

# EVERYDAY GUARDIANS

50 YEARS OF NATIONAL SERVICE  
IN SINGAPORE'S HOME TEAM



## NATIONAL SERVICE VOCATIONS IN SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE



Ground Response Force Officer



Community Engagement Officer



Airport Police Patrol Officer



Special Operations Command Trooper



K-9 Officer



Police Coast Guard Patrol Officer



Protective Security Command Trooper



Public Transport Security Command Patrol Officer



Field Instructor



Command, Control and Communications (C3) Officer



Operations Support Officer

## NATIONAL SERVICE VOCATIONS IN SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE



Fire and Rescue Specialist



Firefighter



Medical



Dog Handler



Community Engagement Specialist



Provost



InfoComms Operator



Driver



Multimedia Specialist



Technician



Storeman

# EVERYDAY GUARDIANS

50 YEARS OF NATIONAL SERVICE  
IN SINGAPORE'S HOME TEAM

KOH BUCK SONG





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Cover photo: Images of NS officers by Bob Lee;  
background scene of Singapore courtesy of desktop-backgrounds.com

ISBN 978-981-4779-47-0

**Project Team**

National Service Affairs Directorate, Ministry of Home Affairs  
Public Affairs Department, Singapore Police Force  
Police National Service Department, Singapore Police Force  
Public Affairs Department, Singapore Civil Defence Force  
National Service Personnel Department, Singapore Civil Defence Force

**Marshall Cavendish Project Team**

Glenn Wray, Melvin Neo, Bernard Go Kwang Meng

Printed in Singapore

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# FOREWORD

**K SHANMUGAM**

Minister for Home Affairs



**NATIONAL SERVICE (NS) OFFICERS WORK SIDE BY SIDE WITH OUR REGULAR OFFICERS IN THE SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE (SPF) AND THE SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE (SCDF) TO FIGHT CRIME, MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER, RESPOND TO MEDICAL AND CIVIL EMERGENCIES AND SAVE LIVES AND PROPERTY. THEY ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE HOME TEAM (HT).**

Our young Full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) quickly learn to operate in the real world with its complex social realities. When tense and chaotic situations arise, our NS officers have to remain clear-headed and act decisively to tackle the situation. They also learn the importance of social harmony and the need to be ready to respond to emergencies and crises.

Today, our NSFs are better educated and more technology-savvy. Many of our Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (ORNSmen) are leaders in their own fields. The HT has embarked on an NS Transformation Plan that will tap on the full array of skills and experiences that our NS officers bring. We will increase the proportion

of leadership and specialist posts and ensure that time spent in NS is purposeful and meaningful. We will continue to enhance the training of our NSFs and ORNSmen. High standards will be maintained through refresher training and re-certification tests.

This book chronicles 50 years of NS in the HT, and its evolution to become the modern fighting force that the SPF and SCDF is today. The book features interesting stories from different generations of HT NS officers, from those in the 1960s to the present. The uniforms, training doctrine and equipment have changed over the years but one thing remains constant – our NS officers can be counted on to do their best when duty calls.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to all HT NS officers, past and present, numbering more than 260,000 persons in all. You are dedicated to the safety and security of Singapore and Singaporeans. I would also like to thank family members and employers of our NS officers. Your support has been crucial in enabling our NS officers to serve with pride.

One thing remains constant – our NS officers can be counted on to do their best when duty calls.

– K Shanmugam  
Minister for Home Affairs

# MESSAGE

CP HOONG WEE TECK

Commissioner of Police



○ **THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL SERVICE (NS) MARKS AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE IN THE JOURNEY OF THE POLICE NATIONAL SERVICE (PNS) IN KEEPING SINGAPORE SAFE AND SECURE.**

PNS began on a part-time basis with the first batch of 900 PNS officers in both the Special Constabulary and Vigilante Corps in July 1967. Full-time PNS was established in 1975 following the Laju terrorist incident in 1974, which highlighted the importance of boosting the police's manpower to safeguard Singapore's security-sensitive installations.

Over the years, the roles of PNS officers have evolved from protecting key installations and taking on general policing duties. Today, we have deployed PNS officers alongside regular officers across 11 vocations, in more leadership, specialist and frontline positions that are on par with regular officers as we seek to enhance their PNS experience and maximise their potential.

Our PNS officers have since assumed the frontline role of Community Engagement officers, reaching out to the

public on crime prevention and mobilising them to do their part for the SGSecure movement. PNS officers now oversee the safety and security of the annual Geylang Serai Ramadan Bazaar. The Protective Security Command comprises the largest single group of PNS officers who receive specialised training for front-facing deployments. With the rising global terrorist threat, we have formed the PNSmen Public Order Troop, where our PNS officers undergo a specialisation course with the Special Operations Command to support their regular counterparts during public order operations. Every day, our vigilant PNS officers from the Public Transport Security Command keep our public transport system safe so that Singaporeans can travel with peace of mind. Through the last 50 years, our PNS officers have served with distinction whenever they are called to duty, and they will continue to play a vital role that is crucial to the success of the SPF's mission to prevent, detect and deter crime.

This book pays tribute to the commendable achievements of generations of Home Team (HT) NS officers from the Singapore Police Force and the Singapore Civil Defence Force, as well as the contributions of our HT NS officers. These insights bear testimony to the importance of NS to Singapore, and I believe they will inspire our future HT NS officers to serve with pride and honour, in the footsteps of the NS pioneers.

On this 50th anniversary of National Service, I thank our past and present PNS officers for their dedication, commitment and sacrifice, as well as their families and employers for their unstinting support towards NS for Singapore's safety and security.

# MESSAGE

COMR ERIC YAP  
Commissioner of SCDF



**THIS BOOK TRACES THE KEY NATIONAL SERVICE (NS) MILESTONES IN THE HOME TEAM (HT) AND CHRONICLES THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS OF NS OFFICERS FROM THE SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE (SCDF) AND SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE (SPF).**

In SCDF, the first batch of Full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) was enlisted under the Singapore Fire Brigade on 22 January 1976. After completing the basic firefighting course, the 50 NSFs from this pioneer batch were deployed to the fire stations and primarily tasked with routine chores such as area cleaning and washing of fire hoses. At the fire scenes, their roles were confined to support functions such as providing water supply from the hydrant. Firefighting then was undertaken only by the regular officers.

41 years on, we have evolved from our humble beginnings. NS in the SCDF has progressed substantially. Today, not only do NS officers work alongside SCDF regular officers in saving lives and property, they are also well-equipped with more advanced equipment and sophisticated state-

of-the-art vehicles such as the Light Fire Attack Vehicle, Unmanned Firefighting Machine and Fire Medical Vehicle.

Beyond the shores of Singapore, SCDF Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (ORNSmen) have also worked hand-in-hand with our regular officers at numerous overseas Operation Lionheart humanitarian missions. They include Lieutenant Colonel (NS) Mohamed Razaleigh Bin Mohamed Saem who was the Deputy Contingent Commander for the Operation Lionheart mission in Nepal in 2015 and Dr Mohan Tiruchittampalam, a former SCDF ORNSman, who was a Medical Officer involved in four other Operation Lionheart missions.

In recent years, the number of NS vocations has not only expanded to allow for more specialised NS schemes of services, such as Emergency Medical Technician and Marine Firefighter, but has also been enhanced with more frontline leadership appointments, including Deputy Division Commander and Paramedic designations. What is most heartening is that there have also been countless instances of SCDF NSFs and ORNSmen, regardless of their vocations, who continue to step forward readily as community first responders to help those in distress even when they are off-duty.

NS is a rite of passage and it has become a source of pride and strength for Singapore. On behalf of the HT and The Life Saving Force, I thank all NS officers for their service, dedication and sacrifices that have kept Singapore safe and secure; and not forgetting their spouses, family members and employers for the continuous support towards National Service.

# KEY MILESTONES OF NATIONAL SERVICE IN SINGAPORE'S HOME TEAM



**1975 Full-time PNS**  
Full-time PNS was introduced on 22 February 1975, following the Laju terrorist incident in 1974. The first intake of 200 Singaporean males was enlisted on 24 July 1975.

**1967 Compulsory National Service (NS)**  
The NS (Amendment) Bill was passed on 14 March 1967 to build up Singapore's defence forces. Part-time Police National Service (PNS) was introduced in the Special Constabulary and the Vigilante Corps (VC).  
In the Civil Defence movement, there were two part-time NS schemes under the VC – the Civil Defence scheme and Auxiliary Fire Service scheme.

**1981 Part-time NS Discontinued**  
Part-time NS was discontinued. The red lanyard worn by the part-time PNS officers was no longer used.  
**Full-time NS in the SCDF**  
This disbandment of part-time NS made way for the establishment of the Construction Brigade and Civil Defence Corps.

**1976 First Batch of Police Officer Cadets**  
The first batch of Police Officer Cadets was enlisted on 22 January 1976 and appointed as NS Probationary Inspectors upon completion of a nine-month course.  
**Full-time NS in the Singapore Fire Brigade (SFB)**  
On the same date, the first batch of Full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) was enlisted under the SFB.

**1988 Introduction of Multi-Task Group Concept**  
The Multi-Task Group concept allowed PNS officers to contribute in a wider range of frontline duties which included crowd control as well as emergency and disaster management.

**1986 Establishment of Rescue Battalions**  
The first SCDF Rescue Battalion, a principal operational arm of the Reservist Units, came into operation in September 1986. Reservists from the SCDF Rescue Battalions were also deployed to the Hotel New World collapse incident.

**1995 Commissioning of First Batch of SCDF NSF Officers**  
The first batch of SCDF NSF officers was commissioned. They later became the first group of "thoroughbred" SCDF Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (ORNS) officers.

**1994 Standardisation of Police Uniform**  
As part of integration, PNS officers began wearing the same uniform as regular officers. The white name tag worn by PNS officers was also replaced with the black ones.

**1998 Direct Enlistment for Full-time Police National Servicemen (PNSFs)**  
On 24 June 1998, the first Direct Enlistment Exercise was held where PNSFs reported directly to the Police Academy (known as the Home Team Academy today).  
**Deployment of NSF Firefighters to Fire Stations**  
The first batch of NSF firefighters that completed the Basic Fire Fighting Course was deployed to the fire stations. NSF firefighters continue to work alongside regular officers at the fire stations till this day.

**1999 First Operation Lionheart Mission Involving SCDF ORNSmen**  
On 21 September 1999, the SCDF Operation Lionheart Contingent was deployed for a mission to Taiwan to render assistance in a search and rescue operation following a massive earthquake. This is the inaugural deployment of SCDF ORNSmen in an overseas humanitarian and disaster relief mission.

**2009 Commissioning of Public Transport Security Command (TransCom)**  
The TransCom was commissioned on 15 August 2009, to enhance public transportation security in light of the terrorist attacks in London and Mumbai. This unit is primarily staffed by PNS officers to oversee and manage policing efforts throughout the entire public land transport network in Singapore.

**2010 Deployment of ORNS Firefighters to Fire Stations**  
With effect from November 2010, the In-Camp Training for SCDF ORNS firefighters attached to the fire stations was increased from 8 to 18 days annually. This extension allows them to take on active Rota (shift) duty as well as work hand-in-hand with regular officers and NSF firefighters in responding to frontline fire and rescue operations.

**2014 SCDF Collaboration with Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)**  
On 19 August 2014, the SCDF and WDA formalised the SCDF-WDA collaboration via a Memorandum of Understanding. This collaboration provides SCDF NS officers with industry-recognised certifications for the competencies they acquire during NS, which helps facilitate their transition into the workforce.

**2015 Introduction of Voluntary Extension of Service Scheme**  
The scheme was introduced to allow Police Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (PNSmen) to continue contributing their expertise to the SPF by serving as mentors and trainers beyond their statutory age (40 years of age for Police Officers and 50 years of age for Senior Officers).

**Establishment of NSF Paramedic and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Vocations**  
The NSF Paramedic vocation was established for newly enlisted NSF's with the appropriate academic background and training. This development, coupled with the introduction of the NSF EMT vocation in March 2015, has enhanced the standards of the SCDF NSF's in Emergency Medical Service.

**2016 Establishment of Protective Security Command (ProCom)**  
The ProCom, a specialist line unit, was commissioned on 8 July 2016 to provide security coverage at major national events and protect security-sensitive locations during peacetime and national emergencies.

**FUTURE Enhancing Operational Capabilities**  
Come September 2018, the first PNSmen Public Order Troop will be formed. The troop will be trained and equipped to deal with violent rioters and boost the police's capabilities during national emergencies and major events. The troops will be fully rolled out by 2023. The SPF will continue to develop policies to provide PNS officers with more leadership opportunities and new roles in light of the ever-changing security climate to better safeguard Singapore every day.

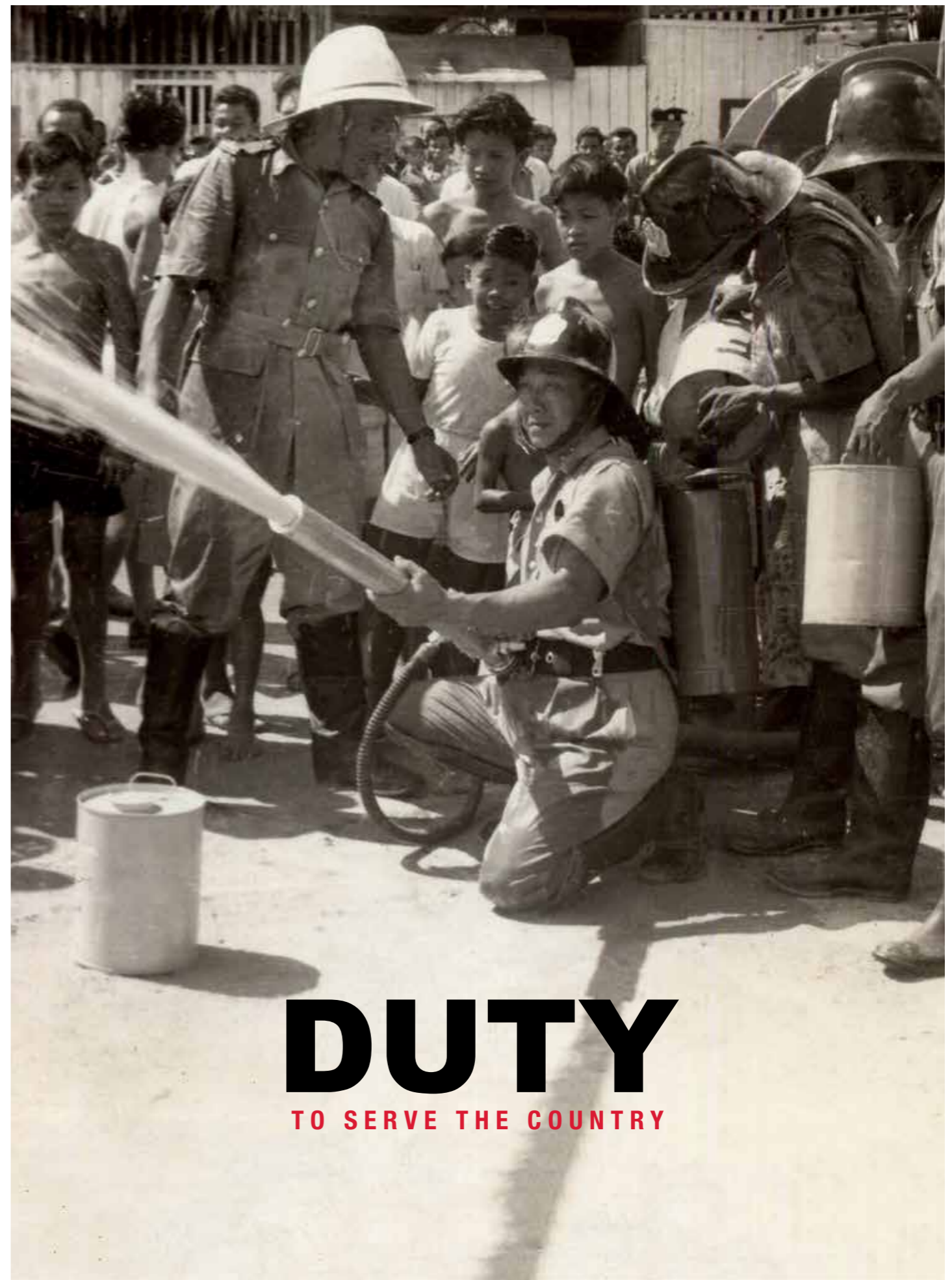
**Establishment of Community Engagement and Division Special Task Force Vocations**  
The Community Engagement vocation was established to allow PNS officers to take on more active roles in crime prevention and youth engagement.

The Division Special Task Force vocation was established for PNSmen to enable land divisions to better fight crime and tackle security challenges. The annual Geylang Bazaar deployments consist fully of PNSmen from this new vocation.

**SCDF Shelter Battalion Renamed**  
With the introduction of the SGSecure movement in 2016, the SCDF Shelter Battalion (formed in 2012) was entrusted with an enhanced role as 'mobilisers', and renamed the Public Shelter and Resilience Unit on 1st July.

**Towards the Future: SCDF's Transformation Journey**  
Under the SCDF's vision to build "A Nation of Lifesavers" by 2025, a holistic response model was established to integrate community first response with SCDF response. As all NS officers are a critical resource of SCDF and also form part of the community, the NS transformation plans will dovetail with SCDF's overall vision.





**DUTY**  
TO SERVE THE COUNTRY



*PNS officers on patrol in the late 1970s.*

### EARLY BEGINNINGS

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) can be said to have almost as long a history as Singapore itself. Since its founding as a British colony by Stamford Raffles in 1819, Singapore's security has drawn from the earnest endeavour of citizens, and its ultimate effectiveness has relied on close collaboration with the community.

By 1820, the first form of a police force was formally established. The first Resident of Singapore, William Farquhar, introduced licenses to fund a small police department, and Francis James Bernard (his son-in-law) was appointed Police Assistant, leading a department with just a writer, jailor, *jemadar* (sergeant) and eight *peada* (constables).



*Top: Entrance of the old Singapore Police Training School.*

*Photo from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.*

*Middle: Old Police Academy at Mount Pleasant Road.*

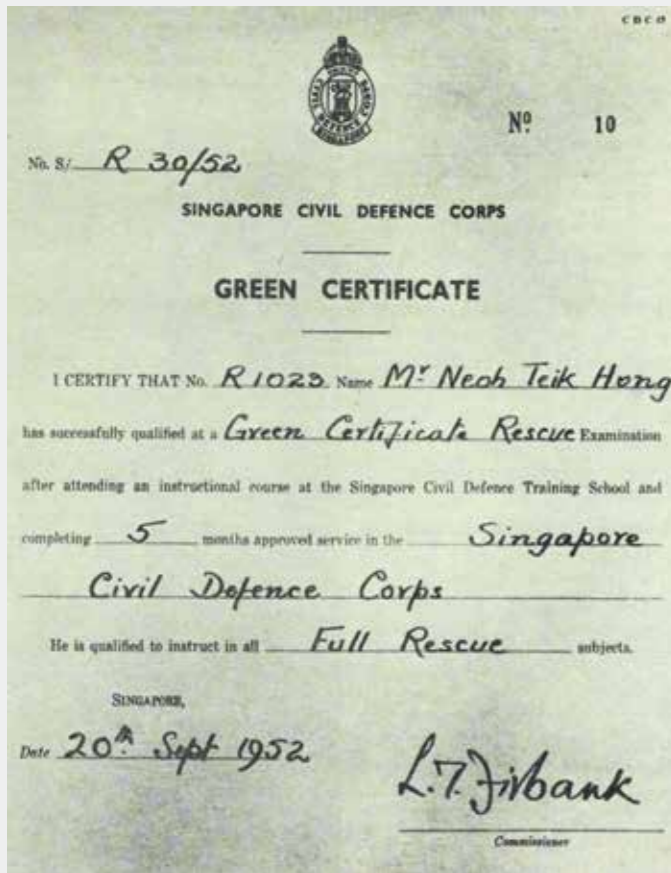
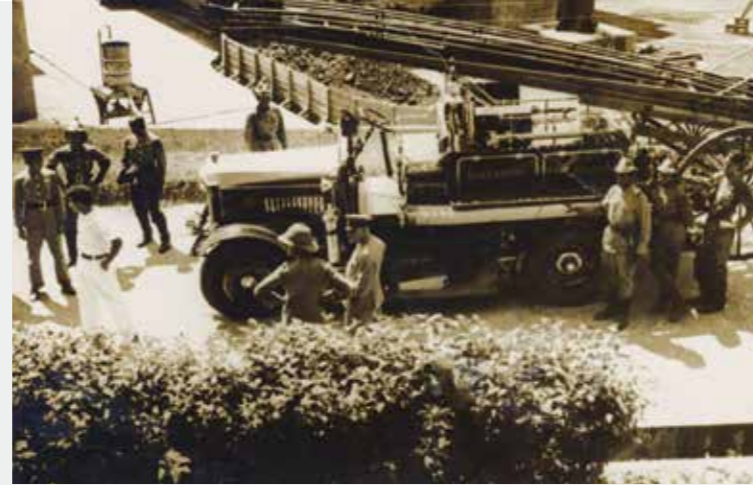
*Bottom: PNS officers in training.*

In 1857, the Police Act was passed, paving the way for a full-time regular police force to deal with escalating violent crimes. In 1923, for the first time, police recruits received training in a temporary Police Depot, a disused exhibition site where Shenton Way now stands. In 1929, training was formalised with a proper Police Depot to equip officers with skills to instil law and order in what was, by then, a thriving colony. This Depot at Thomson Road became the home of generations of police trainees for the next 76 years.

The Police Training School was elevated to a Police Academy in 1969, to enhance police training for a highly professional and efficient Force. In December 2005, with the opening of a new Home Team Academy in Choa Chu Kang, the Thomson Road campus took on its current name: "Old Police Academy", closing a significant chapter of the early history of the police force.

Another key part of protecting the community was to develop civil defence in Singapore. Volunteer firefighting forces can be traced back to before the founding of Singapore in 1819, when different groups of men came together to put out fires when the need arose. As fire safety became more of a priority, Raffles introduced a troop of 150 sepoys, mostly from the British Army in India. They were better-equipped than the volunteer firefighting forces, but even then, their 'fire engines' were merely carts of water attached to hand pumps. A Fire Committee formed to assess the need for an organised fire brigade went on to set up the first Voluntary Organised Fire Brigade in April 1869. This Fire Brigade saw the consolidation of different groups of volunteers formed prior to 1819.

In 1888 the official Singapore Fire Brigade (SFB) was set up by the Municipal Commission. The first fire station,



Top and bottom left: Central Fire Station in the 1980s.

Top and bottom right: Central Fire Station continues to operate at 62 Hill Street till today. It was gazetted as a national monument by the Preservation of Monuments Board in 1998.

Opposite top left: Volunteer firefighters fighting a dockside fire after a raid during World War II.

Opposite top right: The early years of the SFB.

Opposite middle right: Cross Street Station, built in 1891, was the first fire station in Singapore.

Opposite bottom left: A "Green Certificate" was awarded to those who completed civil defence training with the Singapore Civil Defence Corps.

Opposite bottom right: Officers from the Singapore Civil Defence Corps' hospital undergoing a practical first-aid lesson.

Photo from Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

Cross Street Station, was built in 1891. In 1908, the construction of Hill Street Fire Station was completed. It was later renamed Central Fire Station in 1950.

The early role of the SFB was focussed mainly on firefighting, with little emphasis on civil defence. There were general ground sentiments that, if there had been more of a civil defence capability during the war, suffering could have been minimised.

