

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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Acc No.	NARC
83	0050 24

Release No.: 03/NOV
05-1/83/11/01

SPEECH BY MR GOH CHOK TONG, MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND
SECOND MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AT THE RSAF GRADUATION CEREMONY
AT PAYA LEBAR AIRPORT ON TUESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER '83 AT 6.00 PM

Discipline and Dare

First, my warm congratulations to all the 148 officers who are graduating today. Next, my appreciation to all those who made today's graduating ceremony possible - their parents who encouraged them, their friends who stood by them, and the officers and staff who taught and trained them. Amongst the graduating officers are pilots, controllers, maintenance and engineering officers and air defence artillery officers. Besides regulars, we have for the first time reservists among the graduands. We hope to see more of them.

What are your responsibilities now that you have completed your training? You have many. But your fundamental responsibility is to defend our nation, to make sure we have permanent security, and that successive generations of Singaporeans can continue to build on the successes of previous generations.

You may soar alone in a jet aircraft high up in the sky. You may go unnoticed tinkering with knobs and buttons in the maintenance shed. Or you may stare for endless hours at the monitor screen and nothing happens. But however small your job may seem to be, each of you play a vital role in the defence of our nation. Because whatever niche you are hidden in, however simple your job may be now that you are trained, your responsibility is not light. Your responsibility is to ensure that 2.5 million people have a place under the sun which they can call home. That is the object of building up the SAF - to ensure permanent security for all of us.

I do not exaggerate your importance nor the burden of your responsibility. A hairline crack in our defence shield could lead to devastation, deaths, rubbles, ruins. A hairline crack allows the enemy to punch a gaping hole through which torrents of forces could pour through and flood the country. Do not, therefore, tolerate any weak points in the SAF. Be utterly ruthless in eliminating them and putting things right, because your lives depend on your ability to defend yourselves. And our lives too. In fact, all lives in Singapore.

To have permanent peace, all Singaporeans must be ready, operationally ready, to keep out threats from any direction. The sharper our defensive skills, the higher the chances of our being left alone to progress and prosper in peace, to work and play. Take the porcupine, for example.

But, unlike the porcupine, we are not born with defensive quills. The Bloodhounds, Giraffes, Skyhawks, have to be acquired. Infrastructure has to be built. We cannot quiver these quills at ease in a natural reflex. We have to learn and master the defensive skills the hard way. This means training, exercises, more training and better training. The key factor is, therefore, the human factor. Are you prepared to dedicate yourself to your job so that defending Singapore becomes a natural reflex? Are you able and ready to bristle and rattle your quills to warn off unfriendly footsteps as easily and naturally as a porcupine?

But for the quills to have a painful deterrent effect, they must be handled with discipline and dare. A missile will wreak untold havoc in the hands of a well-trained, well-drilled air defence crew. It might as well be consigned to the museum if the crew fire aimlessly.

Training and experience, discipline and dare - these are the critical elements in the human factor. The lessons learnt in each exercise must be retained in institutional memory. They must be passed on so that our skills get honed with the experience of each exercise. Training exercises must not become all form and no substance.

Discipline is a basic constituent of all armed forces. But discipline without dare is like well-garbed troops smartly turned out on parade. And dare without discipline is reckless bravery, like troops charging at the enemy's strongest defensive point when there are weaker targets. The two qualities must be nicely balanced.

If each one of us is well-trained, disciplined and has dare, collectively, we are a formidable force. We can succeed in discharging our heavy responsibility of protecting our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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