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SPEECH BY MR ONG TENG CHEONG, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS,
AT THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY ON WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER '78
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The development of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) has been rapid and impressive, considering the severe limitations of training area, lack of military expertise and the predominantly conscript nature of our military service. As the SAF grows, indeed as Singapore grows, these limitations will have increasing impact on the type of army we run and the type of soldier it turns out.

The Officer Cadet School (OCS) was set up in 1966, the first of the many establishments that now constitute the SAF. It was designed to produce as quickly as possible a core of professional officers to form the nucleus of the SAF. Its role has expanded considerably since then. It now readily meets the SAF's requirements for regular officers in all arms of the land forces and satisfies the SAF's enormous appetite for national service officers.

Newly commissioned officers are often told that the real test of leadership comes only when they join their respective unit. But the most important task in the education of an officer is performed in the training camp - in spite of the limitations I have just named! The business of an institution like OCS has as much to do with equipping its trainees with the basic skills of command and control as with inculcating in them a mental attitude of resourcefulness, preparedness and thoroughness, and an exalted sense of responsibility, all of which are essential qualities in a leader of men.

Several instances in the past in which fatalities occurred during routine training and routine activities in the SAF are perhaps cause for concern that these qualities or standards may

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have been compromised. The training of soldiers incorporates stringent controls to guard against every foreseeable hazard. The best look-out for the assiduous application of such controls is an unwavering attention to detail and order, and a desire not to fail.

The omms is not on the Officer Cadet School to teach you how to deal with every situation you might face in the course of your duties. Yet you must have satisfied your instructors on at least two counts. You must have attained high standards of competence in your professional training. And you must have shown yourself capable of the self-discipline without which you will not be able to inspire and lead men.

Fitness to serve as a leader involves physical, mental and moral attributes, not necessarily in that order. Where older armies elsewhere are able to draw from centuries old traditions to inspire and train entrants to the officer corps, the OCS has only a mere 12 year-old history. Good repute and enduring respect, on which a tradition builds, will come from shining deeds out of those who enter the corps.

It is, then, your task as young officers to build on the foundations laid by the Officer Cadet School. If we go by the past records of the SAF, you, as the latest entries into the officer corp, can be expected to do so successfully. I wish you all the best.

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