



SPEECH

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Speech by the Chief of Defence Force, Lieutenant-General Melvyn Ong, at the 39/18 Specialist Cadet Graduation Parade

23 May 2019

Graduands of the 39/2018 Specialist Cadet Course,

Families and loved ones of all our Graduands,

Ladies and Gentleman,

A very good evening.

Before I begin, can we have a round of applause for our 1,000 cadets here, a round of applause for them. To this 1,000, it is good to be with all of you today and congratulations on completing the Specialist Cadet Course. It has been a tough 22 weeks, you have demonstrated your ability, your determination, your fighting spirit. And while today your graduation marks the end of your training here, it also signifies the beginning of your service to the nation as Specialists and Leaders of the Singapore Armed Forces. What you will be faced with after today, you will be given greater responsibilities – to train, to lead, to inspire the men and women under your charge. The road ahead will be demanding, it will not be easy. There will be highs and lows, but I am confident, we are confident here, that you have been equipped with a strong foundation of leadership and warfighting skills to take on and to overcome the challenges you will face.

DETERRENCE

The SAF's role in securing Singapore's sovereignty and our way of life remains as critical as it was 54 years ago. Learning from harsh lessons of the Japanese Occupation and the Konfrontasi, our forefathers recognised the importance of being able to defend Singapore. Despite the competing needs for housing, education and healthcare when Singapore was beginning, we invested resources to build a strong and credible SAF those 50 odd years ago.

The SAF's mission today is to enhance Singapore's peace and security through deterrence and diplomacy and should these fail, to secure a swift and decisive victory. In simple terms, we must demonstrate our capabilities so that people do not want to fight us, such that they are deterred from fighting us; and if they choose to fight us, then we must win and we will.

What is deterrence? It is two things – capabilities and the will to fight of our servicemen like those standing in front of us and those seated in the stands. It explains why after so many decades, Singapore has consistently invested in defence capabilities. It also explains why we continue to have national service and the importance of having a strong NS system and leaders, leaders like yourself; and we have to do this 24/7.

DEFENDING OUR EVERYDAY

Last year, we saw a slice of this: the capabilities and the will to fight. We saw a slice of this at the Trump-Kim Summit, and how the SAF ensured a safe and secure Singapore. On land, we had the Island Defence Task Force who supported the Police in security operations. Many soldiers like those standing in front of us worked hand in hand with the Police to ensure that we were free of threats, free of interferences on the ground. At sea, we had the Maritime Security Task Force that patrolled the seas, providing maritime security around Sentosa and the Singapore Strait. In the air, airmen and women from the Air Defence Task Force watched our skies, providing air defence coverage so that nothing will come close. Our Special Operations Task Force was also on standby.

Many NSFs like those before us today were involved in the security operations. NSmen as well. We showed that we had the capabilities and we showed that we had the platforms. Most importantly, we showed that we had the soldiers, and their competence and their will to defend Singapore. I spoke to many soldiers, sailors and airmen over those weeks – NSFs and NSmen. They understood the importance of defending Singapore. They said, we understand and believe that Singapore's vulnerability as a small nation was the same yesterday and is the

same today. It has not changed. They told me, we believe in fighting for our buddies, we believe in fighting for our families like those seated in the stands, we believe in fighting for our loved ones. They told me, as leaders, we have to be role models, put others before ourselves.

And as leaders of the SAF today, we entrust you with the lives of your soldiers. You shoulder the responsibility of leading and inspiring the soldiers under you to safeguard and ensure Singapore's sovereignty. Train them well, train them in their craft and train them safely. And above all, lead by example.

Many will say the acme of war is actually not to fight, and we hope that we will never have to. But we live in a very complex world and we have to prepare ourselves, not only to deter, but to fight and win when the need arises. Be good role models, and remember that every soldier counts. Centre your efforts on our soldiers. Build soldiers with a strong body, strong mind, and a strong heart - physically fit, mentally resilient and committed to loving Singapore and to the defence of it.

CONCLUSION

I see a lot of families here today. And I want to thank all of you for being here. To the families and loved ones of our graduands, thank you for your encouragement. Your efforts are here. You see it before me on the parade square. Without your support, without your love, without your commitment, they will not be here today. Their achievements are reflections of yours, your support gives them strength. Your support gives to the NS system and it gives strength to the defence of Singapore. Let us have a round of applause for everyone who is here tonight.

Finally, to all of those standing on the parade square, well done. 22 weeks is not easy, a lot of hard work. It does not stop here, I am sure you know it, you will go to the ground at various points, you will train and lead your soldiers, sailors and airmen well. Hone their skills and help the SAF continue to deter and to win. I wish all of you the best in your exciting leadership journey ahead.

WITH PRIDE WE LEAD! Thank you.

News Release:

- 1,000 Graduate as SAF Specialists (MINDEF_20190523002.pdf)

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