

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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05-2/80/05/26 - 9 JUN 1980

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**SPEECH BY MR. BERNARD CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE  
AT THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OF THE ARMY, NAVY AND AIR  
FORCE OFFICERS AT THE ISTANA ON MONDAY,  
26 MAY 1980 AT 1830 HOURS**

Tonight's commissioning ceremony includes officers from the Army's 10th Standard Military Course, the Navy and the Air Force. This tri-service setting is an appropriate one for me to comment on those professional aspects which affect the three services.

Over the years, we have been able to improve on the calibre of officers recruited into National Service. The success of our education system in turning out better educated men in larger numbers has enabled us to inject the necessary brain power into areas which needs qualitative upgrading. The task ahead of the SAF is to make the maximum use of such expertise.

To do this, we must provide better training for our soldiers and commanders in all the three services. Our commanders must be trained to be original in thinking and creative in ideas to enable us to continually develop new doctrines and operating methods. They must be well versed in operating new equipment and handling modern weapons. Even more important will be our ability to develop the will and tenacity that will ensure that our troops in combat will be able to fight harder and achieve much more than any other opposing forces. The history of warfare has shown that there are both "hard" and "soft" armies. A soft army gives up easily, depends on a long logistics tail and loses its nerve very rapidly in adverse conditions. The troops who attempted to defend British Malaya in 1942 is an example of this. On the other hand, Yamashita's troops are good examples of hard armies who successfully defied great odds and tough battle-field conditions to reap brilliant battle-field successes. The SAF must train to be a hard army to succeed.

Let me now stress on the need to have team work both within the service and amongst the three services. All of you are aware that for the armed forces to be at its most efficient, the technical and service

personnel who maintain and service the equipment must be handled and managed as part of an efficient team, together with the users of the equipment. In the Air Force, pilots, engineers and technicians must develop the bonds of mutual respect, understanding and teamwork so that the Air Force can operate as a single lethal force. Similarly, Naval Officers, engineers and technicians must also understand that only good teamwork and rapport will result in the RSN being able to optimise the usage of their combat naval craft. The Army is also no exception. In a high technology age, the army must rely on new and sophisticated weaponry and equipment to stay ahead. The same ability to foster teamwork between field commanders, engineers, soldiers and support bases is equally important.

In overall terms, the strength of any armed forces lies in its ability to work closely together. Modern defence calls for close co-operation between all three services of the armed forces. If all the three services - air, naval and army can enmesh themselves and mutually support each other well, then its combined strength will be far in excess of those who thought they may outnumber it. The SAF must therefore be well-versed and well-grained in joint services operations. It must continually strive to develop between all levels of the three services.

As young officers who are about to be actively engaged in the professional work of each service, you will have a large part to play in the qualitative development of the SAF. I urge all of you to put your willing shoulders to the wheel. If each of you strive to attain the qualities that I have spelt out this evening the SAF cannot but succeed.

I would like to congratulate all the officers being commissioned tonight and wish them well in their future appointments.

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