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Work Starts on Singapore Training Facilities in Queensland

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CAF MG Goh Yong Siang and Cmd 1st Div Australian Armed Forces MG Tim Ford with the first of many shovels of earth

Another military agreement between Australia and Singapore will be cemented tomorrow, 28 Nov 97, with a ground-breaking ceremony at Oakey in south-east Queensland.

The ceremony will mark the start of construction of new facilities at the Australian Army Aviation Centre at Oakey for a Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) helicopter unit.

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An Australian company, Fulton Hogan Pty Ltd, was recently awarded a $5 million contract for earthworks and construction of the aircraft disposal area. Two other associated projects, involving building construction, engineering services, roadworks, carparks, and a commercial support package, are also in the pipeline.

The Oakey agreement was signed in October 1996 by Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Dr Tony Tan, and Australia's Defence Minister, Mr Ian McLachlan. It allows the RSAF to deploy up to 12 Super Puma helicopters to the base for a period of 15 years with the first aircraft expected to arrive late next year.

Flying activities will be consistent with maintaining flying skills and operational capabilities in accordance with Australian laws and Australian Defence Force regulations.

Singapore and Australia enjoy a strong defence relationship with mutual benefits, including bilateral and multilateral exercises, professional exchanges and training in Australia.

Singapore currently has a jet flying school at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Pearce in Western Australia, developed under a similar arrangement to Oakey, and regularly conducts exercises in the Shoalwater Bay Army Training Area on the central Queensland coast.

The RSAF will be represented at tomorrow's ceremony by its Chief of Air Force, Major General (MAJ-GEN) Goh Yong Siang, and the Australian Defence Force by the Commander 1st Division, MAJ-GEN Tim Ford.

MAJ-GEN Goh said Singapore was grateful to Australia for allowing the RSAF to develop training facilities which were not available in Singapore. He said the Oakey training arrangement was another positive step in the growing bilateral relations between both countries.

During his visit, MAJ-GEN Goh is also expected to meet local, state and federal politicians.



Cmd Australian Army Aviation Centre BG Bill Mellor, CAF MG Goh, and MG Ford holding an artists impression of what Oakey Base will look like when it's completed

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