



SPEECH

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Interview with Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen on his visit to Brunei

19 Sep 2016

Graduands of the 102/15 Officer Cadet Course,

Parents,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

It is a good day to be a soldier, it is also a good day to be an airman. And it is always good to be home and it is for me a particular privilege for me to be here at your commissioning parade.

Commissioning parades are always awe-inspiring experiences. For good reason, we are filled with immense pride. We stand firm and we stand tall. While I am sure there are many thoughts and emotions flowing through you right now, I hope you are also wriggling your toes to keep your blood flowing!

Now that this image is stuck in your heads, I do ask all of you to consider this. If you were to distil everything, all these 38 weeks of rigorous and demanding training into a few central thoughts or themes, what would that be? Well there are no model answers, but allow me to share with you 2 themes that come to mind. Firstly, it is always about "Our People",

OUR PEOPLE

Our people are why we exist. It is always about our people - our parents, our brothers, sisters, our wives, our friends - because they give our lives meaning. They give meaning to the word home. They make our world, they make our nation. They are why we defend Singapore. And we should never forget this.

But our people are also the ones that defend our nation. We all know that our people are also our only resource. Our people make things happen. In every one of our operations in the military, it is always our people that have enabled us to achieve mission success. When the Indian Ocean Tsunami struck on Boxing Day 2004, within 4 days we were ready and we sailed off into the unknown on the fifth day, New Year's Eve. When our nation called, our people responded. They put our duties and responsibilities before self. They flew our flag with pride. This is loyalty. When we needed to go ahead amidst the uncertainty, our leaders led by example and from the front.

Even though we had never carried out an operation of this scale before, it didn't matter. We exercised discipline, professionalism, fighting spirit to make it all happen. We executed our mission with humanity always. We treated people with respect and compassion. We did what was right and not what was easy. Our ethics guided us in all that we did. At all times, we looked out for each other. We cared for each other. And when the mission was achieved, we came home safely with every single man and woman in our command. When anchored on our core values, this is what our people can do. While our future may be uncertain, this is one fundamental constant, our people. Our people will sense-make. Our people will find the solutions, and our people will deliver the outcomes. And the question at hand therefore is why and how did this happen? Did it happen on its own? Is it by chance? How do we unlock the capability of our people? How do we nurture them? Why did our people go the extra mile?

WHO WE ARE

And this is where all of you come in, which is my second theme, "Who we are". Who are you? What do you stand for? What do you believe in? Shortly, we will be commissioning you as Second Lieutenants in the Singapore Armed Forces. You will have the authority that comes with that rank. You will command and others will do what they need to. Is this who you are? But never mistake form for reality. Because you only begin to lead when you earn the trust and respect of your men. When that happens, they will not just do. They will run as lions and they will soar as eagles. And that is our role as leaders. We lead so that others will follow. They follow only because they trust and respect us. And they trust and respect us because of who we are. Mahatma Gandhi puts it most eloquently, and I quote: "Your beliefs become your thoughts, Your thoughts become your words, Your words become your actions, Your actions become your habits, Your habits become your values, Your values become your destiny." Our values define us. This is why who we are matters greatly. The question is, who are you that stand before us on this parade square?

OUR OFFICER'S CREED

You are embarking on a profound and difficult journey. You will be confronted by your own inadequacies. You will be faced with expectations that sometimes will seem quite unbearable, and you will be filled with self-doubt.

But you will be on the most exhilarating journey of self-discovery and personal growth. You will find intense friendship and comradeship. You will experience moments that will form memories that will last a lifetime. And above all, it is a deep profound honour to serve in order to lead. I asked a moment ago, who are you that stand before us on this parade square?

I am an officer of the Singapore Armed Forces.

My duty is to lead, to excel and to overcome.

I lead my men by example.

I answer for their training, morale and discipline.

I must excel in everything I do.

I serve with pride, honour and integrity.

I will overcome adversity with courage, fortitude and determination.

I dedicate my life to Singapore.

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This is who you are. It is my honour to stand here with you, to commission you as officers, as leaders, as guardians of our nation. God bless, and thank you very much.

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- 335 Commissioned as SAF Officers (MINDEF_20160919001.pdf)

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