In 1949, a Civil Defence Commissioner was appointed to implement a detailed Civil Defence plan. This resulted in the establishment of the Singapore Civil Defence Corps that had six divisions at that time: headquarters, warden, rescue, ambulance, pioneer and welfare. In May 1951, the Civil Defence Ordinance was introduced, but it was not until 1982, when the Civil Defence Command was inaugurated, that civil defence began to take its present-day form. In 1982, the National Civil Defence Plan was launched and in 1986, the Civil Defence Act was enacted.

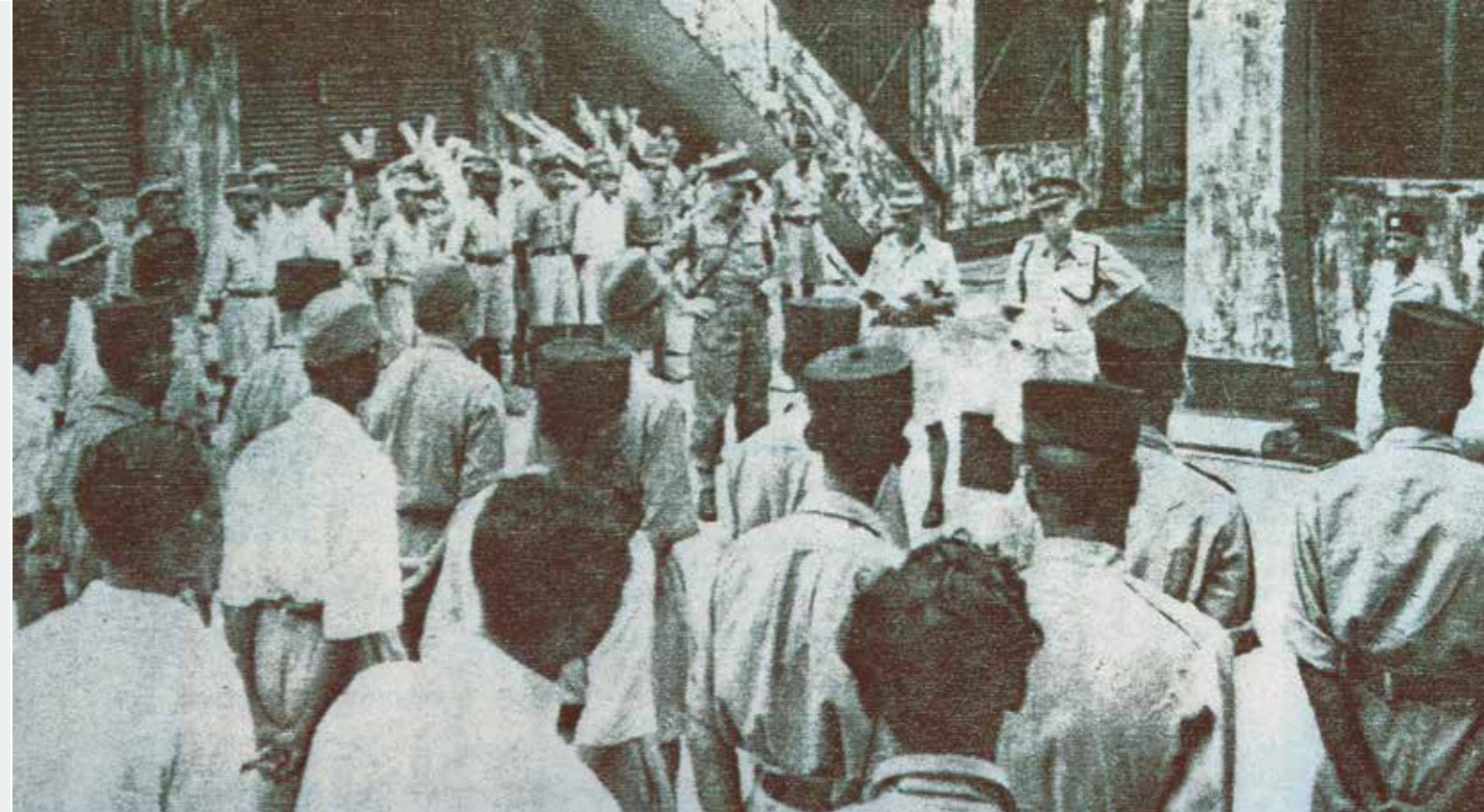
### VOLUNTEERS JOIN THE FORCE

The precursor of today's Police National Service (PNS) is the Volunteer Special Constabulary (VSC), which was formed in October 1946 to complement the SPF. The VSC officers complemented the work of regular police officers in various land divisions and specialised units. VSC officers were drawn from volunteers from all walks of life such as factory workers, nurses, businessmen and lawyers.

The VSC itself has its roots in the Police Volunteer Reserve, founded in 1938 to help deal with civil unrest situations such as when Chinese residents held public demonstrations against the war in China against Japan. This reserve was disbanded during the Japanese Occupation. After the war, an appeal for volunteers was made in *The Straits Times* on 15 September 1945. In October 1945, the Special Constabulary was formed with 150 full-time officers who were paid a monthly salary.

In 1946, the Special Constabulary was restructured into an Extra Constabulary of full-time salaried officers and a VSC of part-time unpaid volunteers. The VSC was especially active during the turbulent years of the 1950s, including the Maria Hertogh riots of December 1950 and the Hock Lee Bus riots of May 1955.

The earliest attempt to introduce compulsory conscription in Singapore was with its announcement in 1952, followed by the National Service Ordinance being officially implemented in March 1954. The Ordinance required males between the ages of 18 and 20 to register for part-time National Service (NS) and to be conscripted into the Singapore Military Force or the Singapore Civil Defence Corps.



*Top: Mr R E Foulger, then Commissioner of Police, inspecting the recruited VSC in 1946.*

*Middle and bottom: VSCs at the Police Training School in 1953.*



Left: Anti-riot police at the Hock Lee Bus riots.

© Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



Right: Hundreds of people outside the Supreme Court, moments before the Maria Hertogh verdict was delivered, 11 Dec 1950.

© Kenneth Chia Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

However, this effort to engage citizens as part-time upholders of national security fell apart because it was vigorously resisted by Chinese middle school students and their parents, who were already unhappy with perceived colonial bias against the Chinese language and culture, and did not see the need to support the British colonial government.

On 13 May 1954, violence erupted when hundreds of students clashed with the police, as they demonstrated against mandatory registration for military service. The effort to introduce NS was thus postponed indefinitely until conditions had changed completely again, after Singapore gained full independence in 1965.

### EARLY YEARS OF NATIONAL SERVICE

Life changed forever for all male Singapore citizens and second-generation permanent residents from 14 March 1967, when the National Service (Amendment) Bill was passed in Parliament to allow for conscription.

Building up self-defence seemed the only option in the late 1960s, when the British government decided to withdraw its troops and bases East of Suez, including

troops stationed in Singapore. The Singapore government decided that it was necessary to have a military force to defend itself that would be more substantial than the 1,000 soldiers at independence. Conscription was modelled after elements from the Israeli and Swiss NS schemes.

### POLICE NATIONAL SERVICE

In 1967, the PNS Command was established with the introduction of part-time NS in both the VSC and Vigilante Corps (VC). In 1967, the VSC was restructured to support the implementation of the 12-year part-time PNS. The VSC was renamed Special Constabulary (Volunteers) or

Police enlistees reporting for NS.





*Part-time national servicemen from the VC registering at CMPB in 1967.*

SC (V), while the national servicemen were called Special Constabulary. The first batch of SC enrolled between 30 August and 2 September 1967 at the Central Manpower Base (CMPB). They were posted to one of five training centres: Police Academy, Gan Eng Seng Secondary School, Tanglin Integrated Primary School, Rangoon Road Secondary School and Dunman Government Chinese Middle School.

The inception of full-time PNS in 1975 was prompted by the Laju terrorist incident of 1974. On 31 January 1974, Japanese Red Army terrorists hijacked the ferry boat Laju at Pulau Bukom jetty and held its five crew members hostage. After eight days of negotiations with the Singapore and Japanese governments, the hijackers agreed to release the hostages in exchange for safe passage to Kuwait. The hijackers had attempted to sabotage oil storage installations because oil and oil-based products were among the chief commodities traded in Singapore at that time.

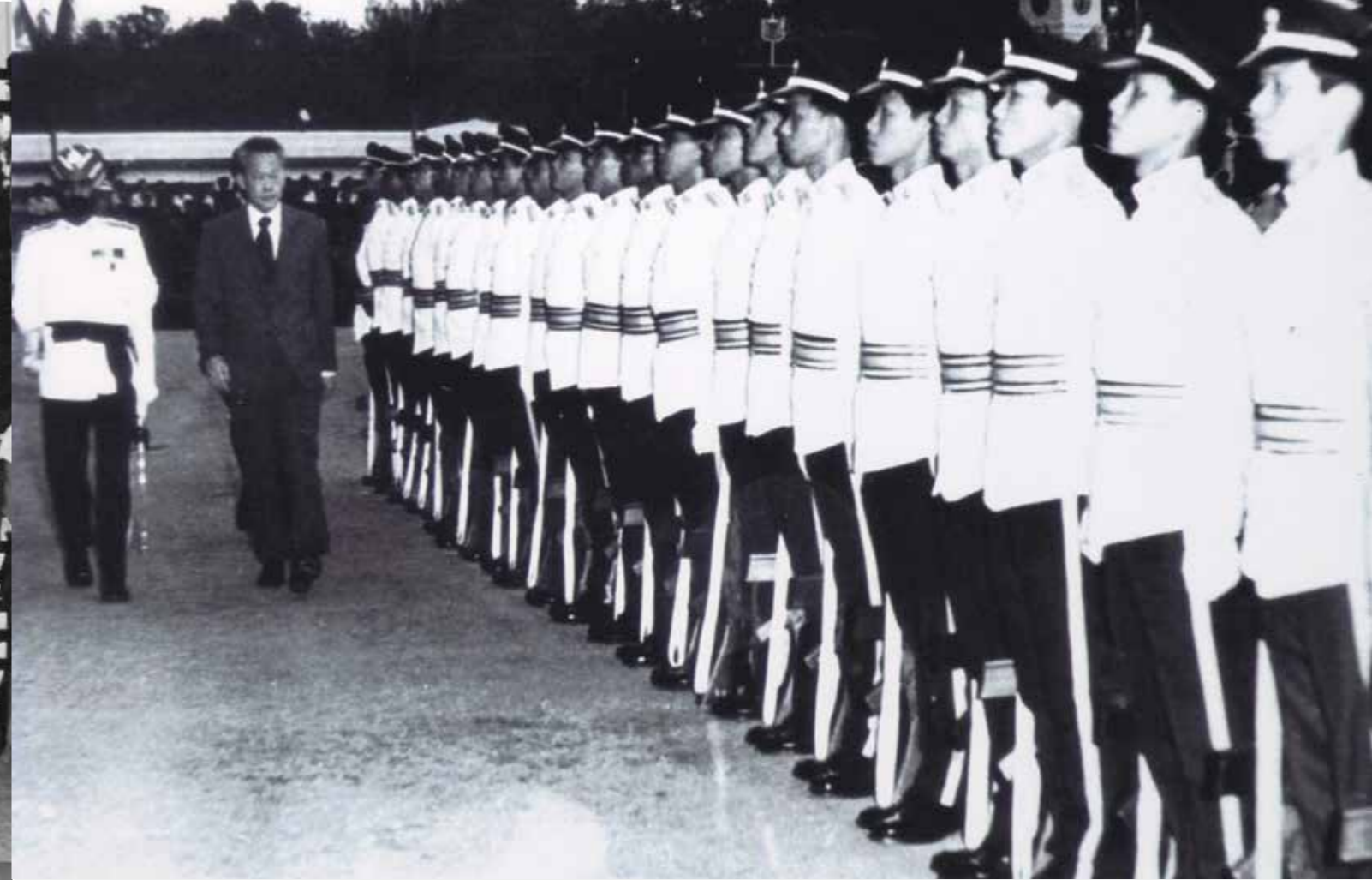
This episode highlighted the importance of strengthening SPF's manpower to secure vital installations and protect important industries. One of the key solutions to boost Singapore's security manpower was with full-time PNS.

The following year, 1975, full-time PNS was introduced. On 24 July, the SPF enlisted its first intake of 200 Full-time Police National Servicemen (PNSFs). Ever since then, newly enlisted PNS trainees go through the Police Officers' Basic Course, where they learn about the Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and relevant criminal laws, police operations and procedures, weapons training and police defence tactics.



*Top: Laju Terrorist Incident on 31 January 1974.*

*Bottom: A 7th Intake PNSF bidding farewell to a loved one.*



*Top and right: Newly-enlisted PNSF trainees are put through their paces at the Police Officers' Basic Course.*

*Opposite top: Mr Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister of Singapore, attending the Graduation Parade of the first Officer Cadet Trainee batch in 1976.*

*Opposite bottom: PNSFs from the pioneer SC and VC batch in salute.*





SC and VC national servicemen conducting "vertical policing" in the high-rise blocks of HDB estates.

In 1976, the grooming of PNSFs for leadership positions and greater responsibility commenced when the first batch of PNS Officer Cadets was enlisted on 22 January, and went through training including leadership skills, physical fitness, law and criminal investigation. They were commissioned in September as NS Probationary Inspectors.

In 1977, the first batch of PNSFs became Police Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (PNSmen), and they were deployed for general policing duties in the evenings between 7pm and 11pm on a bi-monthly basis.

By then, the total SC strength had grown to 9,640 officers including PNSmen and volunteers. The deployment strategy was revamped over time as PNS officers proved themselves more than capable in their roles. Among the adaptations of NS deployment was "vertical policing", which refers to how the officers conduct their patrols "vertically" up and down the floors of multi-storey blocks of flats. By doing this, PNS officers, in patrol teams of two, helped enhance the level of security at high-rise Housing Development Board (HDB) estates being built all over the island.

In August 1980, PNS Inspectors became more involved in frontline policing roles, as well as assisting in crime investigations. In-Camp Training (ICT) was introduced for PNSmen who had completed full-time PNS, and they underwent training at the Police Reserve Unit Base at Jalan Bahar.

The last batch of part-time SC (NS) officers completed their PNS in 1981. Maintaining public order was a major aspect of PNS work. In the 1980s, PNS officers from the Police Task Force, which later became known as the



Top left: A part-time PNS officer working in the mobile squad in 1977.

Middle left: PNS officers from the Police Reserve Unit in the late 1970s.

Middle right: PNS officers on patrol in the late 1970s.

Bottom right: PNS officers in the Police Task Force training to handle crowd management and public order situations.

Special Operations Command (SOC), handled crowd management and anti-crime patrols at major events. This included Swing Singapore (a regular street party at Orchard Road at that time), and Malaysia Cup football matches at the National Stadium, which often attracted crowds of 55,000. They also supported the land divisions in anti-vice and anti-gambling operations.







Left: Part-time national servicemen from the VC also learned basic firefighting and first-aid skills.



Right: Part-time national servicemen from the VC practising firefighting at a Civil Defence Training School.

**CIVIL DEFENCE NATIONAL SERVICE**

In the Civil Defence movement, there were two part-time NS schemes under the VC – the Civil Defence scheme and Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) scheme. These part-time national servicemen, like all part-time national servicemen then, served 12 years. While personnel from both schemes wore the trademark light brown shirt and trousers of the VC with gold buttons and red berets, they also had distinctive insignias. For example, those under the Civil Defence scheme had the “CD” insignia on their uniforms.

Between the two schemes, the AFS scheme was established later in January 1972, with the first batch comprising 700 part-time VC national servicemen. They were trained in firefighting, equipped with brown overalls and deployed to the fire stations to beef up Singapore’s firefighting services namely, the SFB (land), Unified Aerodrome Fire Service (air) and the Port of Singapore Fire Department (sea).

Full-time NS started in the firefighting services in January 1976 with direct enlistment to the SFB. The first batch of Full-time National Servicemen (NSFs) was enlisted on 22 January 1976.



**TAKING THE HEAT**



“As Director of Civil Defence, I remember making a request for the installation of a few fans in our office... to help the firefighters cool down after each operation. This was deemed a luxurious request and after numerous questions posed to me by my superiors, the request was turned down.”

– The late Mr Selwyn Terrance Amerasinghe, on the no-frills working conditions of the late 1970s

**First batch of fulltime NS men for fire service**

**THE** Singapore Fire Brigade will take in its first batch of 25 full-time national servicemen when they report at the Central Manpower Base at 8 a.m. today.

They will undergo three months' basic training in fire-fighting at the Jurong Fire Station, after which they will take on operational duties at various other stations with the regular firemen.

Mr. Lim Beng Lock, acting Chief Fire Officer, said in a statement yesterday this intake would help to strengthen the Auxiliary Fire Service.

The formation and expansion of the service will ensure the Republic's capability to deal with any contingency by providing a pool of trained manpower resources to support the professional fire-fighters when such a need arises," he said.

Mr. Lim also announced that the Brigade would take in 100 full-time national servicemen over a period of two years.

**Strength**

By the end of 1960, the Auxiliary Fire Service would have a force approximately numbering 1,250 to supplement the operational strength of the Brigade in times of emergency.

The Brigade has also been training members of the Vigilante Corps on a part-time basis since 1972.

So far, 321 have completed their basic training and they have been placed on reserve in the service.

Mr. Lim said a second batch of 362 VC members started their training at the beginning of this year and they would complete the course in December next year.

The reservists perform operational duties four hours a month with the regular firemen and they are also liable for one-week in-camp training per year with the Brigade.

**Milestones in the Singapore Fire Service**

- April 10, 1869 — Formation of the first Voluntary Organized Fire Brigade.
- 1888 — Formation of the Singapore Fire Brigade organized by the (Municipal) Commission.
- 1908 — Opening of the 194,000 Central Fire Station at Hill Street.
- Early 1920s — Brigade's services extended to freeing accident victims or those trapped in lifts.
- 1936 — The Auxiliary Fire Service was formed with the onset of World War II.
- 1962 — The Auxiliary Fire Service restarted after World War II as part of the Civil Defence Plan.
- Feb 1, 1975 — Search and Rescue Squad based in the Central Fire Station, specialising in rescue at fires and major incidents.
- 1976 — National Service extended to the Singapore Fire Brigade. Men serve two years full-time and reservists can be recalled for emergencies or training.
- Oct 28, 1978 — High-rise Unit formed to inspect high-rise fire-fighting facilities.
- 1980 — Name changed to the Singapore Fire Service. The Chief Fire Officer is now called the Director of Fire Service.
- Feb 18, 1966 — MRT Strike Force formed. Tested in March of the same year during the Hotel New World collapse.
- July 27, 1966 — Aik Hoe Rubber Factory fire. Goods worth \$2.8 million lost.
- April 20, 1964 — Robertson Quay fire, Teck Guan Street. Five Brigade members died.
- May 25, 1961 — Bukit Ho Swee fire. Four lives lost.
- March 18, 1966 — The MacDonald House Bombing Incident. During Confrontation, Indonesian saboteurs bombed the MacDonald House in Orchard Road. Three people were killed.
- Nov 21, 1972 — Robinson's Fire. Nine died. Historical landmark destroyed.
- Oct 12, 1978 — Spruce tanker disaster. Seventy-six people died.
- 1979 — Fire at Port of Singapore Authority godowns in Nelson Road. \$49.5 million lost.

Top: Group photo of the first batch of NSF's enlisted to the SFB.

Middle: The Straits Times, 22 January 1976, pg.11 © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.

Right: The Straits Times, 28 December 1988, pg.3 © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.



The brigade took in 50 NSF firemen each year and put them through a three-month basic firefighting course before they were deployed to the various fire stations.

At the fire stations, they were primarily tasked with routine chores such as area cleaning and washing of fire hoses. At the scene of a fire, their role was confined to support functions such as providing water supply from the hydrant. By and large, the regular firemen then were protective of their rich tradition and the main tasks of firefighting were all undertaken by them.

“Training facilities then were certainly a lot more basic,” recalls Senior Warrant Officer (SWO) Jimmy Tan, who served his full-time NS with the SFB. In July 1977, he was enrolled in the 4th Firefighter Course alongside 25 other NSFs in that batch. There was nothing like the sophisticated training aids today, such as “the furnace”, today’s state-of-the-art firefighting and rescue training tower at the Civil Defence Academy (CDA).

Top: Registration Notice received by SWO Chia Kok Beng who was enlisted to the SFB to serve full-time NS in 1976.

Right: SFB NSFs undergoing height rescue training at the former Jurong Fire Training School in the late 1970s.

Opposite left: SFB NSFs practising the role of a “hydrant man”.

Opposite right: SFB NSFs during the days of the SFB in their Physical Training attire.



ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP



“Each day, after running around the training vicinity, we also carried hoses on our shoulders and scaled the hose tower as part of our morning workout. When we reached the top of the tower, we were required to shout at the top of our voices: ‘Good morning, Jurong Fire Station!’”

– WO Koh Ser Teck, one of SFB’s pioneer NSFs, recalling the NS training in the early days

“Our training methods were simple but time-consuming,” he says. “Our instructors had to light up a fire tray again and again just for us to master our basic fire extinguishing technique. They burned coconut husks and tyres in a chamber to generate pitch darkness and heavy smoke. We were then directed to don the breathing apparatus sets and manoeuvre our way within the dark and smoky chamber.”

In 1980, the SFB was renamed the Singapore Fire Service (SFS). The NSF firemen continued to be directly enlisted to SFS to serve in the fire stations, with the first batch on 19 March 1987. However, none of them were given leadership appointments such as “leading fireman” and their roles at the fire scenes were still confined to staying at the fire hydrant end of the water hose as the “fireman number 5” or “hydrant man”.

In September 1981, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reviewed the roles of the two part-time NS schemes under the VC and concluded that they could be better utilised through full-time NS.



This resulted in the disbandment or demobilisation of VC NS in 1981 and the establishment of a full-time NS unit known as the Construction Brigade and a unit called the Civil Defence Corps. Both units were managed by the Civil Defence Command – which was then part of the SPF – that executed its functions based on the National Civil Defence Plan of 1982.

The late Mr Selwyn Terrance Amerasinghe, then Director of Civil Defence, had a hand in revamping the original version of the National Civil Defence Plan drafted by Singapore's then Civil Defence Commissioner, Colonel (COL) L.T. Firbank. He decided that, instead of dealing with one crisis scenario at a time, it would be better to plan for the worst-case scenarios during wartime.

Drawing from his personal experience from World War II, as well as similar experiences from the other VC and Civil Defence officers, the Civil Defence Plan was ultimately revised. "Some of my contributions included encouraging the civilian population to use sandbags as an effective shield

*NSFs from the Construction Brigade learning to assemble rebar structures for constructing pillars.*



### WOBBLY HELMETS AND ALL



"In terms of equipment, we had orange helmets that never really fitted well. They wobbled up, down and sideways whenever we ran. We had jumpsuits as our field uniforms and it was almost impossible for us to go in and out of the toilet quickly!"

– Mr Benson Puah, former SCDF Company Commander in the 1980s, recalling the basic equipment of the early days

for shrapnel and to utilise the drains as improvised covers when seeking protection against aerial bombardment."

By the early 1980s, the two most active full-time NS vocations in the Civil Defence movement were NSF firefighters from the SFS and Construction Brigade NSFs from the Civil Defence Command (the predecessor of SCDF).

The Construction Brigade was the first NS vocation of the Civil Defence Command. It was established to train NSFs in construction skills for emergency civil defence needs and also to build a pool of young local workers in the construction industry. On 5 October 1981, 94 NSFs were enlisted to the first Construction Brigade intake. They were trained for three months in construction, repair work, and restoration of essential utilities before being posted to HDB for on-the-job training with building contractors. At its peak, the Construction Brigade scheme took in about 2,000 enlistees annually.

