



NEWS RELEASE

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Keynote Address by Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, for the Launching Ceremony of RSS ENDURANCE

14 Mar 1998

Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
Good Morning.

My wife and I are pleased to be present today to officiate the launch of the Republic of Singapore Navy's new Landing Ship Tank, RSS ENDURANCE.

This morning's launch of a new class of Landing Ship Tank is another demonstration of both MINDEF's and the Singapore government's commitment to ensuring that strong fundamentals and political stability remain the bedrock of our nation's progress and prosperity. Singapore is a small country highly dependent on external trade for our survival. As such, external developments often have far-reaching implications for us. Our consistent policy has been to strengthen the fundamentals like defence which underpin our country's long-term competitiveness and security.

With Singapore's limited land resources, the SAF faces the constraint of limited training space for our soldiers, sailors and pilots. To enable realistic, rigorous and demanding training to be carried out, the SAF actively looks for suitable overseas training areas to offset local space constraints. We have been fortunate in having friends both within the region and beyond who understand our position and have been willing to accommodate our training needs. As the number and frequency of such overseas training deployments increase, the need for an expeditious and efficient means of transporting SAF personnel and equipment has become more urgent.

For many years Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) of the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) have been transporting vehicles, personnel and equipment for SAF training overseas. However, the

Navy's existing LSTs were acquired from the United States Navy in the 1970's. They have been in service for more than 50 years. With upgrading, we have been able to extend the useful lifespan of our LSTs but they have increasingly become uneconomical and inefficient to operate.

MINDEF has therefore decided to replace the Navy's current Landing Ship Tanks. RSS ENDURANCE is the lead ship of 4 new LSTs to be acquired by the RSN. These will replace the 5 aging LSTs that the RSN currently operates. Being larger and faster, the new LSTs will be fully capable of supporting the SAF's overseas training requirements. Innovative and modern technologies will be incorporated into the new LSTs to assure higher system reliability and availability and allow greater automation of manual tasks. This means that, while the new LSTs are larger and more complex than the existing ones, they will require significantly lower manpower and system maintenance requirements.

As with their predecessors, the new LSTs will continue to provide support for the RSN's operational and training commitments, as well as act as sea training platforms for the Navy's midshipmen. The ships are capable of deploying to more ports and countries in the region and beyond as part of their training cruises. Such port calls have a significant role in extending and facilitating MINDEF's defence diplomacy. Such diplomacy helps to foster and enlarge bonds of friendship and mutual understanding.

The new LSTs are the largest naval vessels to be designed and built by the local shipbuilding industry. This complex and challenging undertaking would not have been possible without the professionalism and hard work put in by the teams from the Republic of Singapore Navy, MINDEF's Defence Technology Group and Singapore Technologies Marine. This morning's launch is a testimony of the growing maturity of our local defence development ability to harness creative technologies to meet the unique requirements of the SAF in the most cost-effective manner.

I congratulate all those involved in building the new LSTs on a job well done. I have every confidence that the vessels will more than adequately perform all the tasks required of them.

News Release:

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