In so doing, we must remember that it was the wisdom and foresight of our founding leaders who saw the need for a strong SAF, and its vital role in defending our Singaporean way of life. This fundamental truth underscored the belief that we must ourselves have the determination and wherewithal to defend our home.

Despite humble beginnings, the SAF today is recognised internationally as a credible and professional armed force, capable of conducting a wide spectrum of operations. We have punched above our weight on many occasions, regionally and beyond. This was the result of deliberate planning, dedicated leaders, and a strong will for the SAF to maintain a leading edge in innovation and technology to ensure mission success. This is an edge that we will maintain, especially in our increasingly complex security environment.

### **To Go Far You Must Go Deep**

Complex problems require solutions developed through deep expertise. If you look at the two pride and joys of Singapore - Changi Airport and PSA. Millions of passengers and containers come through them every year. We need to ensure efficient clearance, yet ensure effective security, and a myriad of logistical requirements must all be met, and at the same time provide a world-class customer experience. We can deliver all these, and maintain our position in the world for decades, because numerous teams of domain deep experts working behind the scenes.

For the same reason, a strong SAF with deep expertise, especially in the strategic and critical areas that define the core capabilities of the SAF, is ever more necessary today. To go far, you must be prepared to go deep. And hence the strategic importance of the Military Experts Corps. It is a strategic capability that enables the SAF to see further, learn faster, and integrate its systems better. Today, we have a strong pool of Military Experts who are always innovating and coming up with game-changing solutions to keep our fighting edge sharp.

### **Stories of Role Models**

What it means to be a Military Expert, how you discharge your responsibilities, and the difference you can make, are best illustrated by the real life stories of individuals. Let me recount three.

ME4 Zainal Abidin is a Military Medical Expert specialising in para-medicine. He is professionally certified as a Tactical Combat Casualty Care provider by the United States National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians. He participated in multiple major deployments such as Operations BLUE RIDGE in 2009 in Afghanistan, and has amassed a wealth of operational experience.

With this knowledge and experience, he played an active role in developing the Combat Buddy Aid concept to better prepare our soldiers should they sustain injuries in the field. This initiative is currently undergoing trial at 4th Battalion Singapore Infantry Regiment (4 SIR) and in preparation for full scale implementation as part of the

Basic Military Training for all SAF soldiers. Furthermore, ME4 Zainal plans to pursue a professional degree in Para-medicine to inspire his juniors and serve as an exemplary role model to his children. His message to all of us is that even at the age of 53, it is never too late to study, learn, and contribute meaningfully to the nation.

Naval Warfare System Expert, ME4 Hoo Hui Seng, is a domain expert in shipboard navigation systems and a certified aircraft controller. Having served on-board several classes of RSN vessels, he played a key role in pioneering the electronic charting project to enhance the way our sailors perform navigation at sea. The project was first implemented on the Formidable-class frigates and today, the Electronic Chart Display and Information System has become the baseline design for all RSN vessels. In recognition of ME4 Hoo's potential, he was selected to attend the first Helicopter Control Officer course in the United Kingdom. He excelled the course and upon returning, he was appointed as the Aircraft Control Officer on one of our frigates, a role typically performed by Naval Officers.

### **Conclusion**

Singapore has embarked on a national movement, We call it SkillsFuture. Fundamentally, SkillsFuture is about a Singapore society that values and celebrates the deep skills and expertise in various fields, regardless of earlier academic qualifications of individuals. To a great extent, the SAF is a microcosm of the Singapore economy and of Singapore. It is about achieving mastery through a lifetime of learning; it is about each of us pursuing our own area of passion; it is about a broader concept of recognition and of meritocracy.

These are the same philosophical underpinnings of the Military Experts scheme. You are corps of experts who are prepared to try, learn by doing, set precedents where there are no model answers to follow, and pass down your expertise to build a next generation of experts, and become mentors of the young.

Keep up the good work, and continue to uphold these convictions. Together with the Officer Corps, and the Warrant Officer and Specialist Corps, you will ensure that the SAF is always operationally ready to achieve mission success. I wish all of you the best as you embark on a new phase of your military profession, your leadership journey, and your own lives' journey as well. Thank you very much.

### **News Release:**

- 121 Appointed as SAF Senior Military Experts (MINDEF\_20160722001.pdf)

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