

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS
AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE (POLICY),
AT THE PRESENTATION OF DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY PRIZE AND
TRAINING AWARDS AT THE MANDARIN BALLROOM
ON SATURDAY, 12 JANUARY 1991 AT 11.00 AM**

Today, the world stands at the edge of what could be one of the most intense military conflict in human history. The fearsome firepower of the free world led by the United States, is arrayed against the forces of Iraq's dugged-in in Kuwait. If neither side blinks in this showdown, war may break out in the coming days. And with it, will be unleashed, conventional firepower of an order of magnitude never seen before. Lives are going to be lost. Tens of thousands. Maybe hundreds of thousands.

If only Kuwait had a strong defence; with national service for its citizens to compensate for its small population; and an armed forces commensurate with its wealth to safeguard it. It is too late for regrets now. The country is over-run; and its people subjugated and killed.

The lesson of Kuwait for all small nations is simple. Remember Kuwait. Remember how quickly it disappeared. Remember to invest in defence. Take it seriously. As Sun Tze said 2,500 years ago, the Art of War is a matter of life and death, which can on no account be neglected.

In Singapore, we must invest in our defence. Not just money alone but also manpower, quality manpower. MINDEF and the SAF must have its fair share of the brightest Singaporeans of each cohort. Some of the brightest of our male President

Scholars are selected to be SAF scholars and later SAF officers. And some of the brightest female President Scholars join MINDEF, to work in what we term the fourth service of the SAF, the Defence Technology Group and other vital MINDEF departments. Each year, thousands of able and dedicated young men and women join the SAF and MINDEF as national servicemen and as regulars. From their efforts come lasting peace for Singapore. And with peace comes progress and prosperity.

With quality manpower in MINDEF and the SAF, comes quality performance. The quality of their performance is in the same class as our airport, port and the telecoms. These civilian sectors have won international acclaim for outstanding achievements. If the achievements of the SAF and the MINDEF could be made public, I have no doubt that they too would have won similar acclaim. Of course, national security does not permit that. But that is not a problem for our people. For they are a special breed. They do not need public acclaim to motivate them to give of their best, and to perform at the highest levels. These are people of maturity and self-confidence. They measure their performance against objective criteria. And they know how well they have performed. They give us a sense of pride in knowing that there are so many able and dedicated Singaporeans serving in the defence of Singapore.

MINDEF shares its talent pool unstintingly with the rest of the nation. While in active service, many of our officers render public service on statutory boards such as CPF, NUS, NTI and SMRT. After our officers complete their training in the SAF and MINDEF, and after they have made their contributions to the highest level of their potential, they move on to serve the nation in other capacities. Former SAF and MINDEF officers have contributed as Ambassadors, Permanent Secretaries and senior officers in Government Ministries, Chief Executives and senior officers in Statutory Boards, and Directors and Managers in the private sector. Their vigorous training, their wide-spectrum experience and exposure, and most valuable of all, their

leadership in the SAF and MINDEF stand them in good stead. It is not surprising that they are in great demand all over Singapore, to contribute to the civilian sector of the economy. In this way, MINDEF makes a bonus contribution to the nation, over and above its primary mission of securing peace and stability for our people.

To bright young men and women, I say "Do yourself and the nation a favour". Come join us - either before or after university. There are SAF and MINDEF undergraduate and post-graduate scholarships, tenable at local and overseas universities, to prepare you for a varied, exciting and yes, unpredictable career in the SAF and beyond. Who knows your route to being a Permanent Secretary, CEO or company director may be through the SAF and MINDEF, after being a SAF officer, a defence engineer or scientist or a MINDEF administrative officer.

Today, we honour the contributions of those in the Defence Technology Group who help put the chips in our weapons and equipment, and develop the software to get the most out of them. Their contributions mean that every soldier, every sailor and every airman - national serviceman or regular - is able to achieve much more with his weapons and equipment. Everyone of them has his safety enhanced and his effectiveness multiplied many folds.

The Defence Technology Prize is but a small token of MINDEF's recognition of their performance. In making the awards, the description of the contributions can only be made in the most general terms. Indeed, there are other branches of service in MINDEF where even similar low key recognition cannot be given to their outstanding officers, without undue attention to their areas of service. Many of them deserve no less our acknowledgment and recognition. To such officers - I express the nation's gratitude and appreciation for their outstanding performance.

Let me conclude by congratulating the two teams which have been awarded this year's Defence Technology Prize. They are

- 1 The Computer Controlled Communication System Team for their work in designing and developing an innovative communication system with on-line signal processing capability; and
- 2 the Missile Corvette Team for their work in the Missile Corvette system design and construction project.

I would also like to congratulate the Defence Technology Training Award winners.

Congratulations to all of you.

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