

SPEECH BY MR E W BARKER, THE MINISTER FOR LAW AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OF SAF OFFICERS AT THE ISTANA ON 9 JULY 1975 AT 1830 HOURS

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The ability to command and lead does not come easily. Some people are born leaders, but for most of us, leadership is a quality that has to be developed.

The attributes of leadership are especially important for all of you here this evening, because you will be leading men as young as yourselves and those even older.

As officer cadets you have undergone strenuous training in your respective Support Arms Schools and you are now ready to command your own platoons.

An important factor that you must bear in mind is that a leader should know more than the persons he attempts to lead. Although you are better equipped now for your task, there must still be a great deal more to be learnt, for learning, as you know, is a continuous life-long process.

Apart from the practical experience which you will no doubt acquire, there are the handbooks on Training Directives and Counselling to provide basic guidelines for coping with the various day-to-day problems.

In an army made up largely of young National Service men, it is important that platoon commanders try to know as much as they can about the men under their command. I have no doubt that you will make this a vital part of your job. But I would like to stress the value of this kind of personal contact; for, ultimately, it is the individual persons in individual platoons who together determine the overall efficiency of our army.

I would urge you therefore to continue to improve your professional knowledge by reading military and professional journals. We in Singapore have so far been fortunate to be spared the reality of armed conflict and are therefore in the happy position of being able to learn from the experience of others. We should take this opportunity to further develop our knowledge and expertise, and whether we acquire or fail to acquire this essential knowledge is dependent, in the final analysis, on young officers such as yourselves.

I congratulate you on having successfully completed your officer cadet course and I wish you all every success for the future.