

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel: 3378191 ext. 352, 353, 354/3362207/3362271

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MESSAGE BY MR GOH CHOK TONG, MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND SECOND MINISTER
FOR HEALTH, ON SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES DAY 1 JULY 1982

Singaporeans are becoming better off every year. They deserve to be better off. They have worked for their prosperity. They have a stake in the country. This is their home. But many do not realise that their continued well-being depends on the SAF. Let me explain.

The SAF is like the foundation of a building. You do not see it once the building is up. The super-structure is admired but the foundation is more often than not forgotten. SAF means national security. Security is the foundation on which life, progress, and prosperity are built. Weaken the foundation and the whole building will collapse.

A nation which cannot guarantee the safety of her citizens and their properties against unexpected threats will lose them to other countries. Her citizens will emigrate or become ex-nationals. There will be no new investments to create wealth. Who would want to pour in millions of dollars in new homes, hotels, factories and office buildings, if the security of these assets cannot be guaranteed? We have invested in a new multi-million dollar airport. We will be investing an estimated \$5 billion in the MRT. How can we be sure that such assets will be ours to keep if the SAF is not strong?

When we talk about the SAF, we refer not just to its hardware, but more importantly, to its software: the people who make up what we call the Army, the Navy and the Air Force: the reservists and the full-time national servicemen, the volunteers and the regulars; the officers and the NCOs; the Colonels and the Privates. Army camps, artillery shells, tanks, ships and aircraft on their own do not constitute the Singapore Armed Forces. Singaporeans do!

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The fate of the nation depends on every soldier playing his part and bearing his responsibility as a citizen. National defence is a heavy responsibility. We have been given the duty to defend our country. If members of the SAF, both in active and in reserve units, take their training and tasks seriously, others will have second thoughts about threatening Singapore, and peace will be preserved. If we do not take our training and tasks seriously, we will be inviting others to take our possessions away by force. Better sweat in peace than bleed and die in war!

Over the next few years we must create a greater public awareness of the capability of the SAF and the vital role it has to play in our lives. Singaporeans must be made aware of the improvements in quality continually being made in the SAF. In order to win the respect of the public, in particular, of those who are either national servicemen or reservists, our regular corps of soldiers must impress them with a sense of commitment to their profession and to the country.

Leadership in the defence of the territorial integrity of Singapore comes ultimately from our commanders. The people must have confidence in their ability to lead and in the effectiveness of the Armed Forces to fight off any aggressor. We cannot produce war heroes in peacetime, but we can gain the people's confidence by our inward and outward discipline, integrity, loyalty, and physical toughness. Above all, we must believe in ourselves and in what we do.

Whether we are in the reserve or active units, whether we are national servicemen or regulars, everyone of us, every Singaporean, must understand that without the SAF there would be no security. Without security there would be no firm and strong foundation. Without such foundation there would be no HDB flats, no skyscrapers, no modern Singapore. The foundation must not be forgotten now that the building is up.

On Armed Forces Day, therefore, let all of us in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force renew our pledge to dedicate ourselves to the noblest ideal - service to the nation. Let us strengthen the security foundation so that we can give our people and ourselves an even better life.