



SPEECH

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Speech by Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Industry, Dr Tan Wu Meng at the 40/19 Specialist Cadet Graduation Parade

22 Aug 2019

Graduands of the 40/2019 Specialist Cadet Course,

Parents, families, friends of our Graduands,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good evening to everyone. I am delighted to join you today for the Specialist Cadet Graduation Parade. My heartiest congratulations to all our Graduands. You have shown dedication, determination and grit over the past 22 weeks. 22 weeks of rigorous training.

Today, you will don your chevrons in front of your families and your loved ones, and become Specialists and Leaders of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

A Strong SAF

This year is Singapore's Bicentennial. 200 years since 1819. And the lessons of history are that the journey has not always been smooth. Our older generation saw first-hand what happened during World War Two, when we could not defend ourselves. And in 1967, when the British announced that they would withdraw their troops from Singapore, just two years into our independence, we had to make many challenging and complex decisions overnight. We had to prepare our economy for the impact of the withdrawal. We needed to be ready to

defend Singapore on our own. Those decisions made then would determine Singapore's survival as a country.

Back then, we had just two Infantry battalions that were not under our command, two Cessna aircraft that were leased to us by the Singapore Flying Club and two wooden patrol boats. But this did not faze our forefathers. They rose to the challenge. Built an army, an air force, and a navy, step by step. We also forged strong defence relations with other countries. And today, the SAF is a credible and well-respected force with modern capabilities that can execute a full-spectrum of operations. The SAF's contributions to numerous humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations both regionally and globally, in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and in the fight against ISIS in the Middle East are testament to this fact.

We know that a strong SAF is vital to ensure our country, our Singapore, remains safe and secure. Without a strong SAF, we will not be able to maintain our way of life, or prosper economically, or grow as a nation. Today, Singapore enjoys good relations with our neighbours and with many countries. But we must never rest on our laurels. As the security landscape evolves, as there are new threats and these threats grow both in number and complexity, the SAF must continue to adapt, innovate, and remain vigilant and steadfast, so that Singapore can maintain our peace and prosperity.

Last year, MINDEF and the SAF made the decisive move to tap on cyber talents from the full-time National Servicemen (NSF) pool by setting up the Cyber NSF Scheme. This scheme allows our Cyber Specialists to develop skills and expertise and deploys them to the frontlines to defend Singapore against cyber threats. I am proud to announce that the first cohort of Cyber Specialists cadets is graduating today. As the pioneer batch of Cyber Specialists, you will lead the way in building up our Cyber Defence capabilities, laying a strong foundation for the digital defence of our nation.

Responsibilities of SAF leaders

The strength of the SAF is not only in our military hardware but in our people -- our heartware. For over 50 years, generations of servicemen and women have put in tremendous effort to build an effective military force.

As you embark on your journey as leaders, the responsibility of building up the heartware of the SAF now rests upon your shoulders. Always lead by example, always have heart and

empathy for the men and women under your charge. For the men and women you lead will come from all walks of life and will look up to you for your leadership and guidance. Train your soldiers to achieve high standards of operational readiness while keeping in mind that safety is a top priority. You have a duty to uphold the core values of the SAF and to engage and inspire all under your charge. The journey ahead of you may not always be smooth, but I am confident that no matter what adversity you may face, you will overcome it through teamwork and learning from those who have come before you.

Conclusion

Hardware and heartware – both help keep our Singapore strong. We saw this at our National Day celebrations this year – at the Padang and when our mobile columns visited our HDB heartlands.

The roar of our army, navy and air force assets – that is the sound of our freedom; the sound of an independent Singapore.

The roar of our fellow Singaporeans cheering on and supporting our servicemen and women – that is the sound of a lion-hearted people committed to defence.

The roar of our hardware and our heartware – that is the sound of our Singapore spirit.

Let's give a round of applause and appreciation to all our servicemen and women!

Graduands, today is a day of celebration for all of you. As you celebrate, please take time to appreciate those around you who have encouraged and supported you throughout your training. To the families and loved ones of our Graduands, thank you for your support and your commitment to the defence of Singapore.

Once again, my heartiest congratulations to all our Graduands today! And I wish you all the best in your leadership journey ahead as we keep Singapore safe and secure and independent.

With pride we lead! Thank you.

News Release:

- 1,087 Graduate as SAF Specialists (MINDEF_20190822001.pdf)

National Archives of Singapore