In December 1985, the Construction Brigade scheme was revised to upgrade the skills of its NSFs. With the revision, Construction Brigade NSFs would first complete three months of residential para-military training to develop their physical fitness and teamwork as well as to be trained in basic civil defence skills. Thereafter, they became ranked servicemen and would undergo another six-month intensive course at the Construction Industry Training Centre before being posted to HDB for their on-the-job training. By the late 1980s, Construction Brigade NSFs were in great demand in the construction industry, where they were offered higher wages with good career prospects. This reflected well on the standard of training and skills of these Construction Brigade NSFs.

In November 2002, the Construction Brigade was decommissioned largely due to the fact that their skills were no longer required in the local construction industry.

In 1986, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) was established under the Civil Defence Act. It inherited the functions of the Civil Defence Command, including the management of Construction Brigade NSFs.

In 1987, both the SCDF and SFS maximised their resources by embarking on joint basic training exercises for NSFs. This was to enhance coordination and team work in fulfilling their common life saving mission in times of emergency. In 1989, the SFS and the SCDF merged to form the Singapore Joint Civil Defence Forces (SJCDF), and in 1992, it became the SCDF till the present day.

*Bottom left: NSFs from the Construction Brigade were also trained in electrical and tile works.*

*Bottom right: Group photo taken to mark the integration of the SCDF and SFS on 15 April 1989. The integration was first known as the SJCDF before being renamed as the SCDF in 1992.*



*Top left: Modern-day enlistment at the SCDF NSTI.*

*Top middle: A parent sending her son off for NS enlistment in the SCDF.*

*Top right: New SCDF recruits learning how to fold their No. 4 uniform.*

*Bottom: Mr Amrin Amin, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, joined SCDF recruits for their pre-dawn meal during the fasting month of Ramadan at NSTI.*

# UPHOLDING LAW AND ORDER SINCE 1968

## MR ALBERT LEE

Mr Albert Lee, former Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) (NS), has served in the SPF for close to 50 years.



**MR ALBERT LEE, 67, ENLISTED IN 1968, IN A BATCH OF SOME 150 POLICE NATIONAL SERVICEMEN. AFTER COMPLETING HIS 12-YEAR CYCLE OF PART-TIME NS IN 1980, HE CARRIED ON SERVING IN THE VSC FOR ANOTHER 30 YEARS UNTIL 2010 WHEN HE REACHED THE AGE OF 60, REMAINING A PNSMAN AT HEART TILL TODAY.**

Albert was dreading what he imagined would be very tough NS training when he enlisted in 1968. Things changed when he found out that he would be enlisted to the SPF. Part-time NS – twice a week from 7pm to 10pm – also meant he could continue helping his brother run a stationery business. Later, he served about 12 hours per month of ICT a year for 12 years.

“I enjoyed the training. On top of that, the trainers were also very friendly,” Albert says. The police force occupied premises such as Gan Eng Seng School in Anson Road as venues for the six-month long basic training, which included aspects such as knowledge of the law, leadership and physical training. For arms drills, they had to march to Tanjong Pagar Police Post to draw the British .303 Lee Enfield rifle, which was very heavy, and back again later.

*Opposite top: The old Central Police Station on South Bridge Road.*

*Opposite bottom: The old uniform contributed to PNS officers being taunted as “geena mata”.*

He spent his 12-year stint at the old Central Police Station on South Bridge Road, where he was promoted to Corporal (CPL) and later, Station Inspector and ASP. Each station had about 1,000 PNS officers in 10 teams of about 100 men each. Initially, teams of up to eight youthful officers, led by a regular, would patrol by foot, bicycle or car in eight-hour shifts. “The regular officers felt a bit odd because it’s just like a father taking care of a big family.”

Noting that there were then some 15,000 PNS officers islandwide as the SPF was being beefed up for the security of Singapore, he was fully aware that this was necessary, even though there seemed to be no immediate crisis. Singapore as a young country itself was an “attraction” that had to be protected, he says.

In Chinatown, unlicensed “pirate taxis” would triple-park and obstruct traffic along New Bridge Road and Eu Tong Sen Street. The taxi-drivers would mock Albert and his colleagues as “geena mata” (“children policemen” in Hokkien or Teochew) because they were unarmed, only had batons, and looked so young. Their uniform then, leftover from British colonial times, probably did not help – grey top, brown shorts and white wool anklets that felt ticklish on their legs.

It was only later, with the introduction of stiffer fines for traffic-related offences, that drivers would rush up to plead for leniency whenever they saw Albert and his colleagues whip out their little black notebooks.

Over time, he too plucked up more courage. He was told that secret society members had their principles, and

Times were tough, but the camaraderie was strong.

– Mr Albert Lee





would not harm police officers who were just doing their duty. Although he knows of no police officer who was injured while on duty, every day, he and his fellow officers were still aware of the very real risk to life and limb that their work demanded.

Their scope of work included raiding gambling dens, bars, night clubs and opium dens that were very smelly and full of old trishaw riders, lasting even into the early 1980s mostly in Sago Lane, Hokkien Street and Telok Ayer Street. Over at Tanjong Pagar, they had to deal with workers getting drunk on the alcohol called toddy and falling unconscious in the middle of the road, creating a mess and causing a public nuisance.

He was involved in the Robinson's department store fire at Raffles Place in 1972, and had to run all the way there from Central Police Station as the narrow roads leading up were all jammed. His immediate main task then was crowd control, and he could see the fire burning and felt concern for the people trapped inside. In subsequent days, he and his teams performed a vital function where they conducted security patrols to prevent looting and theft from the incident site. In those days, crimes such as looting would have been more common if not for the presence and vigilance of PNS officers.

Once, he "went undercover" to trap members of a racket stealing calculators (worth \$80, a big sum then). For this covert operation, he had to leave his police warrant card at the station and had nothing on his body to reveal that he was a police officer. This was his first experience as an undercover officer. Though he felt nervous, he told himself he had a job to do.

*Top: Drivers would often plead with Albert for leniency when meting out a traffic summons.*

*Opposite: Passing Out Parade of the third intake of Special Constabulary national servicemen at Police Training School on Thomson Road on 28 June 1969.*

He appeared "cool" and spoke their street language with a mix of dialects. He was offered a packet of chicken rice and a can of beer, which he acted like he enjoyed, as if he was eating with friends. He pretended to be a buyer and went to meet the thieves in a Joo Chiat cubicle with a stash of dummy currency, before his colleagues eventually sprang the ambush. "I had no backup. I was like a lone ranger and it was only later that I realised I could easily have been beaten up."

These were the early times, when the equipment was heavy, like the very basic walkie-talkies and telex machines, but the esprit de corps (camaraderie) lightened the burden of duty. "We supported each other," he recalls. "Times were tough, but the camaraderie was strong."



### HOW TRAINING CHANGED WITH TIME

Training facilities have evolved and been enhanced over the decades. The VC Civil Defence schools were set up to train its part-time national servicemen in basic Civil Defence skills. They comprised a few makeshift training camps located in various parts of Singapore such as Buona Vista and Tanah Merah. One of the largest camps was located at Kent Ridge Park.

These Civil Defence training schools were initially managed by the Civil Defence Command. In 1986, with the establishment of the SCDF, all SCDF regulars and its NS officers, began to train at the four SCDF training schools located at Nee Soon, Mandai, Jalan Bahar and Hougang.

*Bottom: Part-time national servicemen from VC undergoing equipment drills in the 1970s.*

*Opposite top: Part-time national servicemen from VC having field training at Buona Vista Camp in the early 1970s.*

*Opposite bottom: Passing out parade of the Construction Brigade's NSFs at the Jalan Bahar Civil Defence Training School in the early 1980s.*





*Opposite top, left and right: SCDF ORNSmen training at Mandai Training Village.*

*Opposite bottom: Group photo of rescuers trained at Nee Soon Civil Defence Training School, more affectionately known as the "Home of the Rescuers".*

*Top left: The main entrance to the "Home of the Rescuers" along Bath Road.*

*Top right: The iconic entrance arch of CDA.*

The Nee Soon Civil Defence Training School served as a training centre for SCDF commanders and personnel from critical vocations. It was popularly dubbed the "Home of the Rescuers". The school primarily served as a base camp for SCDF Rescue Battalions. It had a three-storey dormitory that could house about four companies at any one time. Over time, other features were introduced to the training school, including the charging and repair rooms for the breathing apparatus sets as well as facilities for medical triage and first-aid treatment. The training school also served as a reporting centre for the Rescue Battalion reservists who were mobilised for the Hotel New World collapse incident in 1986.

Improvements in training facilities have culminated in the CDA, officially opened in March 1999. One of the academy's signature training facilities is called "The Ruins", a large area of rubble with interchangeable voids and confined spaces to simulate collapsed structures, for urban search and rescue training.





SCDF NSFs practising firefighting in a near-realistic scenario conducted at "The Furnace".

Top: SCDF ORNSmen undergoing their ICT at "The Ruins".

Bottom: SCDF NSF Rota Commanders cutting a vehicle to rescue a 'trapped casualty' in a road traffic accident scenario.

The 11-hectare CDA was custom-designed to house state-of-the-art training facilities for a near-realistic training for all SCDF officers including NSF firefighters. Some of these aspects include the computer-controlled liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) bullet tank firefighting simulator, HazMat Chemical Plant and a nine-storey firefighting and rescue training tower known as "The Furnace".



## PROGRESSING WITH TECHNOLOGY



“There is definitely a greater reliance on technology in today’s fire and rescue operations. Our NSFs are now exposed to modern and sophisticated appliances and devices. These include the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle and Compressed Air Foam technology. Of course, it makes operations more efficient and effective.”

– SWO Jimmy Tan, one of SFB’s NSFs reflecting on how the training for SCDF NS officers has progressed significantly over the years

Top left: SCDF’s FMV.

Top right: SCDF’s 4th Generation LFAV, which is affectionately known as the Red Rhino.

## MORE ADVANCEMENTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In 2015, the Home Team Tactical Centre (HTTC) was officially opened, with purpose-built training facilities. Highlights include a massive area of debris and a partially collapsed building named the “Leaning Tower”. With an 18-degree slant, the “Leaning Tower” simulates a collapsing building at a disaster site. Such facilities enable SCDF NS officers to sharpen their urban search and rescue techniques.

Over the years, SCDF further embraced innovation and harnessed technology, resulting in its capabilities and equipment being enhanced many times over. For instance, to mark Singapore’s Golden Jubilee of independence, in September 2014, SCDF unveiled the 4th Generation Light Fire Attack Vehicle (LFAV), which has evolved in design and capability to reflect the spirit of the SCDF – agile, potent, and cutting-edge. This is also the world’s first compact urban firefighting vehicle with a fully integrated compressed air foam pump capability that is able to extinguish fires four times faster and uses 70 per cent less water compared to conventional pumps.

Another innovative breakthrough of the SCDF is the Fire Medical Vehicle (FMV) which was launched in May 2017.

This vehicle is a hybrid of a fire appliance and an ambulance to stabilise and treat casualties of minor industrial incidents and road traffic accidents. The FMV also carries a slew of medical equipment on board that will serve to monitor the patient’s well-being en route to the hospital.

For the SPF, much of the new advanced equipment that has been introduced in recent years is being worn by police officers to enhance frontline crime-fighting

# Skills learnt in NS may get work certification

Plans mooted to speed up transition to working life after national service

By LESTER HO

THERE are plans to certify skills learnt during national service in the armed forces so that they will be better recognised in the work place.

A Workforce Development Agency (WDA) spokesman revealed this yesterday, after a deal for civil defence servicemen was confirmed.

Under the scheme announced yesterday, certain courses taught by Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) to its national servicemen, both full-time and operationally-ready, will earn them Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) certification.

The WSQ is a national crediting system that frames, develops and assesses the skills of employees.

It is based on national standards developed by WDA in collaboration with various industries.

The type of courses that fall under the scheme include SCDF’s sections commander course, the fire fighter course, and the emergency medical technician course.

Under the tie-up, SCDF servicemen can earn credits towards a WSQ certificate during their stint in national service.

They can earn more credits on their own time, or when they return for reserved duties.

It aims to make it easier for those who recently completed national service to get jobs and ease the transition to working life.

Some 2,000 SCDF servicemen are expected to benefit every year from this collaboration, plans for which were first announced last year.

It was sealed with yesterday’s signing of a memorandum of understanding between the SCDF and WDA.

SCDF Commissioner Eric Yap said: “The WSQ certification will benefit our national service personnel by providing them with industry-recognised certifications for competencies they acquire during their national service.”

Mr T. Mogan, president of the Security Association (Singapore), said the move will benefit both employees and employers alike.

“WSQ certification is definitely highly important in the security sector, for instance, people who come out of national service with a certificate in first aid and emergency medical skills will be very helpful to us.”

The WDA spokesman told The Straits Times a similar scheme is in the pipeline for the armed forces, but did not give more details.

They can earn more credits on their own time, or when they



capabilities. An example includes the body-worn camera, which is clipped on the front of an officer’s uniform. Introduced in 2015, this device can capture audio and video recordings while the officers are carrying out their duties. The gadgets help to deter crime and assist in investigations because, as Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations) Lau Peet Meng explains, they “complement existing forensic methods to allow the police to piece together what actually happened at an incident”.

As the hardware of equipment and expertise became more sophisticated, the software of leadership and responsibility also expanded. In August 2014, SCDF and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) formalised a collaboration to provide SCDF NS officers with industry-recognised certifications for the competencies they acquire during NS, that would also facilitate their career transition into the workforce. Today, selected SCDF training courses for NS officers are aligned to the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) system administered by WDA.

Today, SCDF NS officers receive a nationally recognised Statement of Attainment upon completion of each WSQ-aligned training module during NS. One such course is the 28-week Rota Commander Course (RCC), which equips SCDF officer cadets with competencies such as firefighting and rescue skills, staff work knowledge, leadership skills and contingency planning proficiency. Other examples cover skills in areas such as emergency medical response and firefighting.

Each year, about 2,000 SCDF NSFs and ORNSmen benefit from this skills accreditation, that continues into their annual ICT. As WDA Chief Executive Ng Cher Pong noted: “Skills such as team leadership and contingency planning are industry-relevant and sought after by many employers.”



Top left: The Straits Times, 20 August 2014, B2.

© Singapore Press Holdings Ltd.

Top middle: SCDF’s Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, deployed for use during large-scale incidents, enables SCDF officers to monitor the situation of a fire from the air and from a distance.

Top right: The body-worn camera can capture audio and video recordings while the police officers are carrying out their duties.

Bottom: Several SCDF training courses held at CDA for NSFs and ORNSmen are aligned to the WSQ system.

### ENFORCING AND ALSO MAKING THE LAW



“Never did I feel that I was just going through NS. It was exciting to see the policy work we did being translated into law, sometimes within a matter of months.”

– Mr Sundaresh Menon,  
Chief Justice of Singapore,  
on his stint as an NS Inspector,  
Traffic Police

HO YUE WENG

FOO KOKE SHZE

*Top: PNS officers' white and black name tags.*

*Opposite: KINS officers guarding vital installations.*

The Multi-Task Group concept was introduced in 1988 to involve PNS officers in a wider range of tasks, to allow them to contribute more to the SPF in both peacetime and emergency functions.

The peacetime functions included “vertical policing” by patrolling through high-rise blocks of HDB flats, crowd control duties and crime-prevention patrols. Emergency functions included preparation and training for national emergencies and disasters. Training was expanded to prepare PNS officers to help mitigate large-scale national crises.

In 1994, PNS was reorganised to focus on specialisation, integration and operational readiness. At the same time, the uniforms of PNS officers were changed to be the same as the regular officers. Previously, PNS officers wore white name tags. Henceforth, they started wearing the same black name tags, reflecting their greater responsibilities on par with regular officers. That same year, the NS Key Installation and Protection Unit (KINS) was formed to guard vital installations throughout Singapore.

Also in 1994, the term “reservist” was replaced by “Operationally-Ready NSmen” (ORNSmen) to better reflect the frontline deployment of NS officers, as they were in no way held “in reserve”. In the same year, a review of SCDF’s ORNS orbat resulted in a reduction of manpower from 63,000 to 23,000 men. 374 companies were reorganised to form four support battalions. Immediate response units were also introduced and based at fire stations to respond to national emergencies. The orbat was reviewed again in the 2000s, this time reducing the strength further to 10,000 men as part of a leaner, more nimble and multi-skilled force.



## THE “THOROUGHbred” SCDF OFFICER

### COL (NS) EDWAN NIZAR AHADAN

As a “thoroughbred” officer from the first directly-enlisted batch in 1995, COL (NS) Edwan Nizar Ahadan embodies the HT’s longstanding values.



COL (NS) EDWAN NIZAR AHADAN, 44, BELONGS TO A RARE BREED – THE “THOROUGHbred” SCDF OFFICER: GROOMED FROM THE VERY FIRST BATCH OF DIRECTLY-ENLISTED OFFICERS, AND STILL SERVING PROUDLY TODAY.

Now the highest-ranking officer from that pioneer batch, he is currently Commander of 41B Rescue Battalion, leading a battalion of some 400 SCDF men.

Back in April 1995, having just completed his army Basic Military Training (BMT), he was expecting to join his platoon mates to become army combat engineers, when he found out he was to join the SCDF family instead. He asked his BMT sergeant, who said he also did not know much about SCDF. “It was a bit of a shock. We had never heard of this posting before.”

As it turned out, the three-tonner that picked him up took just one turn on the road to reach the SCDF training camp just behind the Singapore Armed Forces’ (SAF) Nee Soon Camp where he did his BMT.

Before 1995, SCDF officers were transferred from the Army or Police. Edwan was one of 10 NSF trainees in the nine-month Basic Officers Course together with six regular officers. They were in for a culture shock. “We thought it was going to be easier, but it was not the case.” The physical training was tough, routinely requiring more than double the pushups he was used to during BMT. Firefighting was the most challenging. “There was not a day that our uniforms were dry.”

Through three months of rescue training, followed by three months firefighting, being attached to fire stations and learning leadership, the pioneer SCDF cadets came to know the extent to which their training was for real, alongside buddies who might one day save their own lives.

As a fresh second lieutenant, Edwan served as a trainer for one batch of recruits at the Basic Rescue Training Centre, which is now the National Service Training Institute (NSTI) at Jalan Bahar, before joining the Fire Safety Bureau (now the Fire Safety and Shelter Department), where his job was to check and advise on building plans for fire safety provisions.

In his operationally-ready NS cycle (for 13 years, at that time), his first appointment was deputy company commander of an Immediate Response Unit at Bukit Timah Fire Station. He then rose through the ranks to be promoted to Colonel in 2014. Along the way, he attended a company commander course focussing mostly on leadership and staffwork, and a unit commander course for battalion commander and head of operations appointments, that includes collaborating with other HT agencies.

His men’s capabilities have advanced significantly, from using a portable breaker (a pneumatic drill) that needed

Firefighting was the most challenging. There was not a day that our uniforms were dry.

– COL (NS) Edwan Nizar Ahadan

two men and some 20 minutes to start, to today's electric breaker that one man can just plug into a generator to operate.

Facilities have also improved vastly, from the improvised training aids of yesteryear, like pouring oil over a disused container and burning it to practise firefighting, to today's purpose-built scale-model "chemical plants" and "furnace" at the CDA.

For Edwan, leading his SCDF ORNSmen – a younger, digital-savvy generation – also means adapting to newer mindsets. This includes allowing his men to run a closed Facebook group. "You need to give them an outlet on social media for effective communication," he explains.

"For us in our generation, when we were told to do something, we would just do it," he reflects. "But today, our Gen Y ask more questions, like why we do something and whether it can be done differently."

Obviously, Edwan has managed his leadership and management demands well, enabling his fellow ORNSmen to excel in proficiency tests in handling rescue equipment such as power saws, and in applying medical skills such as CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation).

Edwan is also a member of the Advisory Council on Community Relations in Defence (Main) (ACCORD (Main)) & ACCORD (Family & Community). Together with other ORNSmen, he helps to drive initiatives in raising awareness of the roles of families and the community in support of NS.

Aside from being named ORNSman of the Year, his unit 41A Rescue Battalion (which he led from 2008 to 2017) is the

only SCDF NS unit to be named best unit three times within one 10-year ORNS cycle (that has seven high-key years). "SCDF Headquarters decided that, because we won it three times, the division would get to keep the trophy – just like in the World Cup." One might even say that such a track record truly befits a thoroughbred pedigree.



Top: Edwan receiving the SCDF Best NS Unit award from SCDF Commissioner Eric Yap.

Bottom: Edwan and his batch mates from the 15th Basic Officers' Course.

**PIONEER ORNSMAN  
INVOLVED IN AN SCDF  
OPERATION LIONHEART  
MISSION**



“As some of the DART rescuers were unable to converse in Mandarin with the Taiwanese, I played the role of an interpreter and helped to make periodic announcements to the locals on the progress of our search and rescue operations. They were most appreciative and knew we were doing our utmost to locate victims who were trapped.”

– LTC (NS) Cheah Kok Keong,  
who was deployed to the  
mission in Taiwan in 1999

*Top right: NSFs from the SRB provided critical support to the SCDF frontline forces involved in the search and rescue operation in the Nicoll Highway cave-in incident.*



From 1990, the SCDF began to extend its sphere of action internationally, with the Operation Lionheart missions for search and rescue overseas. From 1999, the SCDF began deploying its ORNSmen for Operation Lionheart missions overseas. These operations tested the capabilities of ORNSmen well to perform to the best of their abilities.

At home, the structure and organisation of the SCDF continued to be streamlined to adjust to new conditions and meet new demands. The NSF-led Special Rescue Company was formed in 2002 for the management of emergencies.

It was later upgraded to a Special Rescue Battalion (SRB) which has eight platoons of 26 men each to conduct on-site decontamination of victims, vehicles and terrain. The SRB provided critical support for major operations such as the Nicoll Highway cave-in that occurred in 2004.

Since 2012, the SRB has been reorganised once again into Special Rescue Units (SRU) that have four companies. Each SRU company is on standby at each of the four SCDF Division Headquarters for swift deployment for major incidents.



*Top left and right: Two new Rapid Response Fire Vessels (RFV) were added to the existing fleet in May 2017. The highly-maneuvrable RFV was designed by the SCDF Marine Command and can reach speeds of 40 knots.*

*Bottom left: NSF Marine firefighters boarding the RFV to respond to an incident.*

*Bottom right: On 29 September 2014, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean unveiled a plaque to commemorate the opening of the SCDF Marine Command Headquarters and Brani Marine Fire Station.*

Operational readiness continued to be honed, as the SCDF's scope of operation extended to the sea, when the SCDF Marine Command commenced operations in April 2012, after taking over this aspect of coastal coverage from the Maritime and Port Authority. A year later, in 2013, the first batch of NSF marine firefighters was trained to respond to marine fire and rescue operations.

Since then, the SCDF Marine Command has gone even further, actively engaging SCDF's overseas partners for exchange programmes. One such exchange programme is the attachment to the Marine and Offshore Islands Division of the Hong Kong Fire Service Department in 2015.

### CAMARADERIE FOR A COMMON OBJECTIVE



“Security is the main concern. As a result of this common objective, the camaraderie amongst officers will always stand through time.”

– Mr Ng Khay Chong,  
from the first batch  
of full-time PNS

### GLOBAL TERROR AND MORE RECENT THREATS

The rising scourge of global terrorism has posed new challenges to the Home Team (HT). In 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in America, the SPF's Airport Police Division began leading joint patrols with the SAF. Four three-man units, each with two full-time national servicemen from SAF and one from SPF, conduct daily patrols to boost airport security, deter terror threats and provide the first line of response to emergencies.

The global terror threat also brought about a sharper focus on security for Singapore's transport infrastructure. In 2005, in response to the London and Mumbai bombings, the Police MRT Unit (PMU) was formed within the SOC to tighten security and protect the public transport network. The PMU became an independent unit in the SPF and, four years later, was reorganised as the Public Transport Security Command (TransCom) and expanded its role to cover the entire transport system, as well as contingency planning and response. PNS officers joined their regular fellow officers to patrol train stations and to apply their specialised training to discover and handle threats such as improvised explosive devices. They are trained to know the ins and outs of each MRT station so they can help evacuate commuters quickly and safely when the need arises.

