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- 1 NOV 1980

05-2/80/10/23

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SPEECH BY MR BERNARD CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE
AT THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OF SAF OFFICERS AT THE
ISTANA ON THURSDAY 23 OCTOBER 1980 AT 6.30 PM

I am pleased to extend to all of you here this evening, my warmest congratulations on your commission as officers of the Singapore Armed Forces.

It is timely for me to use this occasion to elaborate on the Ministry of Defence's Reserves Upgrading Scheme which has been implemented some nine months ago. It has now been accepted that the quality and maturity of the reservists are critical factors in the building up of the first-line fighting forces of the Republic. We need to emphasise here that the Reserves Upgrading Scheme is a comprehensive effort aimed at improving the skill and training of every reservist - from the senior commanders down to the private soldiers. The Scheme includes a comprehensive revision of in-camp training syllabi and special courses to prepare officers and NCOs for their respective leadership roles and a new emphasis on physical fitness to keep our reservists fighting fit at all times.

As the officer corps will form the leadership vanguard of the Reserves, a strong reserve officer cadre must be developed as a matter of top priority. Mindef had decided, in its most recent upgrading exercise, to promote a total of seventy-nine Reservist Officers. These promotions will take effect from 1 November, 1980. Seventy-three officers will be promoted to Captain's rank and six to Major's rank. The six newly promoted Majors are all doctors in possession of post-graduate specialist qualifications. One of them holds the Reservist appointment of OC of a Medical Company while the other five are deployed in anaesthetic, surgical and other related specialist medical fields. Three of these six doctors are private

practitioners, while the rest are with the Ministry of Health.

Of the seventy-three Lieutenants who will be promoted to the Captain's rank, the overwhelming majority are combat officers. Forty-three of these newly promoted Reservist Captains hold command appointments, whilst thirty are staff officers at Battalion, Brigade and Divisional levels.

The main consideration for these promotions is military performance as Reservists. But we observe a close correlation between their military effectiveness and the expertise and experience acquired in their civilian careers. It is pertinent to note that the majority of the newly promoted Captains are in the private sector. Forty-seven are holding managerial or executive appointments. Twenty-one are Division I and II administrators and executives in government ministries and statutory boards. Forty-five are University graduates and six others possess professional diplomas. There is little doubt that the critical qualities of leadership, initiative, innovation and ability to work under great pressure are in as much demand in military service as in civilian occupations. The SAF as a citizens' army will have to make the maximum use of this symbiotic relationship which binds military and civilian careers together.

In terms of military upgrading, detailed plans have also been finalised for the current work year. A total of 528 reservist officers and other ranks have been earmarked to attend courses designed to improve their military skills. These include advanced officers' courses in the combat arms of Armour, Infantry, Intelligence, Artillery and Engineers. Courses in Manpower Management and Logistic Support will also be conducted. For Other Ranks, 30 have been invited to attend an Officer Cadet Course to be converted to commissioned officers. This course will be conducted over two years making use of two in-camp training periods of 3-4 weeks each year. They will be promoted to 2nd Lieutenants on successful completion of the course. Another 110 will be trained to take over Senior NCO responsibilities at company and battalion levels. All in all, a total of 417 NCOs will be upgraded.

More information is required to enable us to plan future policies. MINDEF has commissioned research and surveys to determine, among other things, the attitudes of reservists towards their role in the military, as well as the employers' views on the part they could usefully play in the Reserves Upgrading Scheme. With continual feedback, MINDEF will be able to identify weaknesses and take the necessary steps to improve our Reserves Training System.

For the Reserves Upgrading Scheme to succeed, reservists must respond positively to this challenge to improve themselves in their military role. They should avail themselves of this opportunity to update themselves on the new developments in the SAF which would stand them in good stead as they advance to higher command appointments.

I wish the newly commissioned officers all the best in their military career. It is my sincere hope that when it comes to your turn to become Reservists, you will continue to give off your best to the SAF and maintain the high standard of performance and quality that our Reserves Upgrading Scheme has set out to achieve. We will succeed with your unstinting support and total dedication to serve the SAF.
