



SPEECH

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Speech by Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, at the Send-Off Ceremony for SAF Mission to East Timor

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Ladies and Gentlemen For the last few months, Singapore has been helping the International Force for East Timor or INTERFET to restore peace and stability in East Timor.

Our support has taken the form of two LSTs, a SAF liaison team and a medical detachment. From reports, I am happy to be informed that our assistance has been useful and that Singapore has contributed to INTERFET's overall success in bringing peace and stability to East Timor in a relatively short period of time.

Starting next month, INTERFET will hand over its responsibilities to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor or UNTAET.

UNTAET will have a much wider mandate. UNTAET has been tasked not only to maintain law and order throughout the territory of East Timor but also to establish an effective administration, to assist the development of civil and social services, and to ensure the co-ordination and delivery of humanitarian aid and rehabilitation.

UNTAET has a challenging task ahead. To succeed, UNTAET will require not only the support of the East Timorese - who must themselves show that they are determined to rebuild their country - but also the continued support of the international community.

Singapore will support the UN's efforts in two ways. We will assist in a smooth transition to UNTAET, and we will help UNTAET maintain the peaceful conditions necessary for the return of normalcy.

A smooth transition is important for the success of the UNTAET mission. This evening, our LST, RSS Perseverance, will set sail for Darwin to assist in the transition from INTERFET to UNTAET. And for the first time, female SAF personnel will be participating in a UN mission. Eight women - an officer and seven specialists - will serve on RSS Perseverance.

Also at the request of INTERFET, the RSAF will be sending a 25-man C-130 deployment to operate between Darwin and Dili. They will depart next week. Both the LST and the C-130 will be used by INTERFET to support the heavy logistics and transportation requirements during this transition period.

As for our contributions to UNTAET, Singapore will be providing a 21-man medical team to replace the team currently in East Timor. The SAF has selected a strong team comprising experienced men. The team leader, LTC(Dr) Surya Kumar, is a veteran of the medical support team that was sent to the Gulf War in 1991 and has also served in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations as a Medical Support Officer. The SAF medical team has been preparing for its mission over the past few months and is ready to face the challenges in East Timor when they arrive there in 2 weeks' time.

Singapore will also contribute 8 military observers and staff officers for UNTAET Headquarters. The UN has requested that Singapore nominate an officer to take up the senior appointment of Deputy Chief of Staff (Civil/Military Affairs). We are pleased to assign COL Mark Koh Choon Kwang to take up this important appointment. Other appointments - whether as staff officers in UNTAET HQ or military observers - will be finalised later.

In addition to the SAF's contributions, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) will deploy 40 officers to join the UN Civilian Police or CIVPOL mission in East Timor. Our police officers will be involved in peacekeeping operations, community policing and traffic management. The Police contingent will be led by Acting Superintendent Heng Sou Kaw, who is a veteran of several UN peacekeeping missions. All members of the SPF contingent have been specially selected and trained. Many of them have previous experience in other UN missions in Cambodia and Namibia.

To the SAF officers, WOSEs and specialists who are about to depart for your mission, I wish you every success in handling the difficult and demanding tasks ahead. I have no doubt that you will perform your duties conscientiously and conduct yourselves professionally at all times. I am confident that you will put in your best efforts and do Singapore and the SAF proud. I would also like to thank the spouses and families of our men and women for the sacrifices they make as their loved ones embark on this mission.

On behalf of MINDEF and the Government of Singapore, I wish you every success in the mission.

Thank you.

News Release:

- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Dr Tony Tan Announces Singapore's Contributions to the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (Document No: MINDEF_20000105001)

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