The TransCom has grown from 30 officers to about 500 now, in tandem with the expansion of Singapore's rail network. PNSFs like Special Constable Corporal (SC/CPL) Muhammad Ruzaini, 22, account for 80 per cent of the unit's staff strength. Every few days they are called to respond to unattended bags at stations and interchanges.

When dealing with suspicious items, a visual assessment is first conducted, looking for tell-tale signs like oil leaks,



*TransCom (formerly the Police MRT Unit) and Airport Police Division officers on patrol.*



protruding cables, ticking sounds or pungent smells.

“We also assess whether bomb threats have been made recently,” said SC/CPL Ruzaini. Officers like him shoulder the stress and risks every day, so that Singaporeans can go about their daily commute with peace of mind.

Border security at the coastlines was enhanced in 2008 when the Police Coast Guard (PCG) operationalised the Coastal Security Patrol Force to counter illegal landings, so as to enhance the land-sea interface of this facet of security. This has led to the arrests of syndicates involved in the smuggling of items such as contraband cigarettes.

Such arrests are possible only because of the vigilance of officers like Special Constable Sergeant (SC/SGT) Muhammad Irfan Bin Samsuri. On the night of 3 July 2016, he was deployed as a duty operator at the PCG Command Centre conducting surveillance and keeping a lookout for suspicious movement in the vicinity of Woodlands Checkpoint. At around 3am, he noticed some movement along the Causeway near the Checkpoint. Upon further investigation, he realised that it was a person walking sneakily towards the Singapore mainland. He alerted his supervisor immediately to send resources to intercept the subject, who turned out to be an illegal immigrant.



Left: TransCom officers assisting members of the public.



Right: PCG patrol officers conducting checks on a vessel.

**LEARNING NEW SKILLS**



“I was excited to join the PCG. We learned to read nautical charts, and the traffic laws of the sea. We were also taught to handle weapons, tactical movement, firefighting, survival swimming. No matter where you are posted, you will learn useful skills and have unique experiences.”

– SC/CPL Tavish Raman, PCG Technician

The training that he applied included mastery of the functions of various computer and surveillance systems and how they complement each other, as well as awareness of what to look out for at different locations in Singapore. “It takes only one successful landing by the enemy, not by illegal immigrants but by terrorists, not entering with contraband cigarettes but with weapons, to destroy the lives of our loved ones and friends,” he added. “I have learned that I must never let my guard down when performing my duty. This means having enough rest before my duty and always keeping an eye on the surveillance cameras so that I do not miss any suspicious movement.”

The SCDF Shelter Battalion, an ORNS unit, was transformed into the new Public Shelter and Resilience Unit (PSRU) in support of the SGSecure movement. Besides managing the public shelters, some 1,500 NS officers took on active roles as SGSecure ‘mobilisers’ during their ICTs to reach out to residents through house visits.

During house visits, ORNSmen from the PSRU, equipped with fire extinguishers and first-aid kits, can be activated by SCDF to respond to incipient fires or medical emergencies occurring within residential estates. They also act as ‘eyes and ears’ to report on any suspicious activities or individuals in the community.

SCDF’s NSFs are also actively involved as SGSecure ‘mobilisers’. Besides making house visits, these NSF Community Engagement Specialists also join the ORNSmen



Top: SCDF ORNSmen from the PSRU, accompanied by volunteers from the Community Emergency Response Team, conducting a house visit to disseminate SGSecure messages.



Bottom: LCP Lucas Ngan (second from left), SCDF NSF EMT, demonstrating the IFAS to Mr Desmond Lee, then Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development, at the EP Day event at Jurong Spring on 29 May 2016.

from the PSRU and SCDF volunteers to man the SCDF’s ‘Triangle of Life’ hands-on booths – involving firefighting with fire extinguishers, Improvised First-Aid Skills (IFAS), CPR and using automated external defibrillators (AEDs) – at the Emergency Preparedness (EP) Day events to enhance community resilience in support of the SGSecure movement.

At these EP Day events, SCDF NSFs encourage residents to be community first responders and to download the SCDF myResponder mobile application which would alert them to nearby incidents of cardiac arrest cases. Also at these EP Day events, SCDF NSFs leverage the opportunity to impart the IFAS to members of the public on how to use everyday items to stop excessive bleeding during medical emergencies.



# FABRIC OF A NATION

## MR YEO CHAK KHIAM

The first PNSman to command a Police Day Parade, in 2000, hopes that every PNSman will appreciate the worth of his own contribution, however small, in adding up to the whole.



*Mr Yeo Chak Kham (right) receiving the Meritorious Service Award for Singapore Police Association of National Servicemen (SPANS) from Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, then Minister of State for Home Affairs. SPANS has since merged with Civil Defence Association for National Servicemen (CDANS) to form HomeTeamNS.*

**THE SECURITY OF SINGAPORE IS HELD UP LIKE A HUGE QUILT MADE UP OF LITTLE FABRIC PIECES OF CONTRIBUTION. THIS IS HOW FORMER SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE (SUPT) (NS), MR YEO CHAK KHIAM, 59, SEES THE VITAL VALUE-ADD OF EVERY PNSMAN.**

“PNS is important because if PNS officers start to think that what little they do helps to secure a part of the peace and if this is duplicated across the island, then they can be assured that they and their loved ones will be protected,” he explains. “Collectively, we will make that happen.”

This mindset of each officer doing his own bit and appreciating the worth of his own contribution extends to even seemingly small details. For instance, if a charge sheet has a spelling mistake, officers should take the initiative to verify and correct the error, before passing it to the next officer.

He started doing his bit after enlistment in 1977, with smaller-scale operations such as the anti-jaywalking campaign of the late 1970s. He was in the first batch of

PNS Inspectors who were made Investigations Officers in 1978, and served until the age of 50. Whenever he feels nostalgic about his police service, he looks for a photo of himself posing with a fellow officer in front of an anti-riot vehicle during his PNS days, among other memorabilia.

Having to cope with a shortage of investigators at that time, he would go on a 24-hour stretch of duty every four or five days, which included conducting field operations. Over the years, he has led more than 50 raids on gambling dens in the Chinatown area, and has also volunteered for anti-drug operations.

Drug abuse was rampant at that time. On one anti-drug raid, he pursued a suspect on foot from Amoy Street to Keppel Road, running through heavy traffic. For the raids on gambling dens, which were then prominent in places such as Chinatown, he and his colleagues would always remind each other to be more careful when dealing with those involved, as illegal guns were prevalent in those days.

As an NS Division Commander, he was part of the SPF’s “mirror” command structure, with an NS officer helping to take care of the whole division, to map out the strategy for event and emergency deployment. In his case, he was assigned to Bedok Division for his experience in change management.

An executive who works in business management and organisational development in the IT industry in his civilian life, he made a big difference in applying computerisation to police work procedures and helped develop what evolved to become the SPF’s recall system today.

If PNS officers start to think that what little they do helps to secure a part of the peace and if this is duplicated across the island, then they can be assured that they and their loved ones will be protected.

– Mr Yeo Chak Kham

*A SC and VC examine heroin tubes after a drugs raid in 1976.*  
© Singapore Press Holdings Limited.





Top and opposite: Mr Yeo commanding the Police Day Parade in 2000.

Bottom: Part-time SCs conducting checks.

Previously, during a recall, three books were used for sign-in at different areas. Retrieving documented data was very tedious, as all records were in paper files. Developing the first computerised recall system for his division made the recall process more streamlined and faster. His fellow regular officers were very excited to see on a monitor screen the regular real-time updates of how many PNSmen had already reported for duty. “That was something new for them,” he recalls.

The computer system was also extended to the armoury, with alerts sent if arms were not returned within a specified time. Warrant cards were updated with current digital photos. Later, the system was further developed into a web-based one.

Such structural improvements are very important for more effective command and control, says the former National Cadet Corps Air Cadet Lieutenant. The key is also that these changes are aligned towards refocusing structure to meet the mindset and situation of how PNSmen work.

For example, deciding which officers to be paired in patrol teams should not be arbitrary, but should take into account factors that would enhance team effectiveness, teamwork and camaraderie. On his part, he always made sure to have teams that work well together because they come from a mix of diverse backgrounds and yet get along well with each other. This means that it will be easier to do a swop of duties, say, if someone takes emergency leave.

Another aspect is leadership, which has two key dimensions. One is for leaders to step forward, as Chak Khiam did in 2000 to create history as the first PNSman to be the Parade Commander of the Police Day Parade. This



was seen as an affirmation of the capability and contributions of PNS officers to national safety and security. There were fellow officers who were initially not confident that a PNSman would be up to the mark but, as it turned out, he received many compliments after the parade.

The other dimension of leadership is to build up others. “You need to develop the next level of leaders, not just manage people. When you start to do this, you will inspire.” This comes into play, for example, in the working relationship between a young PNS inspector and a veteran regular sergeant. Respect is built through enlightened exercise of command and control, within a meaningful organisational structure. Trust is forged over breaks such as at table soccer games during lunchtime.

“In our time, we feel good because the camaraderie is very strong,” he recalls, putting this down partly to the lesser influence of distractions like the social media of today. “There was no need for us to write emails.”

The key, he believes, is to get the value instilled into the minds of all PNS officers that the little parts they play are absolutely crucial to add up to the whole. “If I do my part to protect one place, it may not be my house, but if other people are doing the same, my own home will also be secured.”



Top: ProCom regulars and NS leadership members at the commissioning of ProCom's new beret ceremony, May 2017.

Opposite: ProCom protects critical infrastructure, security-sensitive locations and events.

### ONGOING NATIONAL REVIEWS

At the national level, efforts remained untiring in further enhancing the capacity of national servicemen to serve the country. In 2014, the Government accepted the 30 recommendations made by the Committee to Strengthen National Service. The proposals are tailored to the various stages of NS, and aim to give national servicemen more opportunities to contribute to Singapore's security and defence.

Some of the key recommendations are quite far-reaching. The "gap" between NS officers and their regular colleagues – which had already been narrowed significantly over the decades – will be further closed. The entire NS training system will be boosted with additional regular officers employed in the SPF and SCDF to improve training and, just as importantly, also to inculcate organisational values more effectively. Leadership opportunities will be expanded by raising the proportion of officers and specialists from 30 per cent to 40 per cent, to meet new operational needs.

NS will become more fulfilling, with greater deployment flexibility for NSF's, by taking into account their individual skills and preferences even more. Even as this vocational choice will help maximise the contributions of NSF's, the move to enhance the accrediting of skills gained during NS will make these skills more applicable to civilian life after NS.



NS officers will also be better able to serve with greater peace of mind, knowing that their welfare is being provided for. New schemes for life and personal accident insurance coverage will cover servicemen for incidents during their full-time NS and ORNS call-ups. NS officers can also purchase additional personal insurance coverage for themselves outside their period of service as well as for their dependants.

As part of the holistic recognition of NS officers, their recreational and social needs will also be met with more and better options that aim to be the best in their class. HomeTeamNS clubhouses will gather feedback and input from members and continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of NS officers.

Announced in the NS50 year of 2017, the three new clubhouses being built over the next 10-15 years will have their own distinguishing features. The one near Khatib-Yishun will be customised to cater to indoor teambuilding, while the one near Bedok Reservoir will be designed with a waterfront theme, and the one in the future Tengah Forest Town will be big enough for more cohesion-building activities for larger groups. These will be the social meeting places of the future for HT NS officers and their unit mates, friends and families.

In 2016, a specialist line unit called the Protective Security Command (ProCom) was operationalised as an expansion of the former KINS, to protect critical infrastructure, security-sensitive locations and events during peacetime and national emergencies. By the end of 2017, ProCom will have operationalised all four Protective Security Units, with more than 500 troopers (85 per cent PNSF) who went through an intensive training programme covering

**INSTILLING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE**



“The ProCom mission requires a certain level of finesse because we need to be highly-effective operationally, while managing a strong relationship with the public that instils confidence.”

– DAC (NS) Ben Tan  
NS Commander ProCom

*ProCom officers conducting vehicle checks.*



scenario-based training, search protocols, weaponry and equipment competencies and certification tests.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Police (DAC) (NS) Ben Tan, 47, NS Commander for ProCom, who has served as a PNS officer since 1995, notes that the men of ProCom will see more frontline deployments. “The increasingly dynamic and challenging security environment motivates us to increase our level of vigilance, which requires greater fitness and faster response.”

Some system improvements come about from ideas from NS officers themselves. For example, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) (NS) Derrick Goh, 46, played a key role in piloting a new scheme for handling reservist recalls in his unit. PNSmen are typically recalled three times a year: for a physical fitness test, a shooting test and two weeks of ICT. Derrick and his regular counterparts worked together to streamline the process.

“We brought the physical fitness tests and the ICT together, so that a PNSman who is recalled for ICT can complete his physical fitness test at the same time,” he said. The initiative saw an improvement in fitness test participation rates and results. It was well-received by PNSmen as being more efficient, and is being rolled out to other SPF units.

The community is also being involved like never before in SCDF’s 2025 Vision towards building “A Nation of Lifesavers”. Citizens are envisaged to be able to help in times of crisis at three levels – as “emergency prepared citizens” who can protect themselves and their families, as



*Top left: ProCom officers in training.*

*Top right: Officers using MobiC’s VR technology to practise realistic scenarios.*

*Bottom: MobiC.*

“bystander responders” who can help others in the neighbourhood, and as “volunteer life savers” who have comprehensive life saving skills.

In line with this vision, SCDF NSF’s and ORNSmen are trained in the “triangle of life” skills to enable them to be community first responders even when they are not on duty. Such efforts are vital parts of SCDF’s current vision to make Singapore an “emergency ready nation”.

**A MAP FOR THE FUTURE**

A whole new training and learning ecosystem is something to anticipate for the future. At the Home Team Academy Workplan Seminar 2017: Mapping the Future of Home Team Training, glimpses into this future were unveiled. The compact Mobile Classroom (MobiC), for example, jointly developed by HTA, the Office of the Chief Science and Technology Officer (OCSTO) and the SPF, aims to take realistic training to the frontlines.

MobiC uses Virtual Reality (VR) technologies to deliver realistic scenarios (e.g. at a coffee shop setting, or inside a HDB flat) to train SPF officers at the Neighbourhood Police Centres (NPCs). This would allow officers to practise and hone their judgement on how to respond to different situations in a safe learning environment, boosted by the After-Action Review system built into MobiC, which tracks the officers’ training information. What makes it different from ordinary training capabilities is that MobiC is built on a



*The formation of the PNSmen PO Troop in the SOC will see PNSFs gain the same capabilities as regular Police Tactical Troops in quelling public disorder.*

vehicle platform which can be driven and parked at various NPCs, offering dedicated training space and equipment right on the frontlines. It can also be configured to facilitate training in a classroom setting.

With the continued rise of threats arising from global terrorism and self-radicalisation, public order will surely become an even more important facet of police work. The formation of the PNSmen Public Order (PO) Troop in the SOC will see PNSFs gain the same capabilities as regular Police Tactical Troops in executing the operational requirements for containment, dispersal and arrest to quell riots or other forms of public disorder. Two PNSmen PO Troops will be formed annually from 2018 onwards.

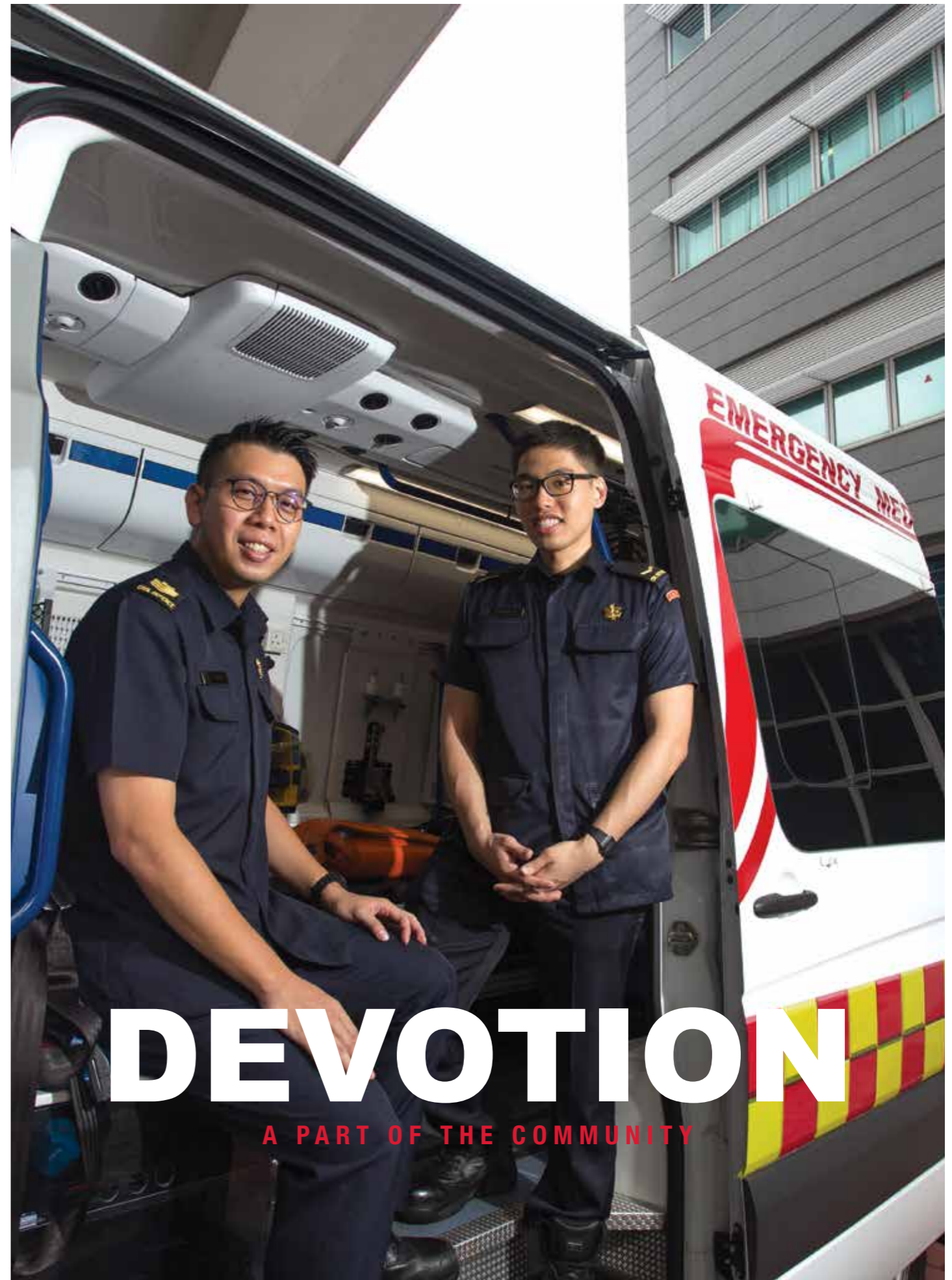
SGT Wilson Ng is one of the PNSFs who went for a specialisation course with the SOC after passing out of basic training. As part of the Police Tactical Unit (PTU) in SOC, the troopers are equipped with the same gear and arms as their regular counterparts – full riot gear with fire-retardant suits and riot shields. Iconic red trucks are ready to take them to handle a variety of public order situations, ranging from passive resistance to violent riots. In normal times, they have been deployed alongside their regular counterparts for deterrence patrol and at public security



*The SOC plays a crucial role in securing public events.*

events such as the Thaipusam Festival and the Chingay Parade. After their Operationally-Ready Date (ORD), PNS officers like Wilson will be recalled to perform similar duties.

As we look to the future, the challenges will no doubt continue to evolve in character and complexity. But in the main, security will be assured, in the hands of Singapore's everyday guardians.



**DEVOTION**

A PART OF THE COMMUNITY



A police officer briefing Citizens On Patrol volunteers.

### A PART OF THE COMMUNITY

From the earliest times, the community has played an important role in helping to keep the peace and security of Singapore. Low crime does not mean no crime. Disasters can strike at any time.

Responding to crime and disaster calls for more hands on deck than only those whose full-time jobs are in security. Ordinary citizens have had to step up to support the work of the police by being their “eyes and ears” when they are on patrol. These citizen guardians have continued to help keep Singapore safe and secure, becoming the everyday heroes of today.

It takes a village to keep the peace – literally. In the late 1950s and 1960s, much of Singapore was still rural farmland outside the city centre areas. The *kampongs* that dotted the landscape set up their own basic security systems, with villagers geared to protect the estates as well as their own



Top: The MacDonald House bombing killed two office workers as well as a driver, and injured at least 33 other people.  
© Singapore Press Holdings Limited.

families and belongings. For example, Operation Senjata, an operation in July 1961 to combat secret societies, mobilised one quarter of the police force and needed reinforcements from the VSC to round up more than 200 gangsters.

When *Konfrontasi* surfaced, in the wake of Indonesian opposition over the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, the people were again called upon to help keep Singapore safe. With more than 40 bombing incidents killing seven people and injuring more than 50 others, there would probably have been more casualties if not for the augmented vigilance of civilians.



Top: The opening of the Khe Bong NPP marked the beginning of a structured form of community-based policing.

Opposite top: NPP officers making house visits in the 1980s.

Opposite bottom: CPU officers conducting house visits to educate and engage the public on SGSecure.

Out of this background came the advent of neighbourhood policing, with the setting up of Neighbourhood Police Posts (NPPs), and later, NPCs. The increased presence of police officers in the neighbourhood gives peace of mind to residents. In some cases, the men in blue are fellow residents themselves.

In more recent times, with SGSecure being the latest national movement, community policing has become an increasingly important approach to involve the people more cohesively in maintaining a safe home. PNS officers are at the frontline of this new partnership with the people, motivated by devotion to duty for the country and for their community.





# ESPRIT DE CORPS

## BROTHERS THROUGH AND TRUE

**SC/SGT RYAN ZHU, SPF**  
**CPL RAYMOND ZHU, SCDF**

SC/SGT Ryan Zhu and his brother CPL Raymond Zhu embody in real life the esprit de corps of the HT.



**SERVING THE COMMUNITY INVOLVES MUCH RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH THE PUBLIC, FORGING BONDS WITH THE RESIDENTS, YOUNG AND OLD, WHO MAKE UP THE NEIGHBOURHOODS THAT NS OFFICERS HELP PROTECT. TO DO THEIR JOBS TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES DEPENDS ON THE BONDS BETWEEN THE OFFICERS OF THE HT THEMSELVES.**

As brothers-in-arms, NS officers of the HT build on their esprit de corps every day. For Raymond and Ryan, being brothers has an extra meaning – they are twins in real life. Serving in the SCDF and SPF, they are living examples of brotherhood in the HT.

Raymond is an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) at the Marina Bay Fire Station. His work includes attending to medical emergencies such as helping to resuscitate heart attack patients. In his line of work as an SCDF NSF, Raymond has rendered assistance to people from all walks of life, from young children to the very elderly. He played a vital role in assuring those in distress as well as helped them with the life saving skills he has been equipped with.

Ryan is a Ground Response Force (GRF) officer and his work includes responding to public order incidents around the nightspots in places like Clarke Quay and the Orchard Road area, where he once encountered a stabbing incident. It was just after dawn when he and his partner were alerted to a stabbing case in front of Orchard Towers. They saw two victims lying down with a pool of blood between them. A huge brawl was happening near them, with several subjects punching and kicking one other subject.

Heavily outnumbered, Ryan and his partner called for backup, and intervened to stop the fight. They also quickly attended to the victims and assisted the paramedics who had just arrived. They also managed the traffic and crowd control around the area. “The situation was a matter of life and death. Blood was gushing out from the victim’s neck,” he recalls.

