

Singapore Government PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617. TEL 3378191 ext 352, 353, 354, 3362207, 3362271

Release No.: 06/NOV
11-1/83/11/02

**SPEECH BY MR CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
AT THE ANNUAL DINNER AND DANCE OF THE SPECIAL CONSTABULARY
AT THE NEPTUNE THEATRE RESTAURANT
ON WEDNESDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 1983 AT 8.00 PM**

The Volunteer Special Constabulary has a distinguished history. It was formed some 40 years ago as an auxiliary volunteer police force. It played an important role in helping the regular Police in maintaining law and order in the turbulent riot-torn years immediately before and after self-government and during Malaysia when we faced the threat of saboteurs brought about by the Indonesian confrontation.

It started off with a humble beginning with only 150 volunteers. Then in 1967 when part-time National Service was introduced in the Police Force the Special Constabulary grew into a large force comprising both volunteers and national servicemen. It reached a peak of 10,000 strong in 1977. However, in 1981 when it was decided to abolish part-time national service, the Special Constabulary again became a purely volunteer organisation. It retained the faithfuls and the dedicated who decided to remain behind and volunteer their service.

The role of the Special Constabulary has always been to supplement the traditional policing work of the regular Police. They were thus engaged in performing patrol duties in the land divisions as well as in the marine and traffic divisions. Some were attached to police field services, reserve units and to anti-drug squads.

In the last two years, a fundamental change has taken place in our doctrine and system of policing. This process of change started off when we introduced the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NWS) in June 1981. This was followed by the establishment of Police Boys' Clubs a year later. This year we introduced the Neighbourhood Police Post or NPP System. All these are part of a comprehensive plan to establish a community orientated policing system which is based on the fundamental premise that we cannot succeed in fighting crime and keeping it down without the co-operation and active involvement of the community.

To get public co-operation and involvement, the Police must go out to cultivate friendly relations with residents and by the efficient performance of their functions to win the confidence and trust of the public. Here the Special Constabulary comprising volunteers who come from a wide section of the community is in a unique position to play an important role as a bridge to promote community relations. The Special Constabulary must therefore re-orientate their role to include this new objective.

More specifically the Special Constabulary can promote the formation of Neighbourhood Watch Groups (NWGs) in their own residential area. Our crime figures show that in areas where we have the NWS in operation incidents of crime have generally decreased. In our public housing estates where a total of 9,841 NWGs involving 46,492 household units have been formed, less robberies and housebreakings are being committed than in other areas. On the other hand in the private housing estates where to date only 140 NWGs involving 846 household units have been formed, the crime rate shows an upward trend. For example, the 51 cases of robberies and 574 cases of housebreakings which occurred from January to September last year rose to 103 and 701 over the same period this year. This works out to a 102 per cent and 22 per cent increase.

It indicates a shift in the crime trend from our public housing estates to our private housing estates.

The Police is therefore putting emphasis on the expansion of the NWS in our private housing estates. But unlike in the public housing estates where we have the Residents' Committees (RCs) who are actively promoting the NWS we have only 46 out of an estimated 238 private housing estates with Residents' Associations (RAs). Out of these 46 RAs only 11 have responded by forming NWGs. Here members of the Special Constabulary who reside in these private housing estates can make a most valuable contribution by getting their fellow residents together to form RAs and to promote the formation of NWGs. The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) has also expressed their desire to get their members who live in private housing estates to form NWGs. I would suggest that the Special Constabulary should contact the SCWO so that the members of both organisations can co-ordinate their efforts in promoting the NWS in their respective residential estates.

The police officers in the various Police Land Divisions, will also join in to promote the NWS. The Divisional Police will be deploying more bicycle patrols in the private housing estates. This is not only to provide a visible police presence but also for the patrolmen to drop in on households to establish rapport with the residents. The Police is also in the process of preparing a booklet to be distributed to the householders to urge them to be more security conscious and how they can go about forming NWGs. These measures should be an effective interim substitute to keep crime rate down while waiting for the implementation of the NPP System in these private housing estates.

Crime rate in the commercial areas is also on the rise. To meet it the Police is implementing a plan to

urge owners, tenants, management and employees of commercial complexes and office blocks to get together and set up crime prevention committees. Their role is to organise crime prevention activities and implement security measures in their premises. Here again the members of the Special Constabulary who are professionals, business executives and those who work in offices can take the lead in the formation of these committees. To date 23 crime prevention committees have been set up in commercial and shopping complexes. The Crime Prevention Department has identified 160 commercial and office buildings which are vulnerable to crime. The target is to set up crime prevention committees in these 160 complexes by 1987.

The importance of the setting up of NWGs and crime prevention committees as an effective way to combat the present rising crime trend cannot be over-emphasised. It assumes even greater significance when viewed in the light that the present increase in crime in Singapore can be attributed to some extent by the large influx of foreign workers as well as those coming into Singapore on social visit passes. The percentage of foreigners compared with Singaporeans arrested for crime has risen from 12.8 per cent in 1981 to 13.1 per cent in 1982 and 13.4 per cent for the first half of this year. Last month the Police broke up a 24-man gang which was responsible for at least 17 robberies and 27 burglaries with the arrest of seven men. The vast majority of the members of the gang were foreigners. From police investigations and arrests, it indicates that the rate of serious crimes committed by foreigners operating with local accomplices has also increased. It rose from 11.5 per cent in 1981 to 12.7 per cent in 1982 and to 13.6 per cent between January - June 1983. The Police and the Immigration Department are closely monitoring the situation and will make strict checks on those foreigners who are here under suspicious circumstances with the view of getting rid of the undesirable foreigners. Here our alert members of the

public can help by reporting to the Police foreigners who behave suspiciously in their neighbourhood.

It is most encouraging to note that this year we had the most instances of quick response by members of the public in calling the Police that led to the arrest of criminals. A good example was a case of a leader of a NWG in Geylang Bahru who saw a man breaking into a motor vehicle. His immediate call to the Police resulted in the man being caught red-handed while he was still ransacking the vehicle. Another example was the break-up of a 24-man gang of foreigners I had mentioned, which was the result of a quick call by the victim to Police who arrived in time to arrest one of the robbers who was still in the vicinity.

If this trend of quick response by members of the public to crimes committed continues to grow then we can be assured of greater success in apprehending criminals and thus raise further our clearance rate of criminal cases. Our success rate can be expected to go up even further when the Police introduce the Computerised Operations Room for Police or COP system by the end of 1984. The COP system is designed to speed up the processing of calls for police assistance from members of the public as well as to provide quick screening of persons and vehicles to policemen on the ground.

With all these new developments, I am sure those of you who are volunteers in the Special Constabulary will find your new policing role a more meaningful as well as a challenging one. You will come in contact with and work more closely with members of the public. Your role will then be better appreciated by the community and this should give you even greater personal satisfaction. You are now embarking on a recruitment drive to double your present strength to 2,000 volunteers in the next two years. I wish all of you every success. @@@@@@@@@@