GIVING STRENGTH TO OUR NATION
The SAF and Its People
GIVING STRENGTH
TO OUR NATION
## CONTENTS

**Message** 13  
**Foreword** 15  
**Preface** 17  
**Introduction** 19

### I  THE BIG PICTURE

- Pre-SAF History 25  
- Growing in Strength 35  
- Defence Diplomacy 42  
- Transformation 45

### II  WHO WE ARE

- Generations of Men 55  
- Developing Regulars 73  
- The Men and Women in Civvies 84  
- Volunteers 87  
- Women in the SAF 93

### III  SECOND HOME

- Camp Architecture 103  
- Parade Squares 110  
- Training Areas 113  
- *The Flora of My Army Days* 124  
- Memories of Peng Kang Hill 126  
- Food, In Camp and Out 129

### IV  SWEAT

- Field Camp 137  
- Learning to Shoot 143  
- *Grenade!* 148  
- Urban Warfare 151  
- Heavy Fire Power 157  
- Keeping Fit 165  
- *PT Shoes* 170  
- Route March 173  
- Obstacle Courses 179  
- Jungle Confident 183  
- Airborne Ready 187  
- Pilot Training 191  
- Training Sailors 197  
- Basic Diving 202  
- Reflecting on *Ex Golden Sand* 2014 204  
- Evaluation Exercises 207  
- Overseas Training 215

### V  SAF IN ACTION

- Value in Peace 223  
- Operations 229  
- *Cable Car Rescue* 238

### VI  ON THE CUTTING EDGE

- DSO National Laboratories 243  
- DSTA 249  
- Personal Arms 255  
- Ops-Tech Integration 259  
- Logistics & Engineering 263  
- Uniforms 267

### VII  CONNECTIONS

- Camaraderie 275  
- Mothers & Wives 281  
- *Joining the NCC* 282  
- *Kids-Eye View* 294  
- Supportive Employers 297  
- Total Defence 303  
- Reaching Out to the Community 307  
- Listening to Feedback 314  
- SAFRA 316  
- SAF and Advertising 319

### VIII  IN OUR CULTURE

- SAF in Popular Media 327  
- SAFRA Radio 332  
- *10 Things that Prove You’ve Been Through the SAF* 334  
- Music and Drama Company 337  
- *PIONEER Magazine* 343  
- *PIONEER Alumni* 344  
- *Writer Class 2* 346  
- SAF Songs 349  
- SAF Speak 354  
- NS in Literature 357  
- SAF in Art 365  
- Ceremonies and Rituals 371  
- National Day Parades 379

### IX  THE LONG VIEW

- Interviews with the Chiefs of Defence Force 384

### EPILOGUE

- A Case for National Service: A Romantic View of NS and Chivalry 409

### APPENDICES

- Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Chiefs of Defence Force 412  
- Writers & Contributors 414  
- Picture Credits 416
BUILDING AN SAF was one of our earliest and most important decisions when Singapore became independent in 1965. Our founding fathers strongly believed that we were responsible for our own defence, and were determined that we should never have to rely on others to defend us.

These convictions drove our pioneers to build the SAF from scratch. They started with very little except their wits, gumption, and will. They had to make hard decisions and sacrifices when faced with obstacles. We are grateful that they never gave up. We also thank the succeeding generations of servicemen and servicewomen – Regulars, National Servicemen, civilian personnel and volunteers – who have continued the tradition and ethos of the pioneers and kept the SAF strong.

This year, we mark 50 years of the SAF with an appropriate theme: “Our SAF: Giving Strength to Our Nation”. Indeed, the SAF is the cornerstone of the Singapore Story. It has given us the peace and security to build a home, the strength to forge a cohesive society, and the freedom to pursue our dreams and chart our own destiny.

We cannot be sure what the future will bring. But we can be sure that we must continue to work hard, stay united, and be able to defend ourselves. As long as we do that, the SAF will continue to be a strong and reliable guarantor of the security and future of Singapore.

I would like to thank all the men and women of the SAF who have made the SAF what it is today. Please join me in wishing the SAF a very happy 50th birthday. May the SAF keep growing from strength to strength.

Lee Hsien Loong
Prime Minister
FOREWORD

IN THE WHEEL OF HISTORY, nations rise and fall, as each faces its set of unique challenges. None dare claim the right to always be ascendant, peaceful and stable. Singapore’s success was not pre-ordained. In fact, impoverished at our independence, we ranked low on the “should succeed” list. That we stand today as a first world country, harmonious and prosperous, in 2015 our Jubilee Year, gives us therefore great cause to celebrate. It is in this context that we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the SAF’s inception.

The SAF’s strength enabled our country to be safe, stable and to progress – it gave strength to our nation. As Mr Lee Kuan Yew said in his book *Hard Truths*: “Without a strong economy, there can be no strong defence. Without a strong defence, there will be no Singapore. It will become a satellite, cowed and intimidated by its neighbours.” This was a deeply-held belief by Mr Lee and Government leaders in our founding generation having witnessed subjugation and intimidation from colonisation, Konfrontasi, and communism. When we gained our independence, considerable resources were therefore invested to build a strong defence, among which and above all, through National Service, every able-bodied young male would be called to serve dutifully as soldiers in the SAF to defend this home with their lives.

But the story of how the SAF grew from infancy to be a strong, professional and respected modern military was not one marked by ease of passage. Indeed, many hardships and obstacles lay in its path, that could be overcome only by the unremitting effort and sacrifices of many individuals. This commemorative book shares these individual stories. Without the commitment of the Government and Singaporeans, there would be no strong SAF.

I hope the stories in this book will encourage and inspire the next generation of Singaporeans to continue in their commitment to a strong defence to keep Singapore safe and secure for many years to come.

Dr Ng Eng Hen
Minister for Defence
THE SAF’S MISSION is to enhance Singapore’s peace and security through deterrence and diplomacy, and should these fail, to secure a swift and decisive victory. Every day for the past 50 years, the SAF has carried out its mission well. We have enhanced Singapore’s peace and security without the need to contemplate war. We have been able to do this because of able men and women who have built up a strong SAF.

The SAF is a force for peace and war. What the SAF does every day round the clock – whether it is protecting our key installations, our waters, or our skies – keeps us all safe and secure as we go about our daily lives. Over the years, the SAF has also taken on new roles and responsibilities, such as dealing with terrorism and piracy, and responding to natural disasters and health pandemics.

This book, written to commemorate 50 years of the SAF, is a collection of stories that bring out the inner strength of the men and women of the SAF. The stories tell of the work they do, their challenges, sacrifices, and their beliefs and determination in carrying out their tasks and missions. Regardless of background and experience, what comes through is a pioneering spirit and unity of purpose to preserve and protect the independence of Singapore.

I thank all past and present SAF servicemen and servicewomen for their hard work and sacrifices to protect Singapore. Let us “pioneer” the SAF for the next 50 years for Singapore, for Singaporeans.

Happy 50th Anniversary!

LG Ng Chee Meng
Chief of Defence Force