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Subject: (Embargoed) Amended Speech by Mr Wong Kan Seng, 5 Apr 2000, 9.15 am

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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(AMENDED)

SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE POLICE WORKPLAN SEMINAR, ON WEDNESDAY 5 APRIL 2000, 9.15 AM, AT THE ORCHID COUNTRY CLUB

Good Morning,
Commissioner of Police
Officers of the Singapore Police Force
Ladies and Gentlemen

Initiatives Last Year

At your workplan seminar last year, I posed you three challenges: to bring crime rates down; to be operationally ready for contingencies and to persevere in your organisational development efforts.

2. I am pleased to note that crime has fallen last year by 21 percent. The public perception survey commissioned by Police last year showed that 94 percent of the public believe that Singapore is safer than many other cities

around the world. This is borne out by the facts. Singapore's crime rate is significantly lower than other major cities such as Hong Kong, Tokyo and New York.

3. Police handled the Millennium events and the Y2K bug standby proficiently and professionally. Each and every of you helped Singapore cross into the new Millennium safely.

4. You did not let up on your organisational development efforts either. Together with Police, other Home Team agencies and other community organisations, all 9 Community Development Councils have also launched their Community Safety and Security Programmes. Jurong Police Division has also successfully implemented the Neighbourhood Police Centre system, bringing the total number of NPCs to ten. Among other staff development initiatives, you have set up a School of Criminal Investigation to train your investigators. I also note that the Singapore Police Force was admitted to the Singapore Quality Class last year, an award given only to organisations that have attained a high standard of organisational excellence.

5. Every single officer's sacrifice and devotion to duty has been worthwhile as it has made a difference to the safety and security of Singaporeans. I hope that at this seminar, you will discuss how to build upon your past successes and excel further as you take on the challenges of the coming year.

Total Defence of Singapore

6. The Home Team plays a pivotal role in the Total Defence of our home. You and other Home Team officers play a key role in contributing significantly to Total Defence. Psychological defence, social defence, economic defence, civil defence and military defence make up the Total Defence of Singapore. **Civil defence** equips the civilian population with the ability to respond in a trained and organised manner during emergencies. The Home Team, through its programmes with the community, helps to train the people to be prepared for emergencies. In working with the community to do neighbourhood patrols, for instance, the Home Team helps prepare the community against crime which may undermine the resilience of the people in an emergency.

7. Another pillar of Total Defence – **Social Defence** – emphasises the people's ability to work, play and live together harmoniously, irrespective of race, language or religion. The Home Team's vigilance in guarding against

racial or religious insensitivities helps to maintain a harmonious society for us all to live in. The CSSP itself, through the involvement of the community, helps bond Singaporeans together and boosts the internal resilience and cohesion of Singaporeans to defend Singapore.

Striving for Excellence

8. This year you have chosen for yourself the theme: “Striving for Excellence - A Force for our Nation”. This is an inspiring and noble call.

9. My first challenge for you this year is to achieve excellence in people and work process development.

People development

10. Human capital is the most imperative factor in determining an organisation’s success or failure. Continue to treat your staff as your most valued assets by developing them to their fullest potential and harnessing their creativity. Having quality and devoted officers ensure that strategies and plans are well drawn-up and successfully implemented. Every officer’s contribution makes a difference to the safety and security of our community. Their creativity and enthusiasm will also help ensure that the organisation is always able to meet new challenges and produce even better ideas. As Singapore becomes a knowledge-based economy, Police Officers too must become knowledge workers - officers who are able to achieve greater value in their work through innovation and utilising knowledge.

11. MHA and the Home Team departments have engaged management consultants Towers Perrin to conduct a career review for the Home Affairs Uniformed Services (HUS). The review will cover uniformed officers from the Police, Singapore Civil Defence Force, Prisons and Central Narcotics Bureau. The review will adopt a comprehensive approach focusing on the different elements that make up the total experience of a uniformed career in the HUS. These elements include salary, benefits, career management, officer retention, continuous learning and development, and rank structures in the forces. With challenges arising from higher public expectations and a fast changing environment, we must ensure that the Home Team can effectively attract, develop and retain capable and dedicated officers. Without a top-notch Home Team, the home defence of Singapore will suffer.

