



SPEECH

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Speech for Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information and Ministry of Health Mr Chee Hong Tat at the 30/16 Specialist Cadet Course Graduation Parade, 23 Feb 17, Pasir Laba Camp

23 Feb 2017

Graduands of the 30/16 Specialist Cadet Course,
Parents and loved ones of our servicemen and women, ladies and gentlemen,
A very good evening,

To the graduands on parade, congratulations and well done for completing six months of rigorous training. That you are here today is a testimony of your discipline, tenacity and mental fortitude. In these six months, you would have realised that it is through struggle that growth happens. You learnt military skills. You also know your strengths and weaknesses better, as well as how to draw upon your inner reserves of strength when needed to accomplish your mission. I am confident you have learnt much about being a soldier of the Singapore Armed Forces. Today, you will be entrusted with the solemn and significant responsibility of passing down the lessons you've learnt and leading your men and women who will defend Singapore's sovereignty and protect our loved ones in times of need.

Some of you may have asked: when would such a time occur? For many of us in Singapore, peace and stability is our only experience. But there was a time, not too long ago in our parents or grandparents' lifetimes that Singaporeans were subjugated by a foreign force. This year is the 75th anniversary of the day Singapore fell to the Japanese, beginning the dark and tragic period of the Occupation, the days when Singapore was called Syonan. During that period, Singaporeans of all races lost our loved ones and lived in hardship. After the war ended, our pioneers decided that we will never again let that happen to our homeland. Even though there was a price to be paid for Singapore to stand free and independent, our pioneers committed to building up a strong defence.

For the last 50 years, National Service (NS) has been the cornerstone of that strong defence. Each generation has received from the last the baton of defending Singapore. Today, more

than one million Singaporean Sons have diligently fulfilled their NS duties to the country. This year, Singapore commemorates 50 years of NS. It is an opportune time for us to reflect on what this milestone means to us as a nation, and as an individual, for the threats that confront Singapore will be no less challenging compared to 50 years ago. Our security environment grows increasingly complex, with multi-faceted challenges and threats.

Many recent events have proven this. Take for example the threat of radicalisation and terrorism. In January this year, six people were killed and eight injured after a shooting in the Quebec City Islamic Cultural Centre. Earlier this month, soldiers were attacked while patrolling a shopping centre near the Louvre in Paris. The growing numbers of ISIS fighters returning to our neighbouring countries will continue to pose security challenges to our region and to Singapore. The threat of radicalisation and terrorism is an on-going, long term one. Many of the diverse threats that confront us are also borderless - the spread of hatred and fake news through the internet are well-known examples. In such an uncertain global environment, we must be prepared for the possibility of a terrorist attack reaching our shores.

We also need to remain agile and vigilant, ready to tackle known and unknown threats that might come our way. It is assuring to know that our security agencies are well-prepared to deal with these threats. The SAF we have today is a technologically advanced fighting force that is always ready to act. In the recent Defence Technology Community's 50th anniversary exhibition, we witnessed some of the cutting edge capabilities of the 3rd Generation SAF, and how they enable the SAF to be sharp and ready. Beyond equipment and technology, the true strength of the SAF lies in its people - the dedication of our men and women forms the solid foundation of a strong SAF. As Specialists, we will depend on you, and your men and women will depend on you to lead with strength and skill.

As you continue to hone your combat skills, remember that the important role you play contributes to a bigger part of the Singapore story. Our ability to keep our nation safe and secure is what will enable Singapore to remain a competitive economy and a cohesive society. Your role as a leader in the SAF also means that you are in the unique position to mould the experiences of future batches of men and women under your charge. Do so with steadfastness, care and compassion, and never underestimate the impact of the presence of support and a timely word of encouragement. Lead by example and be there for them with an assuring word when the going gets tough.

Dear Graduands, today marks a day of celebration for you, a celebration of the hard work that got you to this moment. Today is also a day of gratitude, a day to thank those who nurtured, taught, and cheered you on. Take time to thank those around you, your parents and loved ones who stood by you. To the parents and loved ones of our servicemen and women, I thank you for your support. Your love and support are important sources of motivation and encouragement for our servicemen and women to give their all and strive to do their best for the nation.

To our Graduands, today also symbolises the beginning of a new chapter in your NS life. The chevrons that you will don are a symbol of the nation's confidence in you. I welcome all of

you as Specialists of the Singapore Armed Forces, and wish you all the best in serving your nation.

WITH PRIDE WE LEAD

News Release:

- 1,125 Graduate as SAF Specialists (MINDEF_20170223002.pdf)

National Archives of Singapore