GIVING STRENGTH TO OUR NATION

The SAF and Its People

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MESSAGE

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

PREFACE

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