



SPEECH

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Speech by Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Mr Baey Yam Keng, at the 37/18 Specialist Cadet Graduation Parade

22 Nov 2018

Graduands of the 37/2018 Specialist Cadet Course,

Parents and loved ones of our Graduands,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good evening to everyone. It is my honour to join all of you here at the Leader's Square on this special day. I would like to start off by offering my heartiest congratulations to all the Graduands on parade today. You have successfully completing 22 weeks of rigorous training as part of the Specialist Cadet Course. I am confident that your training has equipped you with the knowledge and skills required for the journey ahead. As you don your chevrons today, you will bear the responsibility and honour of leading your men and women to give their best in the defence of Singapore.

THE CONTINUAL AND STEADY PROGRESS OF THE SAF

Singapore has come a long way since our independence in 1965. As a small nation with limited resources, situated within a tense geopolitical environment, our forefathers understood the importance of having a strong military. The Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) early years were filled with many challenges. Few possessed the knowledge, skills and

structures required to run it. We started off with just two Infantry battalions, two wooden patrol boats and a fleet of Cessna aircrafts. Today, our SAF stands as a modern, professional defence force, armed with advanced platforms, manned and unmanned – all linked by a network of sensors and communication systems. This would not have been possible without the decades of hard work, sacrifice and commitment by generations of Soldiers, Airmen and Sailors who have built the SAF to the strong and capable force that it is today. The leading-edge capabilities of the SAF, combined with the professionalism and commitment of its people, send a strong deterrence message to potential aggressors.

In June this year, Singapore had the honour of hosting the Trump-Kim Singapore Summit. The SAF played an important role, an integral role in this, standing up at very short notice to provide a safe and secure environment for the Summit. Despite the fact that we had only two weeks to prepare, and that the time and location of the Summit had been made public in advance, the Summit went on smoothly, with key national leaders safely hosted. In a show of its military strength and readiness, the SAF deployed two thousand soldiers, four task forces and numerous military assets on land, at sea and in the air, to ensure security during the Summit. The overall success of the Summit was a testament to the professionalism and dedication of the SAF and its ability to defend and protect the sovereignty and independence of our nation.

THE NEED TO STAY RELEVANT

To meet the challenges posed by an ever-changing security landscape, the SAF must continuously adapt. With an increased flow of returning fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) back to South-east Asia, terror threats remain high. In recent years, extremists have plotted two known attacks against Singapore. More alarmingly, terrorists today are also becoming more ruthless, as seen in this year's Surabaya bomb attacks, where two terrorists co-opted their families into their suicide bombing missions. As part of efforts to counter these threats, the SAF regularly participates in numerous large-scale exercises, such as Exercise Northstar and Exercise Highcrest, which put our soldiers through realistic terror attack simulations to train them to respond in times of crisis. Over the years, the SAF has also set up a range of units and task forces to counter terrorism, such as the Army Deployment Force (ADF), which was set up in 2016 to complement other dedicated forces against terrorism, like the Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) and the Island Defence Task Force (IDTF). Additionally, the SAF's firm and continual commitment to protecting Singaporeans

against terrorism at its core can also be seen in its deployments to the defeat-ISIS coalition in the Middle East since 2014.

The increasing interconnectedness of the world through technology has also made cyber security a key part of national defence. The recent cyberattack on SingHealth, for instance, was the most serious data breach in Singapore's history. Threats like these do not respect sovereign boundaries and frequently involve long-term planning. As perpetrators become more skilful, the threat of such cyberattacks will only grow. To counter this, the SAF has worked to strengthen its cyber defence capabilities. Last year, the SAF inaugurated the SAF C4 Command to coordinate and implement C4 (Command, Control, Communications and Computers), as well as cyber defence operations and capabilities. The Cyber NSF scheme was also launched this year to deploy the skills of full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) with talent and expertise in this area to help defend against cyberattacks.

To tackle these new threats, we need nothing less than a strong and committed SAF that constantly improves itself to stay relevant in the face of evolving threats. To tackle transnational threats effectively, regional cooperation is needed, and is something Singapore has steadily been working towards. Recently, the 2018 ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) saw the signing of a joint declaration on strengthening cooperation and building resilience amidst an environment of evolving security challenges. The ministers also leveraged ADMM as a platform to strengthen regional counter-terrorism cooperation and establish a chemical, biological and radiological network against new threats. Subsequently, they also made a joint statement at ADMM-Plus, which acknowledged terrorism as one of the most serious threats to international peace, and emphasised the need for a sustained and comprehensive approach at both national and international levels.

DEVELOPING GOOD LEADERS WITHIN THE SAF

Over the years, the SAF has remained committed in its mission to enhance Singapore's peace and security amidst a complex and evolving security landscape. While our pioneers laid the foundations, each successive generation built upon the efforts of their predecessors. Now, it is your turn to take on the mantle of leadership and build on their legacy.

As future leaders in the SAF, your role does not end with securing victory at the battlefield. Beyond that, you must also win the hearts and minds of your soldiers, inspiring them to work

towards a common mission despite their diverse backgrounds, beliefs and personalities. Be strong role models of the SAF Core Values. Distinguish yourself not by your rank, but through your values and actions. Earn their trust by first showing them respect through the proper and safe conduct of activities so that they will have faith in their leaders. Inspire them, through your own example, to always strive for excellence and achieve high standards of operational readiness. Above all, safety is a command responsibility. Safety is of utmost importance to our Army. Your constant vigilance is required, even as our men and women train realistically and rigorously to hone their skills and competencies. Your role as leaders requires you to look after those under your charge, even as they serve this nation with loyalty, commitment and pride.

The task ahead of you may not be easy, but trust the training that you have received, and look towards your own commanders, who have nurtured and trained alongside you. Remember that the defence of our nation's independence and sovereignty lies in your hands, and you must do your utmost to protect this.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I would like to thank the families and loved ones of our graduands for being pillars of encouragement and support to them. Thank you for the men and women whom you've raised to become great soldiers of fine character.

Once again, my heartiest congratulations to all of you on becoming Specialists of the SAF! I wish you all the best in your leadership journey ahead.

 With Pride We Lead!



News Release:

- 926 Graduate as SAF Specialists (MINDEF_20181122001.pdf)