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Speech by Minister for Finance, Mr Heng Swee Keat at the Launching Ceremony of the Seventh Littoral Mission Vessel

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Chairman of ST Engineering, Mr Kwa Chong Seng
Chairman of Marine, ST Engineering, Mr Lim Ah Doo
President and CEO of ST Engineering, Mr Vincent Chong
Former Navy Chiefs
Friends from MINDEF and the Navy

It is my pleasure to be here today. My wife and I are delighted to be part of this time-honoured naval tradition to launch the seventh Littoral Mission Vessel (LMV), *Dauntless*.

Maritime Singapore

Singapore is a maritime nation whose lifeblood is maritime trade. As a gateway between the East and West, 70% of the world's sea trade transits through the Singapore Strait. Singapore's lack of natural resources means that almost everything is imported – from food to building materials, electricity, petroleum – most things that Singaporeans need on a daily basis. Today, Singapore's maritime trade industry comprises over 5,000 establishments, generating more than 170,000 jobs, and contributing 7% to our nation's GDP.

The Strait of Malacca and the Singapore Strait are vital to the functioning of our economy – any disruption or instability in these waterways will directly impact our livelihoods. Singapore's continued economic prosperity and security are thus premised on the Republic of Singapore Navy's (RSN) ability to secure and keep these key Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) open, as well as how we preserve our right to move freely in waters around the world, as set out by international law. Since the birth of the RSN in 1967, the RSN has taken up the mission of securing our SLOCs, to safeguard Singapore's continued free access to the sea, and protect Singaporeans' way of life.

Safeguarding Our Maritime Domain

We must ensure that we continue to safeguard our maritime space in the face of threats. As an island, Singapore's porous coastline makes us exceptionally vulnerable to seaborne threats, from sea robberies and piracy, to terrorist infiltration and attacks from the seas. Piracy threats can severely disrupt commercial shipping. The ability of trading vessels to navigate the SLOCs freely and safely has to be secured.

We have been working closely with the wider international community to contribute towards keeping our regional seas safe and secure from threats. These threats have the potential to shake confidence in Singapore and our economy. To keep our territorial and regional waterways safe, the RSN conducts coordinated patrols and shares information with our neighbours. The RSN's Maritime Security Task Force (MSTF) and Information Fusion Centre allow Singapore and our defence partners to better combat maritime terrorism together through inter-agency cooperation and information-sharing.

Through the Singapore Maritime Crisis Centre (SMCC), the MSTF collaborates closely with various national agencies such as the Police Coast Guard (PCG) to safeguard Singapore's waters around the clock. Our first LMV, RSS *Independence*, was deployed for operations less than two years after her launch in 2015. During the recent United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (US-DPRK) Summit, the RSN led various national agencies in ensuring the security of the waters surrounding Singapore for this international high-stake event. RSS Independence collaborated closely with other maritime agencies and played a vital role in the security operation by conducting coordinated patrol in the waterways off Sentosa Island. It was a complex operation, with no room for failure.

The successful conduct of this complex security operation was no easy feat. It was enabled by Singaporeans' strong support to the RSN for many years. The success also reinforces our confidence that the RSN rises to the challenge whenever called upon.

Our LMVs Put the RSN in a Position of Strength for the Future

The LMVs will replace our Fearless-class Patrol Vessels, which have been in service for over 20 years. Three things stand out from the LMV project, which is designed to position the RSN strongly for the future, as it better prepares itself to meet evolving future threats.

First, the LMVs adopt a concept of "modularity" which gives the RSN greater flexibility to carry out a wider range of missions. The LMVs can be quickly reconfigured with different mission modules, such as to operate unmanned systems, to conduct helicopter operations and deliver medical facilities. This increases efficiency and allows the LMVs to do much more, in response to different threats.

Second, each LMV will require about 20% less manpower as compared to the current smaller Patrol Vessels they will replace. With an anticipated reduction in the manpower resource available to the Singapore Armed Forces, the RSN is using technology and innovation to improve operational outcomes while operating with a leaner crew — to do more with less. This is only possible through harnessing technologies and creating more streamlined work processes. Lean manning of the LMV is also made possible by our sailors' deep and broad expertise. Each of our sailors adopts multiple roles onboard ships – this is laudable for an 80 metre-long warship. In many established navies around the world, a warship of this size will have twice the number of sailors to operate. This reflects highly on the caliber of the sailors that we need and we have.

Third, and I know that we have students from junior colleges here today, I hope that you will be excited to know that our LMVs were designed with you, our future sailors, in mind. You are the ones who are adept at working with computerised and digital equipment. The LMVs boast an incorporated touch-screen technology which makes the systems more intuitive for their users. Students who have visited the ship have found the design intuitive too.

Success of the LMVs' Operationalisation and the RSN’s Modernisation

Our LMVs continue to be operationally ready and perform exceptionally well when activated. I recall that our first two LMVs, RSS *Independence* and Sovereignty, participated in the RSN's Golden Jubilee celebrations last year. RSS *Independence* flew Singapore's flag high at the first ASEAN Multilateral Naval Exercise in Thailand last year, where 14 ships from the ASEAN nations were involved. Our LMVs also did well this year in bilateral exercises with Indonesia and Thailand. I am also proud to know that RSS *Sovereignty* responded well last December when it was activated for a Search-And-Rescue mission for two men who went missing after their sampan capsized. The mission also demonstrated the close and effective cooperation among the Singapore, Malaysian and Indonesian authorities when responding to an incident. Earlier this year in March, the sixth LMV *Fortitude* was launched.

The rapid operationalisation of the LMVs is truly remarkable given the short period given. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the RSN, Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) and ST Engineering for today's milestone in our LMV journey.

Charting the Future for Our Navy

Singapore has come a long way since our beginnings, to what we have today. Naming this LMV "*Dauntless*" aptly reflects the RSN's determined spirit to overcome all adversity without fear, capturing also the attributes of our founding generation. The "*Dauntless*" spirit will continue to guide the RSN in innovating and constantly improving itself, to safeguard Singapore.

To the men and women of LMV *Dauntless*, I entrust you with the honourable duty of living up to the name that your ship bears, as you embark on your next journey in defending our seas. I have every confidence in you. Once again, congratulations to the RSN. I wish you all fair winds and following seas. Thank you.

News Release:

- Dauntless - Singapore Navy's Seventh Littoral Mission Vessel Launched (MINDEF_20180818001.pdf)