

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR GOH CHOK TONG, MINISTER OF DEFENCE,
AT THE PROMOTION CEREMONY FOR RESERVIST OFFICERS,
AT BEACH ROAD CAMP ON TUESDAY, 29 JUNE 1982 AT 6.00 PM

With effect from 1 July 1982, the SAF will promote a total of 95 reservist officers. Eight of you will be promoted to the rank of Major and the remaining 87 to the rank of Captain. You have worked hard and have helped to improve the SAF. You have earned your new rank. May I congratulate you on your success and extend to you my good wishes.

We have had National Service for 15 years now. I believe, however, that we have not yet built up a close and natural relationship between the SAF and the people. There is still an inadequate appreciation of the importance of SAF officers. For example, our society as a whole does not accord SAF officers the esteem they deserve. A Colonel commanding a division of 15,000 men does not carry the same prestige as a doctor in social circles. Yet, the doctor's survival, indeed, the whole country's survival, in times of war, may depend on that Colonel and his 15,000 men. In times of peace, it is the army officers, the pilots, the navy commanders and their men that keep away wars.

MINDEF itself is partly responsible for the population's low awareness of the social importance of our officers. We have up to now not encouraged our reservist and volunteer officers to use their military rank in their civilian capacity. We have been overly conservative. We should not make a distinction between the soldier and the civilian. The Swiss who also practise compulsory military service do not do so. A look at the Swiss "Who's Who" shows that the big businessmen and bankers are often senior military officers. It is not uncommon to find dentists who are fighter pilots, managing directors who are Lieutenant-Colonels and chairmen who are Colonels. Their cvs indicate their civilian

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occupation and army rank. Their business cards often also carry their rank. The Swiss male is both a civilian and a soldier. He is ashamed not to be a soldier. It is also a common practice for reservist and retired officers in the United States, UK and Israel to use their ranks in their civilian lives. We should do likewise.

It is important that our reservist officers feel a sense of belonging to the SAF and have pride in it. If they do not take pride in being a reservist officer, who would? If Singaporeans are not proud of their reservist officers then we will all be in trouble - because it means that they do not take defence seriously. MINDEF would like to encourage all reservist and volunteer officers to use their military rank in their civilian capacity. We would like you to use your rank freely and be visible as an SAF officer even in your civilian life.

We have a national service army. In time to come, every physically fit male Singaporean will be both a soldier and a civilian. We believe a good showing in the army is an indication of a person's ability, character, commitment to Singapore, and mental and physical toughness. This good performance will show itself up in the rank of the reservist officers.

I am sure you will live up to your rank.

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