The nature of work in the SCDF is as challenging for Raymond. Once, he and his crew attended to a drowning case that involved a little boy. Upon arriving at the incident scene, they immediately assessed the condition of the boy and administered oxygen to him as he was suffering from breathlessness.

While passers-by crowded around the area, Raymond recalls the boy calling out for his mother as he gasped for air. While treating the boy, Raymond took the opportunity to reach out to him and his mother to assure them that everything was under control.

Raymond takes pride in donning his EMT uniform as the presence of SCDF regular officers at emergencies increases public confidence. “It gives the people a sense of assurance that help is here”, he says.

Both 20, the two brothers have lived in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing for most of their childhood. Being on the same team in the guard position in basketball clubs

I know that being in the SPF, when you are out on duty, everybody else will have your back. If you need help, they will come.

– SC/SGT Ryan Zhu



Top: Raymond (left), the older twin by two minutes, has always been a role model to Ryan (right).

Middle: Ryan (left) and Raymond (right) won their first sports event together in a Primary 1 obstacle race.

Bottom: Raymond (middle) and Ryan (right) receiving their gold medals after a victory in a basketball match.

in China for many years, they would sometimes confuse opposing teams because they look so much like each other, and probably also because they synced well by instinct, honed from playing on the same court since early childhood.

Becoming NS officers back in Singapore, they have drawn from real-life brotherhood to form fresh bonds with their new “brothers” in the HT. Because they both speak with a hint of an American-influenced accent, having learnt English from Caucasian teachers at international schools, to fit in even better with their NS “brothers”, they made cultural adjustments including learning Singlish words like “atas” (high-class, from Malay) and “simi taiji?” (Hokkien for “what’s the matter?”). This was how they “updated” their fluency in Singlish, building on the “foundation” they already had from when they were in Singapore during the earliest years of primary school.

For Raymond, fostering brotherhood with his fellow SCDF officers is about getting to know one another and building strong relationships – something that is nurtured also through informal social gatherings and weekend trips to neighbouring countries. “Without this chemistry, we would definitely not work well as a team especially when the nature of our work is so time-critical.”

Often the youngest member in his team, Ryan is especially appreciative of the teamwork that he knows he can always lean on. He says: “I know that being in the SPF, when you are out on duty, everybody else will have your back. If you need help, they will come. This teamwork and collaborative spirit is what enables us to help make Singapore the safest place in the world.”

This quality of police teamwork comes to the fore most clearly on the ground, especially during night shifts in the

Orchard Road area, in Ryan’s case. Once, while patrolling around Clarke Quay on a Friday night past the club Zouk, he and his partner heard a loud commotion and saw a group of about 10 subjects throwing hard punches and kicks at one another. They sprinted to the scene and managed to separate the subjects, one of whom was kicking another male subject’s head. Other officers in the area responded to his call for backup and arrived to help restore the calm.

In another incident around closing time at Parklane Shopping Centre – a hotspot for night clubs – he had to subdue a male subject having a fierce argument with other people. The man threw a punch in his direction, but Ryan managed to dodge the attack. Without hesitation, he moved behind and restrained both the man’s arms and handcuffed him with the help of other officers. “One of the most important lessons I’ve learnt in my NS journey as a GRF officer is to be vigilant and alert at all times. I was always told that I have to expect the unexpected. I have also come to realise that being able to act swiftly and efficiently in moments of heat are paramount in facilitating the execution of the incident.”

As for Raymond, he considers himself to be privileged to have been empowered to save lives and property. When asked about his most memorable NS experience, Raymond says “it would definitely be the sense of relief and smiles on the faces of family members and loved ones each time we save a life.”



United by an unspoken trust: The two brothers, Ryan (left) and Raymond (right), sharing a photo moment at the HTTC.

PEACE OF MIND



“I’m a strong advocate for our NS officers as this gives me the peace of mind to know that our country’s security is safeguarded.”

– Mr Chiu Wu Hong, Executive Director (Tax) of KPMG Services Pte Ltd, won the NS Advocate Award for Individuals in 2015 after being nominated by his colleague, an SCDF ORNSman

**EXERCISE RAMBO**

Exercise Rambo is the codename for the Rescue Battalion Proficiency Assessment exercise, which aims to validate and assess the battalion’s proficiency in operational readiness and in areas of rescue and medical treatment. Once mobilised, ORNSmen have four hours to report for duty and be equipped for deployment.

In pairs, the ORNSmen undergo skill proficiency tests in preparation for a night exercise. The ORNSmen also demonstrate how competent they are using rescue tools such as the power saw, oxy-acetylene cutter and hydraulic spreader.

At the simulated disaster site at the former Mandai Training Village, ORNSmen can rescue almost 80 casualties within an hour of operations. COL (NS) Alvin Low, 31 Rescue Battalion Commander, says that commanders and other key appointment holders must maintain communication



SCDF ORNSmen using a pneumatic breaker during ICT.



Top: Exercise Rambo conducted at the HTTC “leaning tower” in 2015.

Bottom: SCDF reservists utilising the rescue trailer during Exercise Rambo conducted at the former Mandai Training Centre in the early 1990s.

with the team throughout operations, “so that they won’t feel discouraged or alone. We believe in teamwork.”

In October 2015, for the first time, Exercise Rambo was held at the newly-built HTTC at 1 Mandai Quarry Road. 21B Rescue Battalion was the first to train in this purpose-built training facility.



*PNS officers in Exercise Northstar 9 together with regular officers.  
Photo courtesy of MHA.*

### EXERCISE NORTHSTAR

Exercise Northstar, first introduced in 1997 by the SCDF, has evolved into the current-day multi-agency exercise that seeks to validate Singapore's emergency response plan to threats against the country. In addition to putting the whole-of-government response framework to the test, Exercise Northstar also serves to raise public awareness on the current threat landscape and encourages continued vigilance from members of the public.

For example, in 2015, Exercise Northstar 9 was held at the Singapore Sports Hub and Kallang Wave Mall. The exercise also tested the national agencies' readiness in emergency response in the event of a terror attack.

To test their proficiency and coordination, hundreds of NS officers joined their regular fellow officers in the SPF and SCDF, together with 600 officers from other agencies including the SAF. 1,300 volunteers were also involved, including Civil Defence Lionhearter Club members, Civil Defence Auxiliary Unit officers and SCDF civilian staff and their families.



*One of the Exercise Northstar 9 scenarios included vehicles that exploded at the Vehicles Screening Station. The explosion, which sent huge fireballs into the air, was eventually put out by SCDF regular officers and NSF firefighters who took part in the exercise.*

In one scenario, simulated vehicle explosions "killed" officers nearby. "Terrorists" planted improvised explosive devices in two vehicles at a vehicle checking station, "killing" and "severely injuring" several officers upon detonation. In another scenario, a chemical agent attack at the National Stadium resulted in evacuees "coughing", "vomiting", eventually "foaming" at the mouth and "losing consciousness". In a third scenario, a group of four gunmen sprayed bullets at the crowd in Kallang Wave Mall, resulting in mass "casualties", with many "dead" and "injured". The NS officers and their fellow regular officers moved swiftly on their follow-up actions, including crowd control and decontamination of chemical agents.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who observed the exercise, said: "I think we are inoculating ourselves just in case anything happens."

In some years, the maritime component of Singapore's security capabilities is also tested. For example, in 2011, Exercise Northstar validated the National Maritime Security System, a whole-of-government framework that promotes



**THERE FOR THOSE IN DISTRESS**



“I am proud to serve my NS in the SCDF, where I am equipped with life saving skills. It is a noble calling to help those in distress. It is also fulfilling to know that even when I am off-duty, I can still help others as a Community First Responder.”

– LTA Emilio Ardy Rodrigues, NSF Rota Commander, Fire and Rescue Training Centre, CDA

“I think we are inoculating ourselves just in case anything happens.”

– Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

information-sharing, situational awareness, decision-making and operational coordination to deal with non-conventional maritime security threats.

In that scenario, an enemy vessel came near the shore, vehicles exploded and caught fire, and a massive chemical leak “claimed many casualties”. At sea, a terrorist marine vessel headed toward the shores of Jurong Island was spotted and taken down. Meanwhile, on the island, SCDF emergency responders rushed to contain a massive simulated chlorine leak on land, after a truck containing flammable materials collided with a 60 metric-tonne chlorine tank at a chemical factory. Multiple explosions followed soon after, from vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices at the Jurong Island Checkpoint. Before long, the situation was under control and contained.

**PREPARED FOR FRONTLINE DUTIES**

NS officers play an integral role in exercises such as Exercise Northstar that put Singapore’s entire security framework to the test. Through such exercises and training, SCDF continually equips its NSFs with the skills required for everyday frontline duties in the community. Today, NSF paramedics work hand-in-hand with SCDF career paramedics. NSF EMTs are also trained in pre-hospital emergency medical care and are deployed to the fire stations to attend to ambulance calls together with SCDF regular officers.

This typifies the “hands-on” approach of NS within SCDF: some 75 per cent of NSFs are posted to operational vocations such as Fire and Rescue Specialists, EMTs and firefighters performing duties in the frontline units. About 25 per cent are deployed in support functions, holding appointments such as info-communications operators, storemen, drivers and clerks.

Top: NSFs from the SCDF’s SRU ‘attending’ to the ‘casualties’ and rushing them to the on-site first-aid posts for immediate medical attention at one of the Exercise Northstar 9 scenarios.

Bottom: Prime Minister Lee meeting Civil Defence Lionhearter Club members at Exercise Northstar 9.

## SAVING LIVES CLOSE TO HOME

### SGT ALHAKIM SAINI

For SGT Alhakim Saini, 22, a pioneer SCDF NSF paramedic, the demands on his life saving skills came closer to home than expected.



**OFTEN THE FIRST TRAINED PERSON ON THE SCENE OF AN INCIDENT, AN SCDF PARAMEDIC'S FIRST INSTINCT IS TO SAVE LIVES. FOREMOST IN THEIR MINDS IS THE WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY OF WHICH THEY ARE A VITAL PART.**

Once, attending to what he thought was a routine medical distress call, he was at first taken aback to know that he had to call on his newly-gained NS skills to help save the life of his own uncle.

His uncle, a driver at a furniture factory, was unloading goods when he felt chest pains and had to call for help. Alhakim did not know that this was his uncle's workplace, normally seeing him at whole extended family gatherings for bowling or for dinner, especially barbecued chicken wings at East Coast Lagoon.

Alhakim did an ECG (electrocardiogram) test, gave his uncle some medication, and the chest pains began to subside before the ambulance reached the hospital. He later gave his uncle some health advice, including to stop smoking and exercise more.

Alhakim was one of only two trainees in the first batch of SCDF NSF paramedics, who, before enlistment, were already holders of a higher NITEC (National Institute of Technical Education Certificate) in Paramedic and Emergency Care. In 2008, SCDF collaborated with the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College East to start this NITEC course, enabling graduates to undergo just a compressed paramedic training in SCDF before being deployed to incidents in SCDF ambulances. Highlighting Alhakim's connection to the academic community of his alma mater, ITE College East wrote to him in a Facebook post: "You have chosen a path that is fulfilling, meaningful, and full of life and vibrancy."

Alhakim had previously been training at ITE to become a nurse. But when his father passed away from a stroke in 2014, he decided to move to the paramedic course instead. "It was after witnessing the commitment and ability of the paramedics who attended to him that I gained the courage to become a paramedic. As an SCDF paramedic, you have ample opportunities to upgrade yourself, to gain more life saving skills and knowledge".

Alhakim, who signed on with the SCDF in 2016, was also motivated to make the switch because he realised that he preferred to be in a faster-paced environment, with more varied challenges that would call for more on-the-spot thinking and decision-making, as well as to make critical interventions for patients who require emergency medical assistance.

As he was already medically trained, his training at SCDF was focussed more on leadership before he was posted to Bukit Batok Fire Station. Today, he works at Sengkang Fire Station, where he continues to hone the discipline and professionalism he first learned during NS.

As an SCDF paramedic, you have ample opportunities to upgrade yourself, to gain more life saving skills and knowledge.

– SGT Alhakim Saini

The highest of Alhakim's NITEC skills (level 3) is to deliver a baby. Asked if he has had the chance to apply this skill, he replies: "Not yet. I don't know when it will happen, but I definitely look forward to the day when I can help bring a new life into the world."

The next-highest level NITEC skill is operating a laryngeal mask airway, a device to help a patient breathe better, especially in cardiac arrest cases such as when he had to help an elderly woman who collapsed at home in her flat in Bukit Batok.

His ITE training and his NS days truly came together one Sunday, when he was off-duty and riding alone on his motorcycle. Alhakim spotted a man who had fallen off his motorbike, with his helmet some distance away. After checking that the man had no pulse, he initiated CPR for about five minutes.

By coincidence, when the SCDF emergency responders arrived, the SCDF paramedic who was at the scene was Staff Sergeant (SSGT) Geetha from Woodlands Fire Station, where Alhakim had his Level 3 attachment during his ITE course. SSGT Geetha, who was his mentor then, was surprised and glad to see him. As Alhakim recalls, "She is a lovely paramedic and also very motherly; she takes care of the ambulance crew members as if they were her own children".

Opposite top: A family picture of SGT Alhakim.

Opposite bottom: On 16 October 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Justice Institute of Columbia and five other organisations, namely the SCDF, SAF, Singapore Institute of Management, Nanyang Polytechnic and Institute of Technical Education.



## BONDS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE



“During my NS stint in the SPF, I had the opportunity to bond with people from all walks of life and the SPF experience taught me the importance of being disciplined, staying vigilant and not taking things for granted.”

– SC/CPL Derek Wong,  
Commonwealth and  
SEA Games medal  
winner for badminton

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community events are a highlight of community life, especially those that have a street element attracting large crowds. They foster celebration, communion and cohesion. But amidst the fun, it is clear that festivity is founded on safety.

One such community event is the Geylang Serai Ramadan Bazaar leading up to Hari Raya Puasa, in some ways the biggest *pasar malam* (night market) around, with over 1,000 stalls. Over the years, PNSmen have been entrusted with more and heavier responsibilities in the planning and running of police operations. The Geylang Serai Bazaar is an example of how PNSmen play crucial roles not only in maintaining law and order, but also, by extension, in sustaining Singapore’s vibrant street life and community relations.

“My team and I are responsible for the safety and security of the event so that everyone can enjoy the festivities in peace,” said DSP (NS) Abdul Qader, 32, the NS Commanding Officer of the Division Special Task Force (DSTF) Troop 7, Bedok Division.

Sometimes trouble threatens but PNS officers like SGT (NS) Muhammad Arithzuan Ahmad are quick to intervene. He was one of 60 PNS officers from the Bedok Division’s DSTF who were recalled to patrol the bazaar in June this year. He spotted two large groups gathering and moving towards each other in a threatening manner, and knew it was not a good sign. That was when his team moved in. He said: “We could see that things were getting rowdy, and we asked them to calm down. We talked to them and then instructed them to disperse.”

Most of the time, however, the bazaar is uneventful. Advisories are issued to the public to be watchful for



*PNSmen patrolling in the Geylang Bazaar vicinity.*



crimes including theft and outrage of modesty. The presence and vigilance of PNSmen and their regular colleagues is an effective deterrent.

Also, there have been occasions when the police has had to arrest illegal workers there, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Manpower and the National Environment Agency, which regulates hawkers. A joint operation in 2017, for example, nabbed 22 offenders without work permits. The PNSmen and their colleagues had to fan out and launch the raid simultaneously in a coordinated manner, in order to prevent offenders from escaping the raid.

Operations like this call on the teamwork that is part of the organisational DNA of Bedok Division, founded on mutual support and respect among the men. “The SPF made me feel like part of the Force, because there is a lot of trust between PNSmen and the regular officers,” he said. “Each time I wear the blue uniform, I feel like I’m just coming back to work on a normal day.”

Even for such a traditional community event, the PNSmen have also had to adapt to changing times to fresh potential security issues arising from the market’s new audiences. The Geylang Serai Bazaar has, in recent years, become more of a “hipster haunt”, attracting even the attention of international media such as the BBC reporting on the trend of “Instagrammable food” with foreign origins, cool names and pretty colours.



## WORKING WELL WITH OTHERS



“NS taught me how to ask for, and accept, help from people. Only after working in the police with different people did I understand the importance of this human element.”

– Mr Masagos Zulkifli  
Former NS Investigator,  
Jurong Division  
Minister for the Environment  
and Water Resources

*Opposite top left: ERT officers at the EP Day event.*

*Opposite top right: A PNSman helps explain the SGSecure mobile application to a member of the public during EP Day.*

*Opposite bottom: ERT officers conducting a demonstration during EP Day.*

Often, the Geylang Serai Bazaar deployment is fully made up of PNSmen, something Inspector (INSP) (NS) Chan Kang, the deputy team leader in the deployment, is especially proud of: “At other events such as the National Day Parade and F1 Night Race, we work with the regular officers. But here, we feel the added responsibility because the onus is on us to make the decisions on the ground.”

## SGSECURE Closer to the community

As many countries around the world become more aware of the risk of terrorism-related disruptions, Singapore has also stepped up its efforts to work more closely with the community to sustain the people’s resilience against such threats.

HT officers like Staff Sergeant (NS) Roy Pang, an SPF Community Engagement officer, make house-to-house visits to educate the public on what to expect from threats to the community such as those related to terrorism, how to react during terrorist incidents and how to prepare themselves for such occasions. The officers also encourage more residents to participate in events such as EP Days in the neighbourhood. The residents are encouraged to undergo SGSecure community training to learn skills that might be useful in times of crisis. Members of the public are urged to use the i-Witness function on the Police@SG mobile application to report any suspicious activities they might see in their neighbourhood.

Once, during a house visit, a resident asked Roy if he used to be stationed in Ang Mo Kio. “It turned out that I had attended to a dispute case involving his son, then 13,” he said. “The resident was very appreciative that, with my help, their relationship improved.”



# A BENGALI BRIDGE

## SC/CPL NABEL AL MASRI

SC/CPL Nabel Al Masri's command of Bengali extends the Community Policing Unit's (CPU) capacity to reach out to Bangladeshi foreign worker communities.



*SC/CPL Nabel engaging the Bangladeshi workers at their dormitories within Woodlands NPC jurisdiction.*

○ **THE SPF'S CPU ALREADY HAS ITS HANDS FULL REACHING OUT TO THE SINGAPOREAN COMMUNITY. OFFICERS LIKE SC/CPL NABEL AL MASRI, 23, HELP THE CPU EXTEND ITS REACH INTO WHOLE NEW COMMUNITIES.**

He serves with the CPU in Woodlands NPC, in an area that has many dormitories for foreign workers. His fluency in Bengali, the national language of Bangladesh, helps bridge communication with Bangladeshi workers better than any other way.

His crime prevention talks focus on the consequences of crimes including housebreaking, outrage of modesty, robbery, bicycle theft and theft from dormitory lockers, as well as other offences such as littering and illegal gambling. One of his colleague speaks in Tamil at these events. The workers, mostly from the construction and marine industries, are from other countries in addition to Bangladesh, including India, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

The Bangladeshi workers are especially impressed with Nabel, and often crowd around him with further questions after his talks. "They had never seen a Bengali-speaking officer before," he says. "Some of them feel proud to see me. To them, it is as if I am representing them."

To establish initial rapport, he often makes references to cricket, naming famous players such as the top international cricketer from Bangladesh, Shakib Al Hasan. "I make these references to cricket just to create an atmosphere," he says, explaining the effect on his audiences, which can number in the hundreds. "And it really works with these small gestures, some of them get really excited."

Nabel himself has always spoken Bengali almost exclusively all the time at home with his parents and younger brother, and took Bengali as his mother tongue language in school. He came to Singapore with his mother, a homemaker, in 1996 from Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, when he was one year old, and became a Singaporean in 2005. His father has worked as a shipyard engineer in Singapore since the late 1980s.

The unique asset of his language ability has helped his unit overcome more than a language barrier. Previously, foreign workers like those he speaks to found it a hassle to approach and explain to the police if they encountered some law and order problems. Since he began his round of Bengali speeches, more of them have come forward for help with various issues and also to help with crime prevention.

This extra dimension of serving the community has certainly enriched his NS experience. "NS has taught me to be more disciplined and focussed. My work as a CPU

"They had never seen a Bengali-speaking officer before. Some of them feel proud to see me. To them, it is as if I am representing them."

– SC/CPL Nabel Al Masri



*Nabel's crime prevention talks at foreign workers' dormitories often draw large audiences because of his fluency in their national language.*

officer has also made me a more confident public speaker," says Nabel, a former mechanical engineering Polytechnic student who looks forward to enrolling in university after his ORD.

Nabel's language ability comes in useful during house visits, which aim to raise awareness on the SGSecure movement. Engaging with the public is more effective because the HT officers work closely with the residents' committees and grassroots leaders in the area through weekly meetings and constant two-way communication.

The CPU officers are then able to adopt an even friendlier approach in building relationships with the public. They also have more local knowledge and information to equip them to be even more capable of dealing with everyday situations such as family disputes, when the noise from loud quarrels lead to neighbours calling the police to intervene, as well as any more serious disruptions in future.

The CPU officers are split into teams to focus on different community segments including schools and residential areas. They examine the crime rates in each sector and the local issues and concerns, and work out ways to respond.

Nabel's ability to speak Bengali was especially useful when he had to engage an elderly woman who did not understand English. "The family's domestic helper told me that the elderly woman was from India. Initially, I tried conversing in broken Hindi, but after realising she spoke Bengali, I managed to break the ice by speaking her language. She was very positive and listened attentively," Nabel recalls.

Nabel was glad to be able to convey to her the key SGSecure message of "Run, Hide, Tell", which advises residents who encounter terrorist situations to try to run first, then to hide if they cannot run, before telling the authorities about the situation by filing a report through the SGSecure mobile application.

Nabel also asked the lady to convey this message and pass the SGSecure brochure to her son. In it, her son would find information about how to download the smartphone application that enables residents to be alerted to terror-related events around the world and to report any suspicious local activities to the authorities. In these and other ways, SGSecure helps build an even more cohesive and resilient country, thanks to officers like Nabel, who helps to build bridges into other communities.

*Workers crowd around Nabel after his talks to ask further questions. Nabel builds rapport with the workers with references to Bangladeshi culture and sport.*



## HOME TEAM CELEBRATES NS50 IN 2017

FOR THE HT, THE WHOLE YEAR OF 2017 WAS DEVOTED TO CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF NS (NS50) AND SHOWING APPRECIATION FOR THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICES OF NS OFFICERS OVER THE LAST FIVE DECADES.

In February, the HomeTeamNS Tampines clubhouse was opened at Our Tampines Hub. At this event, Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs, announced the long-term masterplan for HomeTeamNS clubhouses. New clubhouses of the future will be even better-designed and have state-of-the-art facilities, for NS officers to enjoy recreational activities with their families, social gatherings with friends and unit cohesion activities. In Mr Shanmugam's words, each clubhouse "symbolises the value we place on NS officers and how we treat them".

*Top left (from left to right): SCDF Commissioner Eric Yap; Commissioner of Police Hoong Wee Teck; Mr Amrin Amin, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs; Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs; and Mr Desmond Lee, then Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development, at the launch of the HomeTeamNS Tampines clubhouse.*

*Top right: Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs, viewing the HomeTeamNS Tampines clubhouse's indoor climbing theme park, Clip 'n Climb.*

*Photos courtesy of MHA.*

The SCDF NS Gallery, named the "Home of the Rescuers" was launched on 28 April 2017. Nestled in a cosy corner at the NSTI foyer, visitors to the gallery can learn about the evolution of NS in the SCDF from its earliest roots in VC to how it supports the SGSecure initiative in today's security climate.

