



SPEECH

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Speech by Mr Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Defence, at SAFTI MI 10th Anniversary Dinner

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To Lead, To Excel, To Overcome

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very happy to join you tonight to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of SAFTI Military Institute. It is also my pleasure to welcome the Commandants of SAFTI's partner military institutes, members of the Military Attache Corps, as well as the many SAFTI alumni (Singaporean and international) to this dinner.

SAFTI MI may be marking its 10th anniversary, but for us SAFTI represents the spirit of excellence and determination that has characterised the SAF Officer Corps since the first batch trained in the original SAFTI at Pasir Laba in 1966. SAFTI acquired a reputation for toughness; SAFTI became synonymous with tough training.

A National Institution

It was in 1982 that then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew asked MINDEF to acquire this plot of land to build a new training complex for SAF officers. From the outset, we were clear that SAFTI MI was not going to be simply a set of buildings and structures to meet functional purposes. The SAF was at that point going through the transition from its first to second

generation, and our vision was that SAFTI MI would be a national symbol all Singaporeans could be proud of. SAFTI MI would be a symbol of service to our nation.

The motto To Lead, To Excel, To Overcome was carefully chosen to capture the spirit that this national institution would epitomise. This was the spirit that had motivated the first generation of SAF officers to come forward to dedicate themselves in service to our fledgling nation. They had to work tirelessly against daunting odds to raise an armed forces almost from scratch. They built the foundation of the modern military force that is the SAF we know today.

SAFTI MI would also be a unique institution. It was then the only tri-service, tri-level military training institution. This unique structure was deliberately chosen so that SAFTI MI could play a central role in fostering the unifying spirit of the SAF. SAFTI MI would be the Home of the SAF Officer Corps, where the best that our nation has to offer would come as aspiring officers – regulars and National Servicemen – to be trained and tested together at the Officer Cadet School before being commissioned as SAF officers to serve in the Army, Navy and Air Force. And to which they would return to upgrade themselves, to renew and strengthen their bonds with one another, the pledge once again their commitment to the nation, as they progressed through milestone courses in the senior constituent schools in SAFTI MI – the SAF Advanced Schools and the Singapore Command and Staff College.

SAFTI MI has also played a major role in strengthening the SAF's network of friends in the region and around the world. Over the last 10 years, 402 officers from 26 countries have graduated from this new campus in SAFTI MI in SAFTI MI's milestone courses. They join the many foreign officers who had graduated over the years from OCS, the Advanced Schools and SCSC before these institutions were brought together under the umbrella of SAFTI MI. These alumni are all a part of SAFTI MI's history. We extend a special welcome to all our foreign graduates who have honoured us with their presence tonight.

Constant upgrading

SAFTI MI has been constantly upgrading itself since its founding in 1995. It has been improving its courses, technology and systems to keep pace with the needs of the SAF. For instance, SAFTI MI has been constantly expanding its network of education and research partnerships with both local and international academic and military institutions. The signing of MOUs with the Australian Defence College and Singapore's National Institute of Education as well as The Nanyang Business School (of Nanyang Technological University) this year are valuable additions to the collaboration with partners such as the Naval Postgraduate School of the US, and Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Temasek Defence Systems Institute, and the Engineering Faculty of the National University of Singapore.

The courses offered by SAFTI MI have also been revamped. They have become more Joint in focus, and employ methods such as self-directed and collaborative learning. SCSC students

are today regularly exposed to the best minds and leaders in both military and non-military fields through the Distinguished Speakers Programme. OCS has implemented many innovative training methods. The three SAF Advanced Schools have joined together for their flagship Tri-Service Warfighters' Course. Over the past 3 years, the Centre for Leadership Development in SAFTI MI has done useful work in the important subject of leadership development. It has promulgated an SAF Leadership Framework that emphasises the importance of "self-awareness, self-management and personal mastery" – all vital aspects of leadership in the SAF.

SAFTI MI has also revamped its professional journal. Contributions to *The Pointer* by renowned experts, local and international, encourage reflection, learning and professional sharing among the officer corps.

Positioning for the 3G SAF

SAFTI MI has successfully captured the spirit of the SAF's pioneers and met the needs of the SAF of today. It must also position itself so that the SAF can deal just as successfully with the challenges of the future.

The 3rd Generation SAF will have well-educated and motivated servicemen who can very naturally and quickly employ cutting-edge technology and innovative operational concepts. 3rd Generation SAF officers must be prepared for a wider spectrum of operations. They will have to operate with other national security and civil agencies, with coalition partners, with NGOs, and all this in the glare of the global media. 3G SAF officers must therefore be more Joint and integrated in outlook and thinking. They must also be prepared to experiment with new ideas, technology and operational concepts. They must be able to think and act independently, understanding the objective, and exercising initiative in self-directed, self-synchronising operations.

I therefore see SAFTI MI as one of the SAF's main engines of transformation. This is where the minds of SAF officers are refreshed and opened to the changing realities in our security landscape and the evolving nature of warfare. SAFTI MI must continue to align both the content and the learning methodology to prepare the type of leaders who meet the needs of the future SAF.

Conclusion

While the 3G SAF will employ new technology and operational concepts, it is fighting spirit and the will to prevail till victory is achieved that are the decisive factors in battle – as it has always been. The spirit of SAFTI MI – to Lead, to Excel, to Overcome – must be deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of all SAF officers. The values that they imbibe will be the driving force of the SAF, for these are the values that they transmit to their men.

The imprint of SAFTI MI goes beyond the SAF. The SAF is a citizen armed forces. Our

National Servicemen go on to play many roles in civilian life, and our National Service officers will take on leadership roles in society. The values that SAFTI MI stands for will permeate our society and strengthen our nation.

I congratulate all of you – staff, students, alumni, distinguished guests and friends and partners of SAFTI MI – on this 10th Anniversary of SAFTI MI, and I look forward to the leading role that SAFTI MI will play in the SAF of the future. I wish you all a pleasant evening of comradeship. Thank you.

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