



NEWS RELEASE

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Factsheet - About Total Defence

Introduction

Singapore is a small country. It has a small population base and no natural resources. It is a multi-racial and multi-religious society. All these make Singapore vulnerable not only to military attacks, but also to exploitation of our economic, social, political or psychological weaknesses by those who may wish to do us harm.

To ensure that we can deal adequately with these challenges, it is important that Singapore has a Total Defence capability that involves the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), as well as the entire civilian population.

The concept of Total Defence was first introduced in 1984 to highlight the important role that every Singaporean plays in the defence of Singapore. In Total Defence, our people are organised to defend the country against all forms of attack, both military and non-military.

Total Defence comprises Psychological Defence, Social Defence, Economic Defence, Civil Defence and Military Defence.

Psychological Defence

Psychological Defence refers to the individual citizen's commitment to the nation and confidence in the future of our country. It is about having pride, passion and patriotism for our country. In Psychological Defence, we develop the collective will to stand up for our rights; to protect what is ours; to seek to be left in peace; to progress and prosper in our own way as a nation. A strong Psychological Defence allows us to safeguard our independence and hence chart our own destiny.

Social Defence

Social Defence is about Singaporeans of all races and religions living and working together in harmony. To build a strong Social Defence, there must be racial and religious tolerance and respect, as well as opportunities for all regardless of race, language or religion. Social Defence also refers to every citizen, especially those with the ability, education and training, having the social conscience to contribute to the larger community and country. This includes showing care and concern for the less fortunate and underprivileged, as well as active participation in volunteer work.

Economic Defence

Economic Defence is the government, business and industry organising themselves in such a way that our economy will not break down in war or under the threat of war. It means putting in place contingency plans to ensure that our offices and factories will be able to continue their operations during emergencies, even after National Servicemen (NSmen) and equipment have been mobilised to deal with emergencies. Economic Defence involves the economic sector sharing material and manpower resources to meet the needs of Civil and Military Defence. At the level of the individual, Economic Defence requires the cultivation of a good working attitude and the constant upgrading of one's skills. This is necessary to help the Singapore economy stay competitive.

Civil Defence

Civil Defence provides for the safety and basic needs of the population so that life may go on as normally as possible during emergencies. It involves training, with the help of the Singapore Civil Defence Force, the civilian population in rescue work, evacuation, first-aid and damage control. Civil Defence aims to produce a civilian population familiar with procedures for survival and protection, and with arrangements for relief services and emergency supply of critical items like blood, water and food. The knowledge and assurance that loved ones are cared for will fortify the morale of our citizen-soldiers in military training or fighting at the front-line.

Military Defence

Military Defence is about having an SAF that is able to deter aggression. A first-class SAF - one that has the capability to act effectively and decisively should deterrence and diplomacy fail - is essential to building a strong Military Defence. While Military Defence is the responsibility of NSmen, full-time National Servicemen and regulars in the SAF, it also involves our own military industries having the capacity to meet the SAF's weapons and ammunition requirements.