The opening ceremony of the SCDF NS Gallery saw the reunion of both pioneer NS officers and more importantly, the people who helped shaped NS in

the SCDF. Amongst them were Mr Tan Kim Teck, then a reservist who courageously volunteered his service during the Hotel New World collapse incident, and CPT (NS) Wong Kum Kay, the first Commander of the Nee Soon Civil Defence Training School. In May, the Home Team Show and Festival (HTSF) 2017 at the Sports Hub showcased the work of the HT in all its key aspects. A Parade at the Indoor Stadium included a show element for the first time, with short films and musical performances including HT NS officer Taufik Batisah's rendition of the song "Everyday Heroes" composed by songwriter Dick Lee.

*Top: The official opening of the SCDF NS Gallery was graced by Mr Desmond Lee (eighth from right), then Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development.*

*Bottom left: The HTSF 2017 at the Sports Hub showcased the work of the HT in all its key aspects.*

*Bottom right: At the official opening ceremony of the SCDF NS Gallery, guests had a glimpse of the uniforms worn by regulars and NS officers from the SFB, SFS and SCDF.*



Exhibits and displays presented the HT's heritage since 1967, its capabilities including SPF and SCDF operational demonstrations, vehicles, weaponry and a shooting range, and also glimpses into the future with futuristic new gadgetry and equipment. Visitors could try out items such as virtual reality goggles, along with SCDF's firefighting gear and SPF's Taurus revolver.

In July, the Old Police Academy (OPA) – home of police training from 1929 to 2005 – hosted a farewell reunion for more than 4,000 PNSmen, regular and retired police officers, and their families. A time capsule was sealed for the Police Heritage Centre at the Police HQ, scheduled to be opened 50 years later in 2067. One item of historical significance to PNS is an NS50 commemorative stamp autographed by Mr Desmond Lee, then Second Minister for Home Affairs and Second Minister for National Development. As the OPA makes way for redevelopment, the Government will integrate elements of police heritage into the area in future.

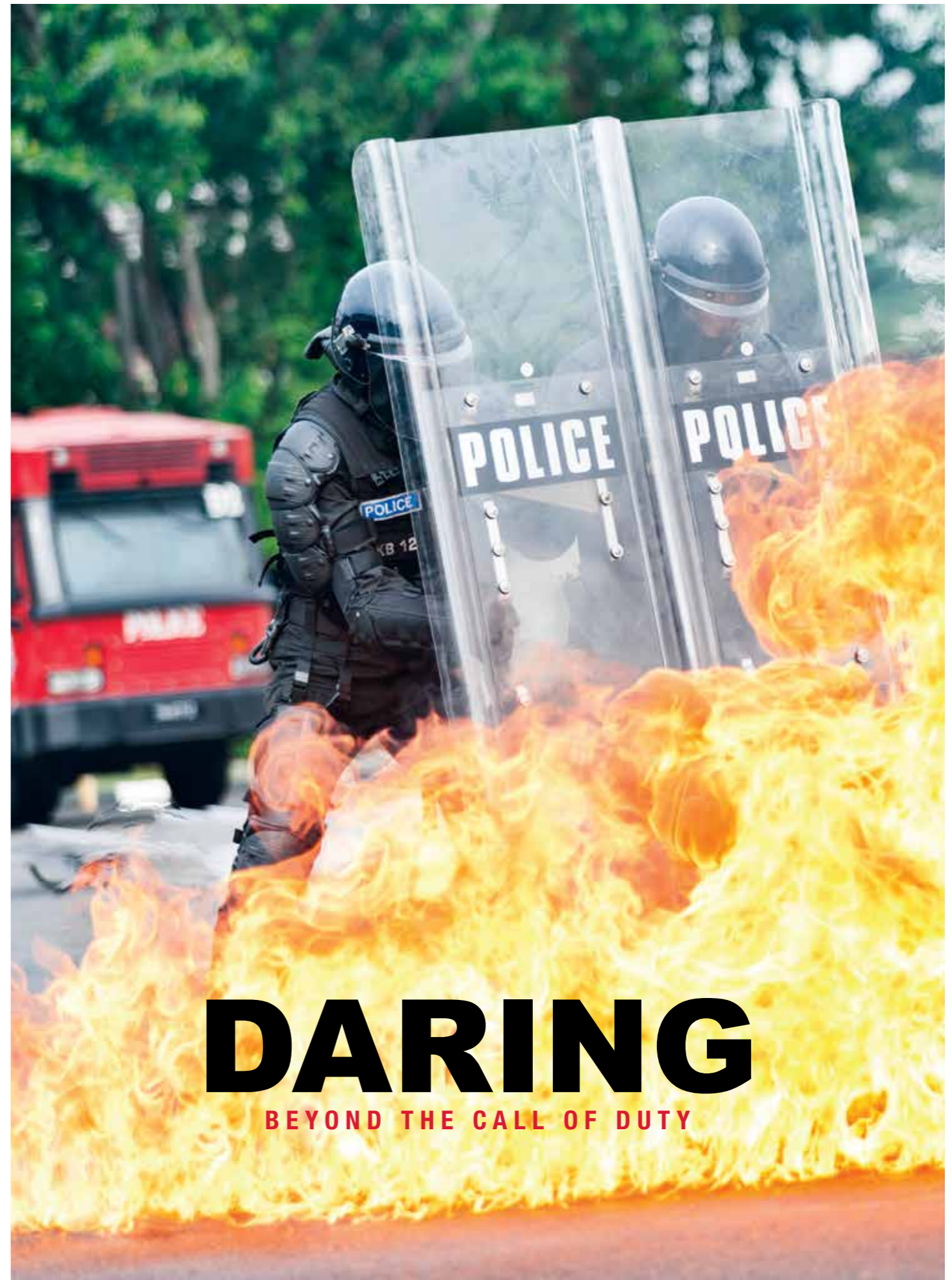
Memories of the OPA days revolved around the tough training, but also times of fun and good food. For instance, trainees would play pranks on one another, especially when squad-mates were sleeping in the bunks. DAC (NS) Chua Song Heng, 53, a cadet there for nine months in 1982, recalls his favourite breakfast dish of sambal chilli with mashed sardines mixed in: "I always looked forward to the days when it was on the menu."

*Top: HTSF 2017 at the Sports Hub.*

*Opposite top: Securing the time capsule during the farewell reunion event. From left to right: Assistant Commissioner of Police and Director of Police National Service Department Lee Chin Ek; Commissioner of Police Hoong Wee Teck; Mr Desmond Lee, then Second Minister for Home Affairs and Second Minister for National Development; Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Police (NS) Chua Song Heng; and Mr Sri Kanthan Chelliah*

*Opposite bottom: Reunion of former police officers at the Old PA.*





# DARING

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY



Police officers are always ready to answer the call of duty.

### BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

The formation of NS in 1967 started the process of formalising the contribution of civilians as everyday guardians of the safety and security of Singapore.

Since then, the resources and resourcefulness of civilian guardians have expanded, and been enhanced, many times over. Amidst the routine serenity of Singapore, serious disruptions are a relatively rare occurrence. But when they do happen, they call for daring, at times even beyond the call of duty. Through the last 50 years, NS officers of the HT have played their part in managing major incidents, even as they have also placed their skills and sense of duty at the service of society in everyday life.

Some major incidents have claimed their place in the annals of HT history. Some have been massive shocks to the physical infrastructure. Others were accidents that escalated

### NS AND NATION BUILDING



“In the early days of NS, there was apprehension and perhaps also fear among both the enlistees and their families. Such a perception has changed over time. Now, every family has someone who had gone through NS. They have come to understand the important part NS plays in nation building and in maintaining a cohesive society.”

– Mr Rajoo Gopal,  
Former Director, Police National  
Service Department

### PNS MARCH

Police National Servicemen  
Steadfast and true we are  
We will maintain vigilance  
And keep our streets crime free

Police National Servicemen  
For peace and harmony  
Resolute in loyalty  
We will do our duty

Police National Servicemen  
And guardians of the law  
We will aid those in distress  
And respond to all calls

We serve with Pride  
Our Country and People  
To one and all  
Without fear or favour

We strive  
To serve  
In all circumstances  
And prepare ourselves  
For all contingencies

Police National Servicemen  
And guardians of the law  
We will aid those in distress  
And respond to all calls

Police National Servicemen  
For peace and harmony  
Resolute in loyalty  
We will do our duty



to become the biggest shocks to normalcy in living memory. Yet other episodes may seem insignificant to some, but it is this day-to-day presence, this tireless vigilance, that is the very foundation of peace. As always, the responsiveness and resolve of NS officers have been vital to keeping Singapore always safe and secure.

## THE DAY THE WORLD FELL IN

### MR TAN KIM TECK

Mr Tan Kim Teck is the only SCDF NS officer to receive a field promotion and Public Service Star, for his initiative, dedication, courage and perseverance in the Hotel New World rescue operation in 1986.



Mr Tan Kim Teck at the Hotel New World collapse incident site.

**THE WORLD LITERALLY FELL IN ON THE OCCUPANTS OF HOTEL NEW WORLD ON 15 MARCH 1986. THE SIX-STOREY LIAN YAK BUILDING, AT THE JUNCTION OF SERANGOON ROAD AND OWEN ROAD, COLLAPSED WITHOUT WARNING, TRAPPING 50 PEOPLE BENEATH THE RUBBLE. SEVENTEEN PEOPLE WERE RESCUED, WHILST 33 WERE KILLED.**

This, the biggest civil disaster in Singapore's history, was a major joint operation of the SCDF and SPF. It saw the mobilisation of NS officers from the SCDF 1st, 2nd and 3rd Rescue Battalions and 1st Construction Battalion. At the heart of the search and rescue operation was Kim Teck, 55, who now works as the director of a heavy machinery rental company in Vietnam. He was a reservist with the SCDF's 1st Rescue Battalion when news of the incident reached him: "I was at work when I overheard my colleagues talking about the extent of the disaster. At that very moment, I knew I must volunteer my services, for I am a trained rescuer."

Despite not being "officially" mobilised yet, Kim Teck, then a 25-year-old carpenter, volunteered to report to the former

SCDF headquarters in Bendemeer Road. As he said in a media interview: "I'm very sure in some big situation, your conscience will tell you that you're needed. My style is to 'just go'."

When he reached the site, chaos was everywhere. He joined regular officers from the SFS and his fellow SCDF reservists to pick through the rubble to save any lives that could still be saved. At first, the men were removing debris with their bare hands, in the hope of finding surface casualties. To make this process even faster, they formed a human chain to relay from one person to the next the slabs of concrete collected. For five days straight through, they worked round the clock. Some nights, they slept on the pavement at the site, exhausted from their efforts.

One of his tasks was to search for openings within the rubble – the dusty avenues of hope – that could serve as access routes for the rescuers to reach trapped victims. Debris was carefully removed, as power saws and drills cut through the rubble. Finally, in pitch darkness, he and his team found a ventilation hole – a gap of just one square foot – that led to the basement car park of the collapsed building. With the use of some breaking tools, they enlarged the hole and eventually managed to gain access. The ceiling had caved in. On one wall, reinforcement steel bars stood dangerously exposed. A pipe must have burst and spilled water into the basement, as the flood water was chest-high. The team had to climb on top of cars to get through to the back of the car park.

He shouted at the top of his voice with the hope of getting a response from any trapped victims. "Frankly, it was scary. There was a risk that the remaining part of the building structure might collapse onto the basement car park and bury my fellow rescuers and me." As a precautionary measure, on their recommendation, civil engineers at the scene directed all above-ground operations to cease while the rescuers, including SCDF reservists, were risking

I was at work when I overheard my colleagues talking about the extent of the disaster. At that very moment, I knew I must volunteer my services, for I am a trained rescuer.

– Mr Tan Kim Teck





Top: SCDF reservists reporting to the operation base at Nee Soon Civil Defence Training School before being deployed to the Hotel New World collapse incident.

Bottom: In April 2017, at the official opening of the SCDF NS Gallery, Mr Tan Kim Teck (right) recounted his memories of the operation to Mr Desmond Lee (middle), then Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development, and SCDF Commissioner Eric Yap (left).

life and limb to navigate through the confined space underground. This was because vibration from machinery above ground could have caused parts of the rest of the building to collapse.

Kim Teck and his fire service counterparts led other rescuers, including tunnelling experts, into the car park. He recalled most vividly speaking to a female Chinese

victim who was pinned down by a concrete slab. “The slab was so huge that we could not see her but could only hear her from behind it. She told me she was in pain and unable to move, and pleaded for me to rescue her. I told her that help was on the way and the rescuers were penetrating the concrete slab to reach her. The rescuers kept talking to her to prevent her from slipping into unconsciousness. Unfortunately, it was such a complex, time-consuming operation, and by the time the rescuers finally reached her, she had already passed on. I remember her body was still warm to the touch. She was among the 33 individuals who perished in the disaster.” For the next four days, he had very little sleep. “I felt bad,” he said. “She was so close, yet so far.”

For those survivors who were rescued, everyone cheered when they were brought out one by one. A woman identified as Chua Kim Choo, 30, survived because she hid under a table, and so, was protected from the caved-in ceiling. Her case even made headlines in *The New York Times* in the USA.

To date, Kim Teck is the only SCDF national serviceman to be given a field promotion – from the rank of Private to Sergeant. It happened on the fourth day of the search and rescue operation and he only accepted the promotion when approached the second time. He was recognised for his bravery and for volunteering his service by arriving at the incident site even before his NS unit was mobilised. For his perseverance in the operation, he was also conferred a State award, the Public Service Star. “Frankly, I least expected it, for I was only doing what I had been trained for,” he said. “The Hotel New World collapse incident was a national disaster and we witnessed Singaporeans from all walks of life coming together to help. I happened to be one of them.”



Top: Police officers were also activated at the Hotel New World collapse operation.

Middle: A police officer consoling distraught relatives at the rescue operations.

Bottom: A police officer helping to cart away items retrieved at the incident site.



Top: SCDF reservists swiftly moving a rescue trailer upon their arrival at the Hotel New World collapse incident site.

Bottom: COMR (Retired) Chng Teow Hua, then SCDF Commissioner (in uniform), briefing Mr Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister of Singapore, on the complexity of the search and rescue operations.



SCDF reservists and SFS emergency responders formed a human chain to help clear the debris at the disaster site.



Emergency responders from the SCDF, before the merger with the SFS in 1989, dousing the oil tank fire at Pulau Merlimau.

**PULAU MERLIMAU FIRE, 1988**  
**An inferno at sea**

Seeing the old SFS green uniform and black safety helmet – items that are now on display at the SCDF NS Gallery at the SCDF NSTI in Jalan Bahar – brings back memories for Warrant Officer (WO) See Kwong Nam. WO See, 49, then an NSF firefighter with the SFS, recalled: “When I look at this uniform, I can almost feel the heat from the burning oil tank. That was a long day for me.”

He wore the same green uniform in 1988 to help fight the biggest offshore fire in Singapore’s history. Alongside his fellow NSF firefighters from the SFS were 50 SCDF reservists who were also deployed for the operation. The total number of emergency responders involved added up to some 600 people — including 300 firefighters, 100 SCDF regular officers and others from several other government organisations.

Even before the merger of the SFS and the SCDF in 1989, regulars and NS officers from both organisations worked seamlessly together at this incident. Making reference to this joint operation, COMR (Retired) Chng Teow Hua, then

THE STRAITS TIMES, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1988

**HOME**

**Fire-fighters battle blaze in oil refinery’s tanks**

Workers being evacuated from Pulau Merlimau heard explosions



Evacuated refinery workers about to alight on the jolly at Jurong, smile with relief to get the fire behind them.

**FIRE** broke out in two naphtha tanks at a refinery in Pulau Merlimau, off the coast of Jurong, yesterday.

No casualties have been reported at press time as scores of fire-fighters continued battling to keep the blaze under control.

The first fire at the Singapore Refining Company (SRC) refinery broke out at about 1.30 pm in a 17-m floating roof tank.

Refinery workers being evacuated reported hearing several explosions.

The tank has a storage capacity of 130,000 barrels of naphtha, a flammable oil product derived from refining crude oil.

The naphtha is used as feedstock by local and foreign petrochemical companies.

A floating roof tank rises in proportion to the amount of oil pumped into it.

“We do not know if the tank is full,” said an SRC spokesman. The cause

and extent of the damage is being investigated.

The refinery is a joint venture between British Petroleum, Singapore Petroleum Company and Citicor (Asia).

The refinery’s fire-fighting staff were complemented later by more than 30 firemen from the Singapore Fire Service and the Port of Singapore Authority and about 30 Civil Defence reservists.

**Other tanks in the area**

Together they helped to contain the fire in the first affected tank and prevented it from spreading to the other tanks in the area.

That fire was brought under control at about 3 pm, although still burning.

Fifty minutes later, black smoke was seen pouring out from a second

naphtha tank.

By 4 pm, it was abate, said the refinery spokesman, as firemen were draining out the naphtha to larger crude tanks nearby.

At least 100 non-essential staff of the refinery were evacuated from the island as a precautionary measure while firemen battled to control the blaze.

At the height of the fire, it was visible from various parts of the mainland.

It is learnt that at least six workers, who were working on the upper sections of the first naphtha tank, narrowly escaped injury after they climbed down a few minutes before the fire began.

“They were very lucky in getting away from the tank in the nick of time,” said a refinery foreman, who asked not to be named.

Several refinery workers, who were evacuated during the early stages of the fire, said they heard



“loud blasts” and complained that “the heat was almost unbearable”.

“I heard two loud explosions. The fire looked very threatening and there were initial fears that it would spread quickly,” said a site supervisor, who declined to be named.

The refinery spokesman said there were no confirmed reports of explosions when the fire began.

Residents in Parkview Condominium and Hong Leong Gardens in Ayer Rajah called The Straits Times to complain that there was a thick pall of black smoke in their neighbourhood.

**Mysterious smell may be connected to gas leak in an off-shore oil refinery**

**THOUSANDS** of Singaporeans living on the western part of the island were mystified by the strong smell of petroleum gas yesterday morning.

This could have been connected to a fire which broke out in the afternoon at a refinery in Pulau Merlimau.

The question foremost on their minds was: “Where is the smell coming from? Is it dangerous?”

The Environment Ministry has not ruled out the possibility that the source of the nauseating smell could be a leak from one of the off-shore refineries in the south-west of Singapore.

A ministry spokesman last night advised the public not to be alarmed as the pollution

levels are well below the toxic level.

The ministry received more than 50 calls between 8 am and 1 pm from residents in Clementi, Holland Road, Bukit Timah, Bukit Batok and even as far away as Balestier Road complaining about the smell.

The Straits Times’ NewsLine was also jammed with scores of calls from concerned readers.

Preliminary investigations identified the gas as mercaptan, an additive used in oil refining and in town gas. It is an organic chemical compound

found in the scents of skunks and chopped onions, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Checks by Public Utilities Board engineers showed that there was no drop in the pressure signal of their domestic gas pipe-lines which would indicate a leak.

“We believe the smell could possibly have come from one of the off-shore refineries,” said the ministry spokesman.

Ministry sources told The Straits Times that the smell may be linked to the fire at the Singapore Refining Company’s refinery on Pulau Merlimau.

Detailed investigations will begin as soon as the fire is brought under control.

Ministry officials will also carry out checks on other refineries in the other off-shore islands.

Mrs Theresa Teng of Ridge-wood Condominium in Ulu Pandan said she first detected the “nauseating smell” on Monday afternoon.

“The smell became so bad yesterday that I had stomach cramps and could not eat lunch. I was worried because I run a mini-mart and the smell was coming through the air-conditioned store in spite of the closed doors,” she added.

The Straits Times, 28 October 1988, pg. 27. © Singapore Press Holdings Limited.

Commissioner of SCDF, said: “We proved that we could click with clockwork precision in an excellently co-ordinated operation during an emergency”<sup>1</sup>.

Pulau Merlimau was one of a cluster of southern islands off the coast of Jurong that were later reclaimed to create Jurong Island. It used to house the refinery of the Singapore Refining Company. On 25 October 1988, three storage tanks of the chemical naphtha went up in flames, whipped up by strong winds. The fire injured 25 people and caused losses totalling more than \$10 million.

The fire lasted for more than 113 hours and it was finally doused on 30 October 1988. Foaming and cooling operations went on for six days. The fire was so huge that, in fact, the men could feel the heat even from the boats out at sea, as they were approaching Pulau Merlimau.

The six hours between noon and 6pm on the second day were the most critical period. The strong winds nearly spread the fire to the nearby LPG fuel tanks. As there were no spare storage tanks for the LPG fuel, the men had to transfer the fuel to ship tankers. This transfer was crucial, because if they had not done so in time, the ignited LPG fuel would have blown up half of Pulau Merlimau.

Even after the last flames licked, the firefighters stayed behind to ensure safety for everyone else. Ground monitors – equipped to shoot foam and water – were stationed near the affected tanks in case the fire were to come to life again. A standby force of about 55 SCDF regular officers spent another night on the island to keep vigil.

<sup>1</sup> Fire under control after fourth tank saved from flames. *The Straits Times*, 28 October 1988, Pg.44.



*SOC troopers patrolling popular areas frequented by tourists and Singaporeans.*

### **SINGAPORE AIRLINES SQ117 HIJACK, 1991**

On 26 March 1991, four Pakistani militants hijacked Singapore Airlines flight SQ117 while it was at Changi Airport en route from Kuala Lumpur. The hijackers, claiming to be members of the Pakistan People’s Party, demanded the plane be refuelled so that they could fly to Australia. They also wanted to speak with the Pakistani Ambassador to Singapore to convey their demand for the release of nine prisoners detained in Pakistan including Asif Ali Zadori, husband of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto.

In response, 40 Special Operations Command (SOC) troopers, which included PNSFs, were deployed. The Police Tactical Team engaged the hijackers in negotiations, buying time for simultaneous operations by their fellow officers. The SOC troopers worked well with their commando colleagues to secure the area around the plane and monitor the situation closely. When a hostage was hurled out of the plane’s cockpit, he gave the troopers vital information on the hijackers and the types of weapons they used. Using this information, the aircraft was stormed and the hijackers taken down in just 30 seconds, thus completing a successful operation that came to give the public much confidence in Singapore’s security forces.

The SOC is SPF’s strategic force deployed for the most critical and demanding of missions. It was formed in 1992 by assembling the best elements of SPF’s tactical units: the Police Task Force, the Police Tactical Team and the Police Dog Unit. Today, SOC consists of three main units: the Tactical Unit, the Special Tactics and Rescue Unit and the Police K-9 Unit.

**NICOLL HIGHWAY CAVE-IN, 2004**  
**When the ground gave way**

On 20 April 2004, a tunnel under construction as part of the MRT Circle Line caved in, causing the Nicoll Highway to collapse. The area surrounding it was also destroyed, along with gas, water and electricity cables. Tremors were felt at the nearby Golden Mile Complex too. Several construction workers were working in the tunnel at the time.

Immediately after the cave-in, 75 SCDF emergency responders, including the elite Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART) rescuers and SRB NSFs, moved into action. On the first day of the incident, the SCDF found the first body of the four missing men. The second day of the operation saw the deployment of an additional 87 SCDF emergency responders and the second body was recovered from the disaster site. The third body was subsequently found on the third day of the operation.

NSFs from the SCDF SRB played a crucial role in supporting the SCDF's DART in the complex search and rescue operation by forming a human chain to relay the casualties from the disaster site to a safe ground. The injured casualties were treated and conveyed to the hospital by the SCDF ambulance crew that included NSF medics.

This incident also saw SPF-SCDF collaboration at the disaster site. SGT (NS) Ridhuan Ahmad, 31, was an SPF NS KINS trooper with the Airport Police Division when one of Singapore's worst infrastructure disasters happened in 2004. He recalled: "I was on duty when the Nicoll Highway collapsed. It was very chaotic but I knew I had to ensure that security and order was in place so that my SCDF colleagues could focus on their rescue operations.

