



NEWS RELEASE

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Speech By LT-GEN Bey Soo Khiang, Chief of Defence Force, at the Inauguration of the Tri-Service Staff Course

06 Oct 1998

Commandant SAFTI-MI, Director IDSS, Distinguished Guests and Fellow Officers,

I am delighted to be here this afternoon to inaugurate the Tri-Service Staff Course or TSC in short. Let me start by congratulating the 18 Army officers, 13 Airforce officers and 6 Naval officers for having been selected to attend the first TSC.

Last year, we completed a review of the education and training system for our officers. The review confirmed that our education and training system is generally sound, especially in the area of functional courses. To improve the system further, we developed a General Education Roadmap, which has, as its core, three tri-Service courses to meet the professional requirements of SAF officers at the junior, advanced and senior levels.

These courses are the Officer Cadet Course, the Command and Staff Course, and the intermediate-level Tri-Service Staff Course that we are launching today. These tri-Service courses enable our officers from the Army, Navy and Air Force to interact with each other, and to establish inter-personal bonds and informal networks that will serve them well in the course of their careers. The understanding and familiarity resulting from the close interaction will contribute towards making the SAF a truly integrated organisation.

The modern battlefield is complex. The more integrated an armed force is, the better its chances of victory. Why this is so is evident in recent military campaigns like the Gulf War. The Americans, together with their allies in the UN coalition, achieved a victory possible only as a result of excellent inter-service understanding and co-operation. On the other hand, less than ten years earlier, the Americans had conducted a limited operation in Grenada, and found to their disappointment that the various parts of their forces did not quite fit together.

Like the Americans, no single Service in the SAF is capable of winning the war on its own. Indeed, this will be the premise on which the SAF will operate. To achieve this, the Army, Navy and Air Force must complement one another to enhance each other's capabilities. The SAF must fight as an integrated system and not as three separate Services.

For this to come about, we must continue to think and work integrated operations. This means more active inter-Service participation when we train, and more active interaction amongst commanders and staff to achieve a better understanding of each other. The three tri-service courses in the General Education Road Map are geared towards this requirement.

The aim of the TSC, besides allowing officers from the three Services to interact and to bond, is to prepare students for Major-grade appointments in the Formations, Service HQs, Joint Staff and MINDEF. There will be six courses a year to train up to 240 officers.

The course curriculum builds upon the contents of the former Joint Junior Staff Course, and incorporates general military education subjects from the former General Military Knowledge Examination. As knowledge in these GMKE subjects is important before an officer is considered for promotion, it is therefore only fair for the organisation to teach these subjects in a course such as the TSC. In the interim until Mar 2000, officers who passed the TSC will not need to take the GMKE. After this date, the GMKE will be discontinued. The course curriculum also includes National Education, and some of the more pertinent aspects of Military Technology, Communication, Management, and War and Security Studies. Last, but not least, the curriculum includes Staff Duties; essential skills that will enable our officers to function effectively as staff officers at various levels.

All in all, the curriculum has been designed to ensure that you leave the course with a common perspective of the SAF and its role in nation building and Total Defence. We would also like you to leave this course with a better understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the other Services, knowledge that is critical for you to function effectively as you progress to more senior and demanding appointments in command or staff in the SAF.

The TSC comprises two phases: a 3 month Pre-Residential Phase and a 3 week Residential Phase which is the course proper conducted here in the Air Force Officers Advanced School of the SAFTI Military Institute. The Pre-Residential Phase enables the students, through self-study, to build up their knowledge base, and to prepare themselves for the course.

The inclusion of a Pre-Residential Phase reduces the amount of time that students need to be away from their units. Of course, this also meant that you had to work very hard over the last three months; juggling your time between family, course requirements and the demands of your full-time job. To those of you who felt the strain, I would urge you to remember the aphorism, "No pain, no gain." The ability to work hard, and to work well under stressful conditions, is training in itself. The social side of the course is an important aspect too. Relax, enjoy yourselves and socialise whenever opportunities allow. Make as many friends as you can.

Finally, I would now like to thank all those who have contributed to make this first course possible. Significant amount of work has been put in to ensure the quality of the course and that it will be efficiently run. It leaves me now to congratulate the participants once again and to declare the commencement of the first Tri-Service Staff Course.

Thank you.

News Release:

- Enhanced Tri-Service Military Education for SAF Officers (Document No: MINDEF_19981006001.pdf)

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