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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE STATE FLAG AND INSIGNIAS TO THE SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE CONTINGENT (UNPKF) ON 1 MAR 2000, 5.30PM AT TRACOM PARADE SQUARE.

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen

The UN-sanctioned International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) moved into East Timor on 20 Sep 99, with a mission to restore peace and stability. Singapore supported this cause by contributing two Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs), a SAF medical detachment and a military liaison team. In addition, Singapore deployed a third LST and a C-130 to assist in the transition from INTERFET to the next phase of operations. I am pleased to hear that Singapore has been held in high regard for their contribution to INTERFET's overall success in bringing peace and stability to East Timor in a relatively short period of time.

Singapore's Role in Maintaining Global Peace

2 As a show of our commitment towards the maintenance of international peace, the Singapore Government has accepted the invitation of the United Nations (UN) to participate in the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) which took over from INTERFET in January 2000. The Singapore Police Force Contingent will help UNTAET in implementing its mandate of providing security, maintaining law and order, and establishing an administration of governance as East Timor embarks on its journey towards independence.

3 Singapore recognises the importance of global peace and the crucial role that the UN plays in safeguarding and upholding international law and order through its peacekeeping efforts. As a responsible member of the international community committed to the principles of the rule of law, we have contributed effectively to numerous UN peacekeeping missions despite our manpower and resource constraints. The UN's invitation for us to take part in its peacekeeping missions over the years is testimonial that our officers have made useful contributions to UN missions.

The Singapore Police Contingent to UNTAET

4 The Singapore Police Contingent to UNTAET comprises officers from the various land divisions and specialist units, namely, the Police Coast Guard (PCG), Special Operations Command, Security Branch, Gurkha Contingent, Training Command, Traffic Police, Airport Police and the Criminal Investigation Department. It will be led by Acting Superintendent Heng Sou Kaw, a veteran of several UN peacekeeping missions.

5 All members of the contingent have been specially selected and trained. Many of them have previous experience in other UN missions in Cambodia and Namibia. It is important for us to ensure that only competent officers are selected for peacekeeping missions as the operating environment in such missions are often very harsh. The officers must therefore be both physically and psychologically suitable as well as having the ability to react well in crisis situations.

6 The team of 40 SPF officers would serve under the UNTAET as UN Civilian Police Officers (CIVPOL). Unlike our previous missions, where our officers were required to monitor the local police in their daily operations, this mission in East Timor vests our officers with certain powers for carrying out their duties of ensuring security and maintaining law and order in the territory. Our police officers will also be involved in the setting up of the East Timor Police Service.

7 For the first time, SPF will deploy four female officers in this UN peacekeeping operation. This marks a significant milestone in the SPF peacekeeping efforts. The female officers have volunteered and have gone through the same training and tests as their male counterparts. I am confident that they will perform well in their assigned tasks.

8 To the SPF officers who are about to depart for your mission, I wish you every success in the challenges ahead. I have no doubt that you will perform your duties conscientiously and conduct yourselves professionally at all times. I would also like to thank the spouses and families of our officers for the sacrifices they make as their loved ones embark on this mission.

9 On behalf of the Singapore Government, I thank you for your contribution and wish you every success in your mission.

Thank you.
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