



# SPEECH

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## **Speech by Minister for Education (Schools) & Second Minister for Transport, Mr Ng Chee Meng, at the 104/16 Officer Cadet Course Commissioning Parade**

19 Mar 2017

Graduands of the 104/16 Officer Cadet Course,  
Parents,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
A very good evening.

It is good to be back on this parade square - brings back fond memories, especially tonight with the showers of blessings. My warmest congratulations to both the graduands on parade and your loved ones for achieving this milestone. You have proven yourselves worthy of being commissioned as an officer of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

As a small nation-state, Singapore's survival will always depend on how well our people can defend Singapore against potential aggressors and protect our interests amidst the challenges we face. Our pioneers understood this from the early days that "what you cannot defend, you do not own." This is why the first order of business for the founding Government of Singapore back in the 1960s was to lay down the foundations for a strong SAF. This was an uphill task, for a fledgling nation with no natural resources, a small population and an economy in its infancy. It took decades of collective hard work, sacrifices and commitment by generations of pioneers to build the Singapore and the SAF of today.

Today, our SAF is an advanced, effective and capable defence force that guards our air, land and sea 24/7 and stands ready to act whenever called upon. Our people are ready to tackle a range of security challenges, such as piracy, pandemics, terror threats and more. The SAF trains and operates around the world, working seamlessly with partners from larger nations and militaries. It has deployed from within our region and beyond to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, be it for the forest fires in Thailand and Indonesia or in the

aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand. Other militaries recognise the SAF's readiness and grit. They are happy to partner us in various training, exercises and operations. For example, the SAF's operations in the Gulf of Aden and Operation Blue Ridge in Afghanistan. This year, a SAF medical support team will deploy to Iraq for another operation.

As security threats evolve, with cyber and information threats growing in complexity, the SAF continues to evolve and position itself for the future. The Next Generation SAF will invest in a new Cyber Command, develop sophisticated urban training facilities and leverage innovations in robotics and artificial intelligence. A strong SAF gives Singaporeans the confidence to live, work, play and pursue our dreams.

A strong SAF also supports Singapore's diplomatic space to secure our national interests. The competence and professionalism displayed by the men and women of the SAF have won us a sterling reputation and the trust of international friends. We continue to play constructive roles in regional and international forums such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), the ADMM Plus, and the Shangri La Dialogue. Just last year, Singapore co-hosted the ADMM-Plus Maritime Security and Counter-Terrorism Exercise with Brunei. This was a useful platform for ADMM-Plus militaries to strengthen interoperability when responding to common threats as well as enhance their close ties.

The SAF must continue to build on our strengths. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the fall of Singapore in WWII. It is a stark reminder of the fragility of the peace and what is at stake. The threats today are just as real - geopolitical uncertainties, the terrorism threat, cyber-attacks, misinformation and fake news pose challenges to our security and even unity. The SAF must therefore remain vigilant, adapt and develop capabilities to meet these threats.

As military leaders of the SAF, you play a significant role in this national mission. You are integral in not only leading our armed forces in the battlefield, but also shaping our nation's future through the many young men and women who you will lead. In the days to come, you will face unfamiliar situations and probably seemingly insurmountable challenges. To prepare yourselves, you, as leaders, must possess an unshakable integrity and the humility to keep improving yourselves.

Soon, you will have men and women under your charge. You will be responsible for their training, morale and discipline. This will not be an easy task. Your soldiers will come from varying backgrounds, have different strengths and weaknesses. And to train your soldiers well, you must guide and challenge them. Set high but achievable goals and motivate them to do their very best. As their leader, you must know their strengths, their weaknesses and their potential. When goals are met, celebrate success. When failure looms, encourage them. Motivate them to improve, and work together as a team and forge ahead to do better.

Instil within your soldiers a strong purpose to serve, so that they will remember all the training and apply what they have learnt in serving our country. Lead them and show them

that the security of their loved ones can only be achieved with their best efforts, through all our efforts.

Also remember your own purpose in serving. Stand guided by your mission, hold yourself to the highest standards of professionalism and discipline. Do these well and thereafter inspire others to do the same.

Give your best always, and develop your soldiers into a cohesive fighting force. Expect nothing in return, except the satisfaction that comes from earning your soldiers' respect and knowing that you have made a difference in their lives, in the defence of your country.

At this point, I would like to extend my congratulations to the cadets from the Malaysian Armed Forces, the Royal Thai Army and the New Zealand Defence Force. Your presence on the parade square is a reflection of the close and long-standing ties between Singapore and your country. Do build upon the experiences and camaraderie developed over the past 9 months in OCS, and as you continue your respective military journeys, stay in touch.

To the loved ones of our new Officers, thank you for being the unwavering support for our men and women. That they are here today is not just a testimony of their hard work, but of your care and support. Today is a proud and joyous occasion. A new generation of SAF Officers will soon be called upon to uphold the honour of the Officer corps and to serve with pride, honour and integrity. To all our new Officers, I urge you to value this opportunity to contribute towards writing the Singapore story, and never forget the OCS motto as your guiding light. "To Lead, To Excel, To Overcome." Keep the SAF strong.

Thank you.

**News Release:**

- 307 Commissioned as SAF Officers (MINDEF\_20170319001.pdf)

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