Work processes

12. The Police must also pay close attention to processes and not just to results. To ensure sustainable excellent performance, you must aim to make your systems and practices robust and superior. A good example is the transformation of your workplan seminars over the years. Since the last workplan seminar, you have not only involved greater numbers of junior and senior officers but have also seriously engaged them in small group dialogue sessions. Officers then have an opportunity share their views, bounce ideas off one another and provide comments to the management on the workplans that have been presented. Better results can then be achieved due to the greater sense of ownership by all involved in the planning process.

13. Similarly, your other processes must be able to encourage new ideas and experimentation that will improve the organisation. You must constantly seek out, learn from, and benchmark yourselves against world-class organisations. Then, ensure that your best practices, sound systems, and effective processes are shared, learnt and replicated across the organisation.

A Force for Our Nation

14. My second challenge to you is to strengthen your community partnership.

15. To be a Force for Our Nation, you have to rise above your normal policing functions and play an active role in the development of our nation. To this end, you have been very successful with community-focused policing. Through your Neighbourhood Police Centres and in working together with other Home Team agencies, you have engaged the community through Community Safety and Security Programmes or CSSPs. This has allowed you to effectively facilitate Active Citizenship - one of the five tenets of our Singapore 21 Vision. Indeed you have come a long way since the first NPPs were set up in 1983. The implementation of Neighbourhood Police Centres and CSSPs have no doubt brought the police-community relationship even closer.

16. The Government has plans to devolve responsibilities and resources to Community Development Councils (CDCs). The Neighbourhood Police Centres and CSSPs will contribute to the work of the CDCs in bringing the communities closer. Through the CSSPs, the local communities have learnt to address local safety and security concerns. As they gain greater experience, they will be able to do more and the Police must be ready to support them. Work together with the

people to create a safe and secure best home.

17. Nevertheless, you must not slacken in your efforts. There is more that you can do to maintain close contact with the residents you serve. With the NPC system, officers would have more autonomy to decide how to engage the different communities. Different communities have different needs and concerns. You must be proactive and innovate to continue to secure their trust and partnership. You must also engage entities such as schools, professional associations and voluntary welfare organisations as part of the community to work towards a common goal of a safe and secure best home.

Adapting to a Changing environment

18. Thirdly I challenge you to enhance your operational capabilities to take on the changing requirements of the new millennium.

19. The coming years will bring with them many changes in your operating environment. Singapore is positioning itself as a regional hub in many areas, including info-communications, finance, education, and life sciences. Take note of these developments. To truly be A Force for Our Nation, the Singapore Police Force will be expected to be able to keep in step with the nation's progress.

20. There will also be new threats such as crimes committed by foreign gangs, crimes on the Internet, financial crimes and many others. Constantly review your processes, legal provisions and capabilities to ensure that you remain successful in your fight against such crimes. Continue to forge and strengthen alliances with foreign agencies to deal with transnational crime. I am glad the Commercial Affairs Department has been successfully reconstituted as part of the SPF. A Computer Forensics Branch has also been set up within CID to assist in tackling computer crime. These changes will better enable you tackle the new threats.

21. However, this does not mean that we lose sight of old threats. For example, while the region is slowly recovering from the economic crisis and the political situations in our neighbouring countries are more stable than last year, the threat posed by illegal immigrants remains. Continue to develop your Police Coast Guard to safeguard our territorial waters from illegal intrusions.

Conclusion

22. You have come through very well the last year despite the tough challenges. The year 2000 will similarly be a challenging year for the Singapore Police Force as you set even higher standards for yourselves in every area to become an organisation of excellence. I am confident that you will maintain the momentum and continue to be A Force for Our Nation and contribute to the Total Defence of Singapore.

23. On this note, I declare the Police Workplan Seminar open.

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