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SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS  
AND INFORMATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE,  
AT THE 1986 NEW ZEALAND DAY PARADE AT DIEPPE BARRACKS,  
SEMBAWANG, ON WEDNESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 1986 AT 6.00 PM

It is an honour for me to be here today to review this parade mounted by the First Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, to commemorate New Zealand Day. I extend to you, and all in the New Zealand Armed Forces our warmest wishes as you celebrate this auspicious Day tomorrow.

The First Battalion has a traditional association with Southeast Asia, which dates back three decades to 1957, when New Zealand Forces were despatched to fight communist insurgents in Malaya. The battalion had the honour of being the first New Zealand unit to arrive on the scene. Within a few months of its arrival, the Battalion saw action in the Malayan jungles. Despite the unfamiliar environment and the harsh operating conditions, the First Battalion quickly distinguished itself by its brave and commendable performance in the field.

After a short break from 1959 when the Battalion was relieved by its sister unit, it was back on active duty again in Malaya from 1961. The Malayan Emergency was officially lifted in 1960. But the Battalion did not have much time to enjoy the period of relative peace. Confrontation set in, and the Battalion was committed to action again. As before, the Battalion proved its mettle in

operations, fighting side by side with other Commonwealth forces. Its reputation as the "Big Gurkhas" attested to its formidable competence in jungle-warfare. Truly, over the past quarter of a century, the First Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment has achieved an outstanding and illustrious record of service in this region.

The Singapore Armed Forces is proud to be associated with a unit as distinguished as yours. Our two Armed Forces enjoy a close and warm friendship, reflecting the good relations between our people and our countries. Our co-operation has been extensive. Our interactions are many. They include professional exchanges, and participation in bilateral exercises, courses, and shooting meets. Significantly, the Alliance that was established between the First Battalion and the SAF's First Commando Battalion represents a bond of friendship which links our two battalions in mutual cooperation and comradeship.

New Zealand and Singapore are also linked to Malaysia, Australia, and the United Kingdom through the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA). Through the FPDA we have been able to conduct combined air, naval, and land exercises regularly. Together, we strive for peace in this region.

The present situation in the region is by no means completely peaceful. The continued occupation of Cambodia by Vietnamese forces backed by the Soviet Union, is an issue of particular concern to all peace-loving countries in this part of the world. It is thus important that we co-operate together and prepare ourselves for unwelcome developments. We have to demonstrate the will and the capacity to shoulder the burden of maintaining peace, only then can we hope to be left in peace.

The presence of NZ forces in Southeast Asia represents the continuing commitment of the New Zealand people to peace and stability in this region.

We value your friendship and we welcome your continued stay. Your presence has indeed contributed to peace and stability in the region. With peace and stability, our two countries can progress and prosper and our people can lead better lives.

In conclusion, let me congratulate one and all in the First Battalion, and the Headquarters, Royal New Zealand Forces, Southeast Asia, for mounting this magnificent parade.

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