ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE COMMISSIONING PARADE FOR INFANTRY OFFICER CADETS ON SATURDAY, 15TH JULY 1972, AT THE PADANG

261 of the 281 who are passing out this evening are from the first of the special HSC intakes in January 1971, implementing a policy to have students do their national service before going to the university. We believe that the armed forces will be the better for it. The university will also improve in tone and sense of purpose when you go up in July next year. After 2½ years of your national service, you will be more mature and disciplined and will get more out of your university years.

But your personal duty to defend Singapore does not end with your Run Out Date (ROD). Under the Enlistment Act, you have another 10 years of yearly reservist training to keep you in trim. In the event of mobilisation of the reserves, other ranks can be called up till the age of 40. As officers, you can be called up till the age of 50.

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As Singapore develops and becomes more prosperous, our people's attitudes to discipline and work can develop in two possible ways. We could follow the course some West Europeans and Americans have taken. In these countries, affluence has blunted the keenness of young people to strive and achieve. They want to be excused from the physical and emotional discipline in military service. So national service is considered a chore which competing political parties promise to abolish. And where, as in Britain, they have abolished national service, the young have tended to be more pleasure seeking and less eager to strive and to achieve. The whole moral tone of the new generation in the West has altered as they go for the soft life. If we follow this trend, then Singapore will go down the drain. We have no NATO alliances which guarantee super-power support if we are attacked. So the more prosperous Singapore is, the more likely that she will be gobbled up if she were weak.

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The other course is the one the Swiss have taken. They keep up their economic development, with higher rewards for higher performance, but with a keen awareness that their defences must be always kept up. The Swiss know and accept compulsory military service as part of their way of life. So it must be for every Singaporean. We have a lot to protect, and everything to lose, if we are unable to defend ourselves. The only way we can defend ourselves with a small

population, of just over two million people, is the way other small countries, like Switzerland, Finland and Israel, have done: by compulsory military service, and building up through the reserves of an armed force of considerable numbers if the reserves are mobilised. For such a force to be credible, an elaborate programme of reservist training is essential. For ten years after your ROD, you will be kept on your mettle.

We have nearly 20,000 already in the reserves. Each year, 12,000 national servicemen will go into the reserves, Infantry, Combat Engineers, Specialist Engineers, Artillery, Armour, Field Logistics, and so on. The annual build-up of reservists will grow from 12,000 to 16,000 in the next few years.

No matter how relaxed and pleasure loving the wealthy industrial societies of the West can afford to be, Singapore will be finished if we become a hedonist society. Our economic advance has been won the hard way. It can be sustained if we keep up the verve and vitality, if we remain a well-organised society, with a well-trained defence force. We must cultivate an attitude to life where nothing is taken for granted. Alertness, cohesiveness and the determination to stand up for our rights will decide whether in fact we have to fight and die for them. The strange thing is that the more people know you are prepared to fight, and can fight well, the less likely is it necessary to do so.

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The course before you is therefore obvious. I am sure you can make it. We have no other choice.

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