*Opposite top: SCDF NSFs assisting in the search and rescue operation at the Nicoll Highway collapse incident.*

*Opposite middle: A section of the Nicoll Highway that caved in.*

*Opposite bottom left: SCDF emergency responders, including NSFs, forming a human chain to relay a body from the disaster site to safe ground.*

*Opposite bottom right: SCDF's elite DART rescuers extricating a body from underneath a tipper truck that was partially submerged in water.*



**EVERY SECOND MATTERS**

“As an EMT, I work with Paramedics in attending to emergency medical cases including life-threatening ones. In such situations, every second matters and we have to work closely as a team. This humbling experience has also made me a more composed individual under trying circumstances.

– LCP Rajeev Singh S/O  
Pradeep Singh, NSF EMT,  
Jurong Fire Station

Such cases were an eye-opener for me at such a young age. NS has made me become more independent, disciplined and ready to accept challenges in life.”

About 20 SCDF appliances including the Heavy Rescue Tender and the Command Vehicles were deployed strategically to manage the operation. The rescue operation, led by the SCDF, lasted four days and was called off because it became too risky for the team to carry on with the operation. The accident resulted in four deaths and three casualties. Three lives were saved and three bodies were recovered. The highway was impassable for many months and was eventually reopened on 4 December 2004.

**OPERATION LIONHEART****Life savers beyond our shores**

On 21 September 1999, the SCDF Operation Lionheart Rescue Contingent was deployed for an Urban Search and Rescue mission to Tai Chung County in Taiwan in the aftermath of a massive earthquake resulting in fatalities and mass casualties.

The Operation Lionheart Rescue Contingent to Taiwan consisted of SCDF regular officers and three SCDF ORNSmen, namely: then Captain (NS) Cheah Kok Keong, Lieutenant (LTA) (NS) Francis Tan Jit Yong and LTA (NS) Wong Nan-Yaw. This was the inaugural deployment of the SCDF ORNS officers in the Operation Lionheart mission. The 20-day mission ended with an eight-year-old boy being rescued from the debris.

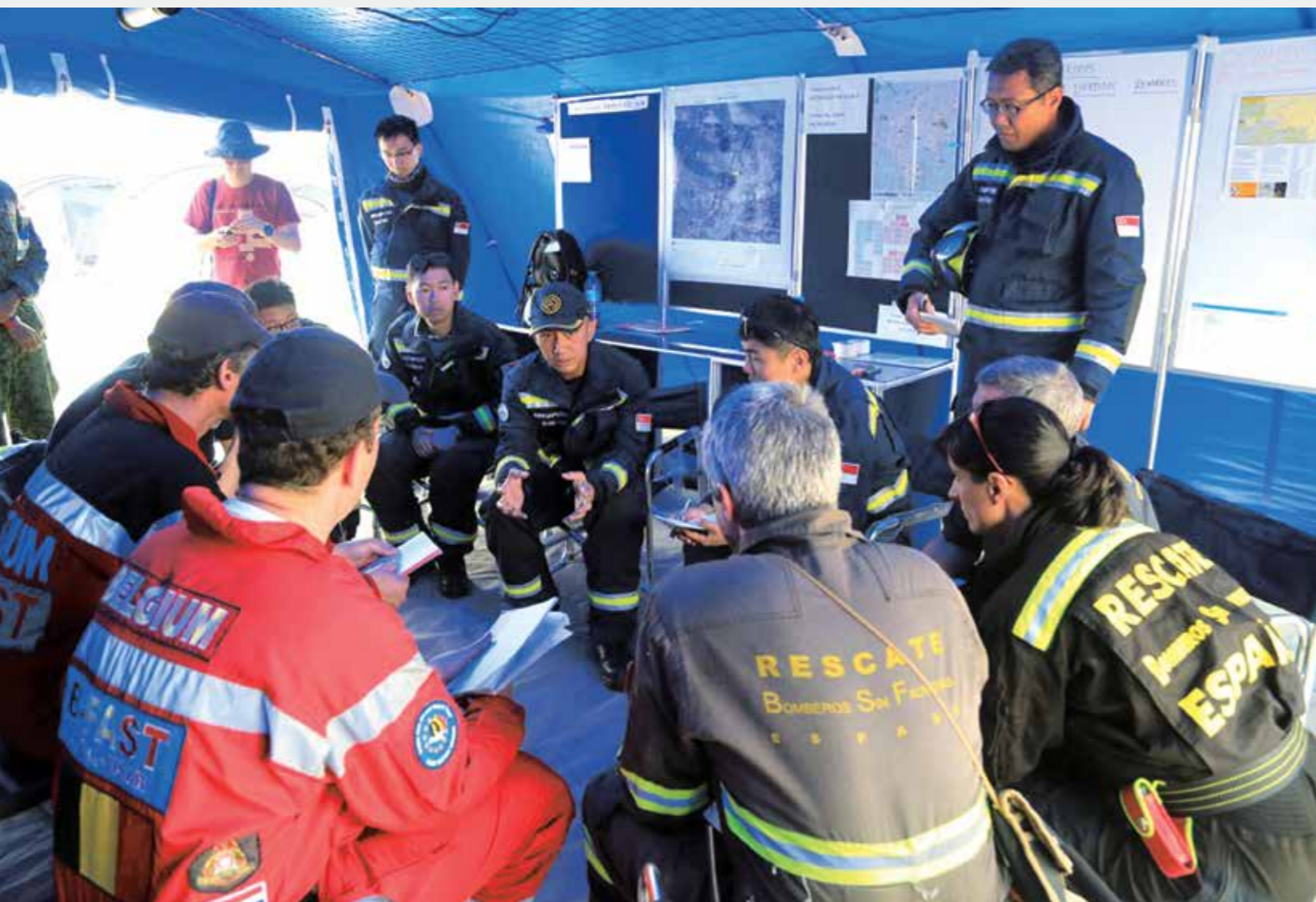
Kok Keong was among the first batch of SCDF ORNSmen deployed for Operation Lionheart. “Having been trained in life saving skills, I wanted very much to be part of



*The SCDF Operation Lionheart contingent that took part in the Heavy USAR reclassification by the United Nations on 28 September 2013.*

the Operation Lionheart rescue contingent. Little did I know that when I volunteered for the mission, I would be making history for being the first batch of ORNSmen to be deployed for SCDF’s overseas humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions.”

During the mission, he had the opportunity to work closely with rescuers from SCDF’s DART. As some of the DART rescuers were unable to converse in Mandarin with the Taiwanese, he played the role of an interpreter as well as a rescuer. For instance, he helped to make periodic announcements to the local people at the incident sites on the progress of the search and rescue operations. “They were most appreciative of such updates and knew that we were doing our utmost to locate victims who were trapped.”



LTC (NS) Mohamed Razaleigh Bin Mohamed Saem (standing, right), Deputy Commander of the Operation Lionheart contingent, involved in a discussion with rescuers from overseas during the mission to Nepal in April 2015.



He was also involved in the search and rescue operation. “As trained rescuers, we knew how to manoeuvre within the confined space of the rubble to locate casualties. We also knew when to pull out momentarily in the face of the aftershocks without endangering ourselves or our fellow rescuers.”

### Growing from strength to strength

Since then, SCDF ORNSmen have been deployed for similar other missions alongside the SCDF Operation Lionheart Contingents. In 2008, the contingent was accorded the highest level of recognition with the Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) classification by the United Nations International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). It was also the first in Asia and the seventh in the world then to attain the Heavy USAR classification.

On 28 September 2013, the SCDF Operation Lionheart contingent attained its Heavy USAR reclassification by the United Nations after a gruelling 36-hour exercise. The reclassification exercise saw the active involvement of SCDF ORNSmen such as then-Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) (NS) Alvin Low who took on the role of Deputy Contingent Commander.

In the same year, the SCDF strengthened the operational capacity of its Operation Lionheart Contingent by expanding its deployment structure to include more SCDF ORNSmen. Under the revised structure, the Contingent Commander is supplemented by a Deputy Contingent Commander, who is an ORNSman. LTC (NS) Mohamed Razaleigh Bin Mohamed Saem is the first ORNSman to take on this Deputy Contingent Commander appointment at the Operation Lionheart mission to Nepal in 2015.

## FAMILY: “THE OTHER HOME TEAM”

### DR MOHAN TIRU

Dr Mohan Tiru's wife, Dr Lee Yin Mei, does her “NS” by supporting her husband as he serves NS, including in overseas missions.



**CHOCOLATES, TALCUM POWDER, DISPOSABLE UNDERWEAR – THESE WERE SOME ITEMS DR LEE YIN MEI HELPED HER HUSBAND, DR MOHAN TIRUCHITTAMPALAM (WHO RECENTLY COMPLETED HIS NS), PACK FOR HIS SCDF OPERATION LIONHEART OVERSEAS MISSIONS. SHE RECALLS WITH A LAUGH: “MY CONSIDERATION WAS THAT SINCE THEY WOULD BE UNDERGOING HARDSHIP, MAYBE I COULD SLIP SOME CHOCOLATE IN, JUST SOMETHING TO HELP RELIEVE HARDSHIP AND BOOST MORALE. I EVEN PACKED MINERAL WATER, BUT HE SAID: ‘DON’T BE SILLY.’”**

To keep within the limits of a full pack's weight and space, key items like a Swiss army knife and mosquito coils took priority, but some less essential items were left behind, like shampoo and cream biscuits.

Supportive spouses like her make up “the other home team” – family members of the men and women of the HT. “This is where the wives of all NS officers come in,” Mohan observes. “People may ask why women don't do NS, but to me, their NS is at home. We must recognise this part of NS as well.”

Mohan, 50, an emergency physician at Changi General Hospital, served 25 years of NS, including several years as SCDF's Deputy Chief Medical Officer until recently. As an ORNSman, he served alongside regular officers in SCDF overseas humanitarian and disaster relief missions, known as Operation Lionheart, in Khao Lak, Thailand in 2004; Kashmir, Pakistan in 2005; Jogjakarta, Indonesia in 2006 and Christchurch, New Zealand in 2011 – helping to save lives amidst the devastation wrought by the earthquake fault lines of the volcanic ‘ring of fire’ in the Pacific Ocean.

The SCDF is like an extended family in the field. On top of basic food like Korean kimchi cup noodles, the men would cook fresh roti prata and chapati using flour they had brought or sourced from local resources. As he explains: “The key was to be as comfortable as we could be under the circumstances, so we could do our jobs happily. Joy at work – that's what I like to call it.”

Yin Mei also observes that NS is supported by a community back home. When Mohan was in Pakistan in 2005, their older daughter Rachele was celebrating her second birthday. A party had been prepared at their home in Seletar, complete with a piñata and magician. Yin Mei will always be grateful for how her friend's husbands chipped in to help organise the party, in a way to “fill in” for the fatherly roles that Mohan had to forego for a while because of NS.

Keeping in touch with family is one aspect that has changed over the years. In 2004, when pagers were still in use, Yin Mei had to scour the newspapers and broadcast media for news of the safety and progress of the SCDF mission, relying on her trust that all was well for her

People may ask why women don't do NS, but to me, their national service is at home. We must recognise this part of NS as well.

– LTC (NS) Dr Mohan Tiru



husband and the SCDF contingent. In the field, Mohan would look for local minimart stallholders to pay them to use their mobile phones for brief calls home.

By the time of the 2011 Christchurch Operation Lionheart mission, telecommunications had improved vastly. The SCDF teams could set up mobile Internet in the field for servicemen to send Whatsapp messages to their family members. Today, family members receive regular SMS updates from the SCDF. An SCDF webpage even enables family members to email messages of support and stay in touch.

Yin Mei – who sent her messages too, of course – has no doubt she would back her husband all the way. Mohan’s very first overseas mission and experience of a tsunami in Khao Lak in 2004 came at a time when Yin Mei was



*Then-Major (NS) Dr Mohan Tiruchittampalam attending to a patient at a medical base in Khao Lak, Thailand in 2004.*

pregnant with their second daughter Elisabeth. She says: “Our roles as wives is to give them as much support as we can, to give them peace of mind during their missions. For us at home, if anything happens (like going into labour), we can just call a taxi. Nothing can be worse than what they have to face during a search and rescue operation in the aftermath of a natural disaster.”

This is how the HT can stand strong, knowing they have the unstinting backing of family, the “other home team”.

*Then-Major (NS) Dr Mohan (second from left) attending to a victim of the Muzaffarabad earthquake in Pakistan in 2005.*



# Fire forces evacuation at Shell's Bukom refinery

Some facilities shut down, blaze contained around midnight

By WINSTON CHAI (SINGAPORE) A blaze at Royal Dutch Shell's Singapore refinery, its largest in the world, has prompted the firm to clear out employees and partially shut down facilities at its offshore complex.

"All non-essential staff from Pulau Bukom have been evacuated from the island," the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) said in a statement last night.

The evacuation order was issued after earlier attempts to contain the mid-day fire at Shell's Pulau Bukom Manufacturing Site proved unsuccessful. The fire was eventually contained around midnight.

In response to the incident, Shell has shut down a hydrocracker on the island but its ethylene cracker is still operating.

Shell Companies' Singapore chairman Lee Tzu Yang said at a press confer-

ence late last night that crude-processing units at the site are now running at reduced capacity.

The SCDF, which was notified three minutes after the blaze broke out at 1.15pm yesterday, had initially said the incident had been brought under control within the hour.

However, plumes of thick black smoke that could be seen from many parts of mainland Singapore continued to billow out from Pulau Bukom in the evening.



Smoke billows: Plumes of thick smoke and flames seen at Shell's refinery on Pulau Bukom after a fire broke out at 1.15pm yesterday. No fatalities have been reported but one firefighter sustained a minor injury

Eyewitnesses also reportedly heard explosions on the facility. A Shell spokesman subsequently confirmed that the fire had indeed intensified.

No fatalities have been reported but one firefighter sustained a minor injury.

All staff are accounted for, the company said. According to the SCDF, the fire involved products from pipes in the tank farm at the Shell complex.

The oil giant's Pulau Bukom facility has a crude distillation capacity of

500,000 barrels a day. Besides refining crude oil, the complex also includes a 800,000 tonne-a-year ethylene cracker and a 155,000 tonne-a-year butadiene-extraction unit.

Some 90 per cent of its products are exported to countries in the region and

beyond, making Singapore a key supply and trading centre for Shell in the region.

The company did not comment by press time on the extent of the fire damage and the exact impact it has on its local production capacity.

## PULAU BUKOM FIRE, 2011

### Great ball of fire

On the afternoon of 28 September 2011, the world's largest oil refinery on Pulau Bukom was engulfed in flames. SCDF mobilised some 120 emergency responders including NSFs, as well as 40 appliances including 13 fire engines and 21 support vehicles from the mainland to fight the biggest fire in recent history.

The fire that raged for 32 hours started at the pump house which carried a network of pipes with various fuel components. The critical task was to prevent the fire from spreading to the fuel tanks. Together with Shell's Company Emergency Response Team, the SCDF emergency responders contained the blaze to a 176-metre-by-65-metre area. The SCDF also protected nearby storage tanks holding unspecified hydrocarbons by using water jets to cool them and prevent a pressure build-up. At the height of the incident, the SCDF activated the Operations Civil Emergency Plan, a national-level emergency response framework for major incidents in Singapore.

Midway through the operation, a fireball erupted and the emergency responders were pulled back for their safety. But they were undeterred. "These guys are brave," said



The Straits Times, 6 September 2011, pg.4.  
© Singapore Press Holdings Limited.

then-LTC Ling Young Ern, one of the operation's commanders. "They will not hesitate to go back in again." And go in again they did. Together with the SCDF regular officers, the NSF firefighters fought the blaze relentlessly and finally completely doused the fire after eight days.

## EVERYDAY HEROES Help close at hand

One benefit of living in a country that has NS is that if trouble crops up, help is actually never far away. In fact, it should be reassuring to know that the majority of one's male fellow citizens are trained to deal with crime and disaster. In short, help is always close at hand.

Signature events tend to grab public attention and the media spotlight. For example, the threat of self-radicalised individuals influenced by the Middle Eastern terror group ISIS has increased the spotlight on HT officers and the roles they can play in keeping Singapore safe.

And yet, the true value of security comes from the everyday. As DSP (NS) Neo Son Chai, former NS Commander of Bedok Division, observed, the duties typically assumed by PNS officers – such as routine patrols and crowd control at events – tend to be "less glamorous" by nature, but they are more important than some people realise. "It is the day-to-day patrols that help keep the crime rate down, more so than raids or special operations. When your officers can appreciate the reason for doing what they do, you can be sure they will go all out to do their job well."

The effect of having everyday guardians all around comes to the fore in incidents such as the one in May

2015, when two off-duty PNSFs helped a woman identify her molester and get him arrested, thanks to their quick actions.

The woman, who had been molested by a 50-year-old man a week earlier, chanced upon him again while taking a bus. She immediately reported the matter to the bus captain. But the molester would have got off one more time if not for two off-duty PNSFs who were also on board the same bus.

One of them, Special Constable (SC) Tan Keng Yew, was on his way to work and was in civilian attire. He identified himself as a police officer before approaching the male suspect. At this point, another off-duty PNSF, SC George Lee, also stood up to identify himself.

Both officers, aged 21, approached the molester, who retreated towards the back of the bus before eventually fleeing through the rear door. The police officers gave chase and managed to detain him.

Bottom left: PNSFs deployed together with regular officers to maintain law and order for the National Day Parade celebrations.

Bottom right: It is the everyday interactions that matter, and NS officers are always ready to lend a helping hand.



### BEING AN EVERYDAY HERO



“Striving to be the best version of ourselves makes us an everyday hero. Let our actions make a positive and enduring impact on others.”

– SC/CPL (NS) Taufik Batisah  
Singapore Idol winner 2004,  
Singer of Home Team Show & Festival  
2017 theme song, “Everyday Heroes”

**Singapore Civil Defence Force**  
January 26 · Singapore · 🌐

This morning, 8 off-duty firefighters from Bukit Batok Fire Station were having breakfast in a food court at Causeway Point after their 24-hour shift when they saw excessive smoke emitting from one of the stalls.

They went to the kitchen to take a look and were alerted by the staff that a stove had caught fire. The Regular officer and 7 National Servicemen immediately sprang into action as their lifesaving instincts took over. 2 of them evacuated the staff from the kitchen while the rest evacuated other members of public to safety.

They extinguished the fire with a hose reel and fire extinguisher. Due to their quick thinking, the damage was confined to the kitchen stove and no one was injured.

Gentlemen, you have done us proud!  
#ANationofLifesavers #everydayheroes

They both drew on the skills and confidence gained from their training and operational work to help out in this incident. When asked how he felt about the incident, George said: “Anyone would have done the same and I am glad to have been able to contribute in a meaningful way during my NS.” Keng Yew said it feels good to know that they made a difference.

### Citizen firefighters

In another incident that occurred in January 2016, eight off-duty SCDF firefighters – one regular officer and seven NSFs – dropped their breakfast meals at a Woodlands mall to put out a fire. They were at a food court, taking a break after a 24-hour shift at Bukit Batok Fire Station. Seeing smoke coming out from one of the stalls, they sprang into action. “Their life saving instincts took over,” the SCDF said in a subsequent Facebook post.

A stove at a stall had caught fire at the food court on level 7 at about 10.30am. Not only did the off-duty firefighters help to evacuate shoppers and staff to safety, they also helped extinguish the fire before the arrival of their fellow SCDF emergency responders. Damage was confined to the kitchen stove and no one was injured.

Another everyday hero is SSGT (NS) Naqib Nizar, 27, who served as a Section Commander at Yishun Fire Station during his full-time NS days. On his way home from dinner one night in Yishun in September 2015, he heard a commotion at the car park. When Naqib saw flames and smoke coming out of the bonnet of a car, he instinctively grabbed a fire extinguisher and rushed to douse the flames. He also ran to a nearby hose reel and put out the remaining embers before the arrival of the SCDF. For his quick action, Naqib received the SCDF Public Spiritedness Award in 2015.

# HOW TO MOTIVATE NS OFFICERS

## MR CHARLES NG

Mr Charles Ng, former DAC (NS), believes that the key to engaging his men is to make their work more meaningful and to tap their ideas.



*Mr Charles Ng addressing PNSmen at one of the deployments for Presidential Election 2011.*

**THE HT PLACES EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPING ITS NS OFFICERS. THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE UNUSUAL JOB OF MR CHARLES NG KOK WEE, 53. SERVING UNDER THE VOLUNTARY EXTENSION OF SERVICE SCHEME BEYOND AGE 50, HE IS A COMMANDER MENTOR TO THE KEY APPOINTMENT HOLDERS IN HIS DIVISION. IN ADDITION TO COMMANDERS, KEY APPOINTMENT HOLDERS INCLUDE THE HEAD OF OPERATIONS AND OFFICERS OVERSEEING AREAS SUCH AS MANPOWER AND LOGISTICS.**

The former NS Commander of Ang Mo Kio Division believes that the last thing that the busy PNSmen of today want is to feel that their time has been wasted. Hence, the key to motivating them is to maximise their contribution. “NS officers want to be challenged,” he says. “So, we make sure that their duties and responsibilities are meaningful.”

This calls for better planning, and planning is second nature to Charles, who works as a Chief Financial Officer for a lifestyle group. This came to the fore in the 2011 General and Presidential Elections, when the men in his unit had to be recalled twice within a few months. For the Presidential Election, some 480 men were recalled. They

were deployed in two shifts to cover the whole day at the polling centres. The first man reported at 3am and the last man stood down only at 5am the next morning, after a recount.

Charles had already identified which men would be recalled. “I know who I can push the button a little bit more.” He gathered his key officers and support staff, and they did not mind meeting after office hours to do the planning for these two recalls. With more precisely-planned work assignments and schedules, the men were happier because they knew exactly what they had to do, and could also plan their own family time better.

Charles, who enlisted in 1982, recalls that the landscape in the early days was very different, operating from Paya Lebar Police Station, that was run-down with no air-conditioning. His missions included rounding up hell-riders racing at night at Lenton Avenue and finding that some of them were runaways from home. Such open spaces are now a thing of the past in a more densely populated Singapore.

Kampong fires in areas such as Sembawang were a major problem in the 1980s. Crowd control operations covered the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, Chingay processions and Thaipusam. Such shared ground experiences have given him and his fellow officers “incredible bonds”, which are still fostered regularly at get-togethers at their old haunt at a roti prata place in Thomson.



*The old Paya Lebar Police Station.*

NS officers want to be challenged. So, we make sure that their duties and responsibilities are meaningful.

– Mr Charles Ng

As a commander himself, Charles believes that for PNSmen there is a need for continuity in leadership, which is where he focussed his energies for his unit. A key aspect of this is spotting and grooming talent. What he looked for in those with potential for higher appointments included aspects such as an officer's attitude towards NS, as well as his trustworthiness and whether he was a team player.

As for leading the men, sustaining camaraderie was crucial. Today, he contributes to this aspect at the national level, as a member of the ACCORD, which includes Ministry of Defence officials, grassroots organisations and women's groups.

There is already a lot of support from the community for NS, but in this NS50 year, the focus is on how to take this to the next level. Recognising the contributions of NS officers comes in small and big ways. In May 2017, one initiative involved young people such as National Police Cadet Corps personnel giving out sunflowers to national servicemen at MRT stations together with notes of appreciation. A larger event was organised with the non-profit group Dads for Life and held as part of an Army open house for NS50 – an overnight camp in tents at the F1 Pit Building area for national servicemen and their children.

Charles also serves on the HomeTeamNS Board of Governors, where he was involved in putting up a case to the government for more investment in HomeTeamNS clubhouses, to add even more recognition for the service of NS officers.

