



# SPEECH

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## **Speech by Assoc Prof Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development & Ministry of Education at The 41/19 Specialist Cadet Course Graduation Parade**

21 Nov 2019

Graduands of the 41/19 Specialist Cadet Course,

Parents and loved ones of our Graduands,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good evening to everyone

I am honoured to join all of you here on this special day. I would like to first extend my heartiest congratulations to all our graduands on your completion of the Specialist Cadet Course. You have displayed commendable commitment and resilience over the last 22 weeks. Today, you will don your Chevrons in the presence of your loved ones and become Specialists of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). You will bear the responsibility and honour to lead men and women to protect our sovereignty and our way of life. Many challenges may lie ahead of you, but I am confident you are prepared to overcome them with your strength and determination.

### **The SAF and our Security Environment**

The SAF was formed in 1965 after Singapore's painful separation from Malaysia. At that time, the country's survival was fraught with challenges. There were many pressing and competing needs, including public infrastructure, housing, healthcare, schools and many more. Despite these, our forefathers, who lived through the Japanese Occupation and the Konfrontasi, knew that we could not depend on others for our security and decided that building a strong and credible SAF would be a top priority. Through long-term planning and the implementation of National Service (NS), the SAF has progressed significantly to what it is today - a modern, competent and professional force that is capable of protecting Singaporeans and our national interests.

Sometimes, protecting Singaporeans and our national interests means deploying half-way around the world, as the SAF has done in the global fight against terror. Since 2014, the SAF has participated in the Defeat-ISIS coalition to counter terrorism at its source. The coalition has achieved considerable success and has regained control of the towns that ISIS once held. While the major fighting phase concluded in 2018, the SAF has continued to play a part, partnering both the Australian Defence Force and the British Armed Forces to conduct training for the Iraqi Defence Forces. Despite the improvement in security conditions in Iraq and the Middle East, we cannot take peace for granted.

The threat to Southeast Asia has increased as former ISIS foreign fighters return home with combat experience. Just last year, 28 people were killed when Surabaya was hit by a spate of coordinated bombings. These were the deadliest ISIS-linked attacks in Indonesia so far. Although these attacks took place in Indonesia, the threat of such incidences occurring in Singapore cannot be underestimated. The plans for the SAF to operationalise a Special Operations Command Centre by this year are therefore timely. This Command Centre will have enhanced command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C4I) systems for better sense-making and improved abilities to monitor and coordinate Counter-Terrorism operations.

The attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities in September are also a grim reminder that conventional threats have not gone away. While the attack is still under investigation, many expert commentators are convinced that the attack was delivered by military-grade drones. Many have also speculated that it was a coordinated attack, involving both military-grade drones and possibly missiles. The attack caused major disruptions and reduced the oil capacity of Saudi Arabia by half, which in turn led to a spike in global oil prices that affected

oil importers such as Singapore. These conventional threats are a reminder that the price of peace is constant vigilance and a high level of readiness, especially for small countries like Singapore.

## **Preparing for the Future**

Even as we confront our immediate challenges, as always, we look to safeguard our future by preparing the SAF for what lies ahead. The battlefield continues to evolve, and the digital domain will be a key battle front in the future. Unlike physical threats, cyber threats are not bounded by geography. Cyber-attacks on key public infrastructure, such as healthcare and transport systems, can have devastating consequences. A strong cyber defence is needed to safeguard Singapore's digital borders. Last year, MINDEF and the SAF set up the Cyber NSF Scheme to tap on the digital skills that many of our young already possess as “digital natives”, to build up our cyber defence capabilities to safeguard Singapore.

## **Leaders of SAF**

Today's graduation marks the beginning of your journey as leaders of the SAF. As you assume your role, you will realise that your responsibilities will increase many-fold, and new challenges will surface. While these may seem overwhelming at times, have faith in the training that you have received and let these fundamentals and the SAF core values guide you.

Parents will depend on you to take care of their children and soldiers entrust their lives to you. You must undertake this sacred responsibility with utmost care. Always lead by example and set high but achievable standards. Train them hard and keep them safe. Inspire their commitment through care and engagement.

Graduands, today is a day to celebrate the hard work that each of you has put in for the last 22 weeks. But as you celebrate, remember to thank those who have nurtured, encouraged and cheered you on. Take time to appreciate your family and loved ones for their unconditional care and support. To the families and loved ones of our graduands, thank you for your support and commitment to the defence of Singapore.

I sincerely would like to thank all of the parents, grandparents, siblings as well as relatives and friends here who have given the fullest support to your child, grandchild, relatives and

friends here. Without your support, they will not be what they are today, I feel proud of our men and we would not have come to this without your fullest support so I thank you for your support. You know, sometimes when I travel overseas for ASEAN, for APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) meetings as well as other official visits to other countries, they say Singapore is a peaceful and harmonious place and Singapore is a safe place. I would share with them this is because we have a strong defence, we have a strong community, we have a strong nation and a large part of it has to do with all of you in Singapore who hone and defend Singapore whether it is at home or overseas as well as our predecessors who have paved our way to what we are today. We want to remember those who have contributed to the defence of Singapore and we want to thank them and to build on what they have done so that our children, our grandchildren and our future generation will continue to have a safe and good life here in Singapore.

Once again, congratulations to our newly minted Specialists of the SAF. I wish you all the best in your leadership journey ahead.

**WITH PRIDE WE LEAD!**

Thank you.

**News Release:** National Archives of Singapore

- 943 Graduate as SAF Specialists (MINDEF\_20191121001.pdf)