Charles reckons that the better-educated NS officers of today can offer good suggestions and some can

really think out of the box. Once, a suggestion from a Corporal to have a personal pass during in-camp training for NS officers rather than a faceless visitor pass was implemented. This came to save time for in-processing administration, boosted morale and gave the men a sense of belonging and pride. "This type of suggestion would never have come from older NS officers."

By appreciating NS officers more in what they have to do and involving them in deciding how best to do it, the men would take ownership of what they have to do, he says. This works best if decisions are not made in a top-down way. "You listen to them, take their suggestions and package them so it becomes a decision taken together."

*Charles keeping watch at the Command Post during General Election 2011.*





### Saving lives with technology

Since the launch of the myResponder mobile application in April 2015, SCDF NS officers, alongside others who have been trained in life saving skills, now have a new outlet to reach out to those in distress. The mobile application, jointly developed by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA, now called Govtech) and in collaboration with SCDF, allows users to report incidents of cardiac arrest and locate nearby AEDs. It also enables members of the public in the vicinity who are trained in CPR and AED procedures to respond quickly upon receiving the alerts.

On 21 March 2017, Lance-Corporal (LCP) (NS) Khairul Iman who served his full-time NS with SCDF as an EMT, responded to a myResponder mobile application alert on a cardiac arrest case two blocks away from his house. He rushed to the scene and reached the incident site within two minutes.

Upon arrival, Khairul assessed the victim and went on to conduct CPR on him until the arrival of an SCDF firebiker. LCP (NS) Khairul's quick thinking helped the patient regain his pulse even before he was conveyed to the hospital. The patient survived the ordeal and was eventually discharged a month later.

### Citizens on patrol

In the case of Mr Charles Ng, former DAC (NS), being of service on an everyday basis is something that he consciously sets out to do. He was involved in an initiative called Police Reservists on Watch Lookout, which trains police officers to look out for loan sharks operating in residential estates. But in Charles' daily life, he continues to practise this focus. "When I go for my brisk walks



The myResponder mobile application highlights the nearby AEDs that may be available to responders.

### EVERY OFFICER CONTRIBUTES



"That SCDF has become an effective and well-respected Life Saving Force. This is a testament to the contribution of each and every one of these officers down through the years, since the very first Rescue Battalion was formed in 1986."

– Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Chairman, Home Team Volunteer Network; Former Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Law

around my estate in the evening, my son and my neighbours always say: 'Oh, the policeman is on patrol' because they know that I always make an effort to keep a lookout," he said. "There was once when I called the police to report a case of a maid being abused by another foreign worker. My NS experience has already been ingrained in me and that is why I will always try to contribute whenever there is an opportunity."

Charles hopes that PNSmen will continue doing their part to ensure the safety and security of the community by being citizens on patrol. "NS is an invisible force within the community that will make our security even tighter."

Alertness, keen observation and a sense of responsibility even while off-duty are qualities exemplified by officers like SC/SGT Ahmad Safudin Muhd Nor. One night in 2016, he was on his way home after buying supper when he spotted the two boys behaving suspiciously at the void deck of Yishun Block 306.

Observing them covertly from the void deck of a block opposite, he saw another boy join them. He called for the police and continued to monitor them. When the trio took the lift up, he moved quickly to see which floor they were going to. When the GRF officers arrived, he assisted to secure the staircase landing at the ground floor. The trio were detained and admitted to their intention to steal bicycle tyres.

In another incident, on 7 June 2017, the Deputy Team Leader of DSTF 6, Senior Staff Sergeant (NS) Lim Weihong, and CPL (NS) Nigel Tan were conducting foot patrol in VivoCity as part of mall patrol anti-crime operations. At around 7.30pm, they were alerted by a shop assistant about a suspected case of theft. The two PNSmen

**THE MANY ROLES NATIONAL SERVICEMEN PLAY**



“To his family, the national serviceman is a son, a brother and, for many, a husband and a father. The challenges and responsibilities that come with managing all these roles are what national servicemen have to shoulder when serving NS to safeguard Singapore.”

– DAC (NS) Mohammed Azhar Bin Yusof, Parade Commander, HTSF 2017

accompanied the complainant to view closed-circuit TV recordings, and confirmed the physical description of the suspect, who was last seen heading to VivoCity Sky Park.

Weihong and Nigel proceeded quickly to Sky Park, after directing other members of the mall’s security team to comb the rest of the mall and cover possible exit routes. When spotted, the suspect attempted to run, but the two PNSmen gave chase, arrested him and recovered the stolen merchandise. The suspect was also screened and discovered to be wanted for earlier cases of theft and mischief.

**“FUTURE-READY” EVERYDAY GUARDIANS**

One abiding aspect of the HT’s work is that it is all too real – and this is one of the few things that will not change in future.

For regulars and PNS officers, their line of duty includes the very real risk of being hurt when discharging their duties. PNS has constantly been evolving to meet Singapore’s security needs, from the early days of part-time NS to the present day. Today, PNS officers take on a multitude of roles, ranging from expanded duties such as protecting vital installations to closer engagement with the community to preserve peace. For ordinary citizens, wherever they are – whether travelling home after a long day’s work, enjoying a night out on the town, or even having a quiet evening at home – they can trust PNS officers to keep them safe.

The dangers that NS officers encounter are ever-present. For example, in 1992, then 19-year-old PNSF Mohammed Azhar Yusof, now DAC (NS), responded to a robbery case at a Chinatown goldsmith shop when he was serving at the SPF’s Central Division. There were two gunmen armed



Left: SCDF NSF firefighters mitigating an oil tank fire at 23 Tembusu Road in April 2016.



Right: About 200 SCDF emergency responders, including NSF and ORNS firefighters, as well as EMTs, were deployed to the major fire at 23 Tuas View Circuit on 23 February 2017.

with semi-automatic pistols and grenades. One died after being shot by an auxiliary police officer. The incident left an indelible impression on him: “I realised the important work that HT officers do. We cannot afford to make a mistake on the frontline because lives are at stake.”

Like Azhar, INSP (NS) Muhammad Azhar, was nearly slashed by a suspicious man when he and his partner were patrolling the Arab Street area in 2015. The man, who was involved in a fight and appeared to be intoxicated, turned hostile when asked for his particulars.

“He started pushing us,” INSP Azhar said. “He taunted us, saying, ‘What are you going to do? I can push you but you cannot push me.’ Despite us asking him to step back, he refused to listen and continued his aggression towards us.”

INPS Azhar and his partner restrained the man and placed him under arrest. “We searched him and found a broken glass bottle hidden in his back pocket. Thankfully, he didn’t have the chance to take it out and use it to cause harm.”

As for the SCDF, one of the numerous examples of NS officers putting themselves at risk in the line of duty is the fire at 23 Tembusu Road that happened on 20 April 2016, when 150 SCDF officers including NSF firefighters were deployed to battle a raging inferno. SCDF ORNSmen serving ICT are also deployed for firefighting and rescue operations, such as the fire at 23 Tuas View Circuit on 23 February 2017.

**DEPLOYING WITH PURPOSE AND MEANING**



“What motivates all PNSmen is meaningful and purposeful deployment for a safe and secure Singapore.”

– DAC (NS) Lim Kok Hwa, NS Commander Clementi Division

## FROM FATHER TO SON

**COL (NS) SYED ABDUL MALIK  
SC/SGT (NS) SYED ISA  
ALJUNIED**

Family conversations and shared experiences enable COL (NS) Syed Abdul Malik to pass on HT values to his son, SC/SGT (NS) Syed Isa Aljunied.



ONE OF THE KEY ASPECTS OF NS, ESPECIALLY AFTER 50 YEARS, IS THE PASSING OF THE TORCH FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT. FOR SCDF COL (NS) SYED ABDUL MALIK ALJUNIED AND HIS SON SPF SC/SERGEANT (NS) SYED ISA ALJUNIED, THIS IS ALSO A FAMILY AFFAIR – LITERALLY.

Malik, 49, is Deputy Division Commander of 2nd Division, leading 2,500 NS officers in four battalions. He has served 31 years, including BMT in the army and his full-time NS in the police force as a staff officer in Bedok Division and Traffic Police. During his ORNS cycle, he was part of the build-up of SCDF forces in the wake of the Hotel New World collapse of 1986. This major incident had heightened awareness of the need for more civil defence capabilities. His experience has even included leading a Construction Battalion equipped with skills such as masonry, carpentry and basic engineering to assist in the recovery and rebuilding of disaster sites.

Through all that time, he says, “last year was the most meaningful time for me as I was serving NS together with my two sons”. His older son, Ilyas, 22, has completed

his full-time NS in the SCDF’s Marine Command while his other son, Isa, 20, serves as a trainer at the SPF’s Training Command.

His time with the Operation Lionheart mission in Pakistan in 2005 is the most powerful experience he has shared with his sons when they were as young as 10 and eight. The contingent of 55, including officers from the elite SCDF DART team, helped save lives in the aftermath of an earthquake. He showed his sons how parents in Pakistan dug through rubble looking for their children, some losing their own limbs out of love. “This is what your mother would do for you,” he told them.

His anecdotes of courage and commitment were also accompanied by action photos including those taken from search helicopters. He recalls: “My sons were excited. They said: ‘Hey, it’s like in the movies, man, show us more!’” Isa was so inspired that he shared some of these stories, photos and articles from the SCDF’s *Rescue 995* magazine at a show-and-tell session in his Primary Five class to show his classmates what civil defence officers like his father get to do. “I saw the line of work that my Dad was in and thought it was pretty interesting – being able to try out rescue and putting out fires.” His father helped him prepare this presentation: “He was highlighting to me why we need firefighters who are selfless, who would put their lives on the line.”

Isa was also inspired by other memories such as viewing SCDF exhibitions that his father took him to, such as outdoor road shows including displays of vehicles like ambulances and Red Rhinos, skits simulating the rescue of civilians trapped under rubble, and firefighting demonstrations involving a “fire wok” used for SCDF

The most meaningful time to me (in 31 years of service) is that last year I was serving in NS together with my two sons.

– COL (NS) Syed Abdul Malik Aljunied



Ilyas (left), eldest son of Malik (right), served his full-time NS with the SCDF Marine Command.





training. Students were allowed to put out the fire using fire extinguishers. In secondary school, he went on to join the National Civil Defence Cadet Corps, being so dedicated that he rose to the rank of Warrant Officer. “He has more medals than me,” his father would tease him.

Top-of-mind for Isa is the SCDF experience of sliding down the fireman’s pole in the fire station upon activation. He recalls his father, then a battalion commander, showing him this pole on a visit to 2nd Division. “There is a technique to wrap your legs and slow your speed down. It’s something I would definitely want to try!”

The fatherly influence of Malik is conveyed through conversations at dinner about current affairs, or while out bowling or watching movies. A key theme is how NS officers are always at the forefront to protect the nation. “The most important thing is passing on the will to serve. I am glad to see that my sense of purpose has been transferred to them.”

Top: Malik (left) and Isa (right), his youngest son, who is serving his NS in SPF.

Opposite top: Malik (left) and a fellow ORNSman at the Operation Lionheart mission in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan, in 2005.

Opposite bottom: Malik (third from right) with some of the Operation Lionheart contingent members at Muzaffarabad, Pakistan.

This will to serve has indeed been “transferred”, judging from listening to Syed Isa (who is himself considering signing on) talk about his work as an instructor of trainees who have signed on to SPF: “My aim is to make sure that these future police officers can take the pressure if a crisis happens. If you don’t set off on the right foot, you’re not going to be as *kilat* (outstanding) as you should be.”

To truly bring home what is at stake, a highlight moment during the three months’ basic training is when trainees fire, for the very first time in their lives, the first live bullet during revolver firing practice at the 9-metre range. Some are left shaken and trembling. Syed Isa recalls one female trainee who almost broke down after firing this first shot, and had to be coached to come to terms with it. “If something like that happens in training, we have to make sure it will transform into something that will not happen in real life.”



### LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCED HANDS



“We were enlisted as strangers, from different races and background, but in just a matter of a few months, we bonded well and built strong camaraderie, just like a family. I also feel privileged to be able to serve alongside career SCDF emergency responders, some with decades of life saving experiences. Not only did they guide and sharpen my life saving skills, they also shared with me the major incidents that they had attended to.”

– CPL (NS) Syed Ilyyas, who served his full-time NS at Brani Marine Fire Station

*SCDF NSF emergency responders conveying a casualty in the aftermath of the highway collapse at Upper Changi Road East on 14 July 2017.*

COL (NS) Syed Abdul Malik Aljunied, Deputy Division Commander of 2nd SCDF Division Headquarters, points out that in the day-to-day fire, rescue or medical emergencies, SCDF officers and NS officers brave themselves for the unexpected and, at times, take calculated risks to battle dangers in saving lives and property. “It’s a real function that makes a difference in keeping the peace,” he added. “These officers, some of whom are as young as 18 years old, are our heroes, our everyday guardians”.

Looking to the future, how will these everyday guardians become better prepared to tackle the challenges of keeping Singapore safe and secure? To borrow a catchphrase from Singapore’s recent economic development strategies, the NS officers of the HT in years to come will also have to become more “future-ready”.

As the tentacles of crime reach further into cyberspace, and the homes and workplaces of a Smart Nation become smarter, it will become more challenging to deal with cyber-criminals. Combating crime must therefore become more resourceful. As citizens become more diverse in background and expectations, new approaches will be needed to engage, and involve, more people as community first responders in the collective effort of protecting the



*Left and right: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles will augment police operations and incident management capabilities.*

whole country. Citizens will be more empowered with technology such as new functions in their smartphones, and can do more to support the HT to tackle threats including terrorism and cybercrime.

New technology will help HT officers of the future to train better, sense better and respond better. Simulation will enhance training in all aspects, from more accurate marksmanship to more effective fire mitigation. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles will augment police operations and incident management capabilities, and help their SCDF brothers to track the spread of a fire. The new Traffic Priority System will turn traffic lights in favour of ambulances and other emergency vehicles to enable them to get to their destinations even faster. The potential in technologies such as virtual reality, robotics and data analytics will be explored and exploited further.

In the years ahead, NS officers will have to juggle many roles. Above all, duty might call on any NS officer at any time, 24/7, even out of uniform – to have to draw on all the knowledge, skills and instincts gained from NS, to meet unconventional, totally unpredictable threats such as those posed by self-radicalised fellow civilians. This might prove to be the most dangerous challenge of all. How NS officers respond will be one of their most vital contributions.

**NOT TOO YOUNG TO BE A LIFE SAVER**



“NS made me realise that I am capable of saving lives and helping those in need, no matter how young I am.”

– SGT (NS) Ian Lok, who served his full-time NS as an EMT at the Central Fire Station

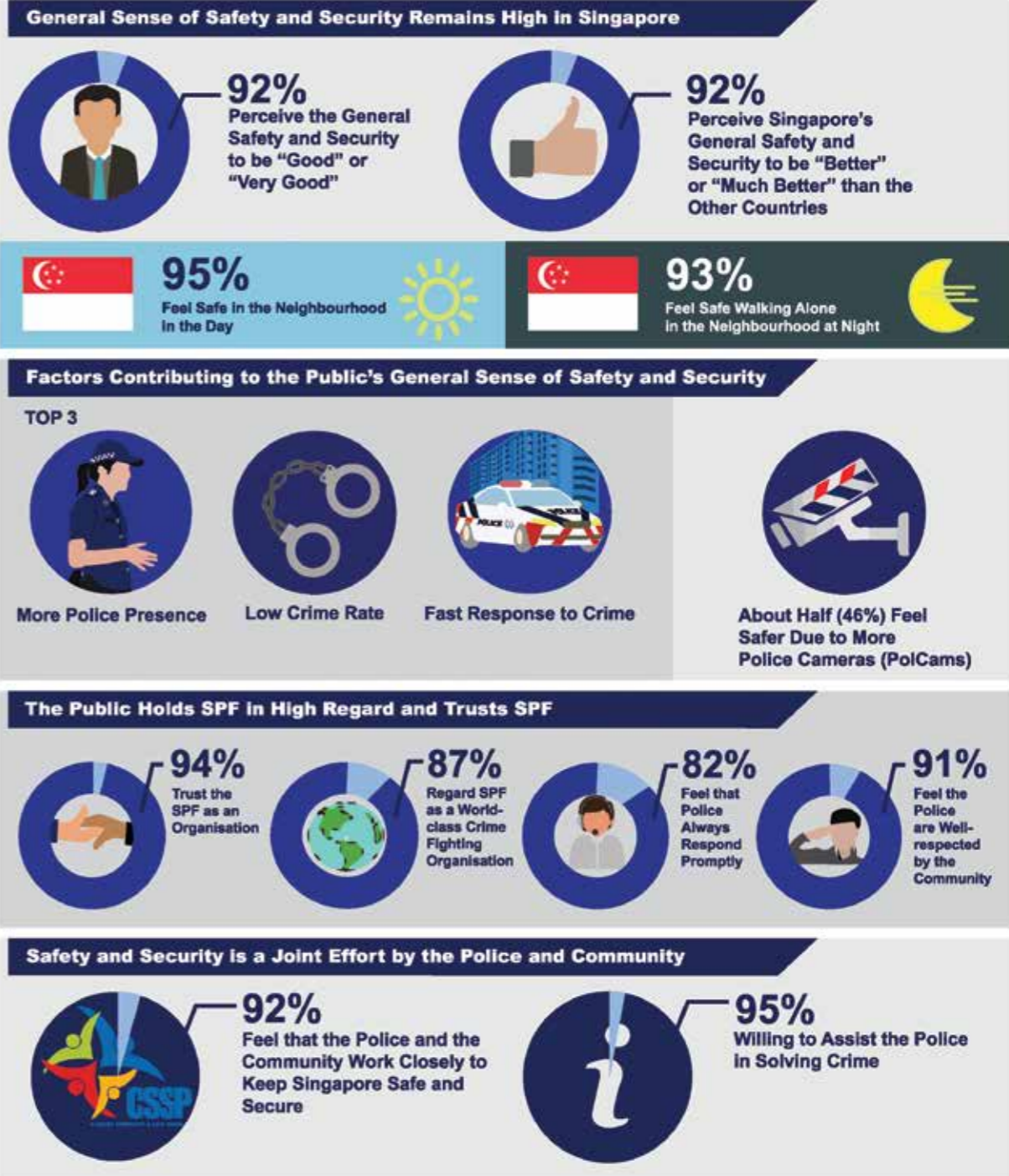
**READY TO RISE TO FUTURE CHALLENGES**

All this while, the whole framework and system within which NS operates is being reviewed and improved on. The PNS Master Plan, approved by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean in October 2014, emerged from a study by the Police National Service Department, after engagement with relevant stakeholders. It aims to enhance PNS officers’ operational effectiveness especially in deployment and in connection with the public, and to create even more meaningful NS experiences. For the SCDF, how NS officers can best contribute to the larger cause is being seamlessly integrated and enhanced under the 2025 vision of fostering “A Nation of Lifesavers”. Coordinated implementation over the next few years will seek to achieve these strategic objectives.

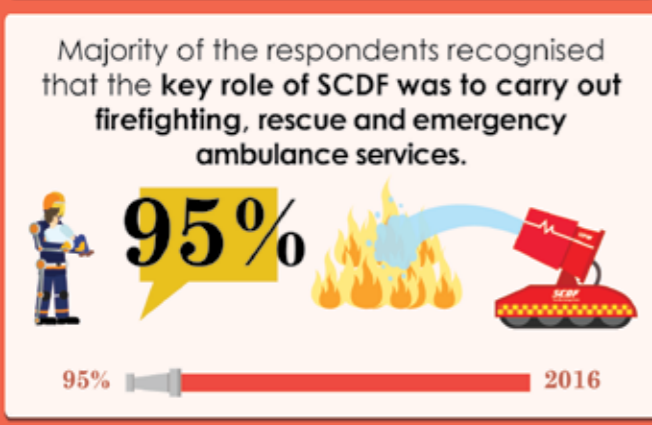
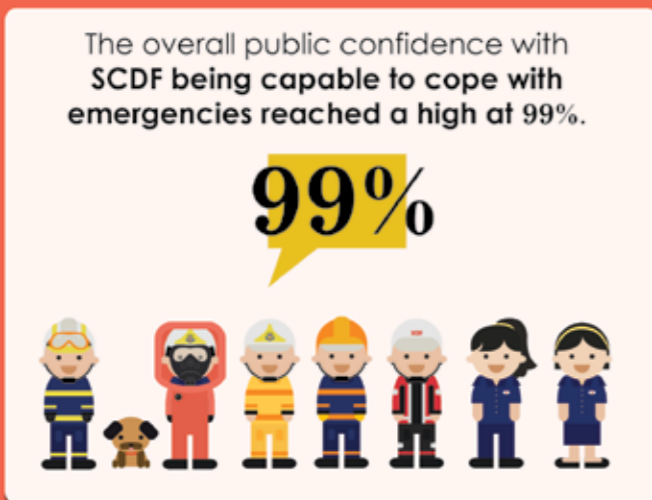
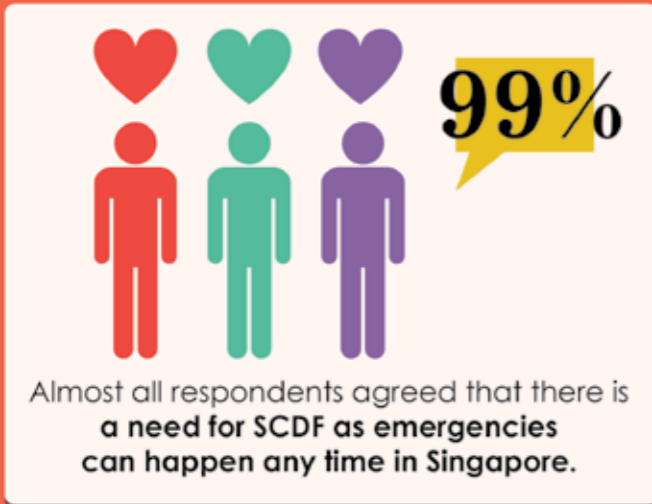
SCDF will embrace change, just as much as their SPF brothers. From humble beginnings as “hydrant men”, NS officers in the SCDF have come a long way. Today, NS officers play critical roles working hand-in-hand with SCDF regular officers and actively engage with the community to promote self-help in times of emergency. In Singapore’s early days, there was little concept of civil defence. This aspect has been painstakingly built up over the past five decades for the safety and security of Singapore. Thanks to the critical contributions of SCDF officers, including NS officers past and present, in promoting Community Emergency Preparedness, Civil Defence now stands proudly as one of Singapore’s five pillars of Total Defence.

The HT is well-placed to do even better going into the future, complemented by the key contributions of NS officers. In a 2016 public perception survey, involving 4,800 Singaporeans and permanent residents, the SPF was regarded as a “world-class crime-fighting organisation” by 87 per cent of respondents. Further, the survey showed

**SPF PUBLIC PERCEPTION SURVEY 2016**



that more than 90 per cent of the respondents are confident of the SPF’s abilities to keep Singapore safe and secure. It is also heartening to know that the SPF enjoyed a high level of trust and that its community engagement efforts have paid off, with 95 per cent of the respondents willing to work with the police to solve crime.



A key factor for these high scores is the “immense dedication and commitment of our HT officers”, said Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs, in Parliament, giving credit to the heightened police presence and quick arrest of criminals. “All of this reflects the extraordinary level of faith and trust Singaporeans have in the police

## GAINING VALUABLE EXPERIENCE



“As a PNSF, I attended to many challenging cases. They have provided me with valuable experiences throughout my NS journey. By donning the blue, we take pride in overcoming daily challenges that are put forth to us.”

– SC/SGT Tarandeep Singh s/o Gurcharan Singh, posted to Rochor NPC during his NS

force... Many law enforcement agencies around the world envy this.”

A similar survey for SCDF in 2016 also scored very well, showing recognition for the contributions of NS officers working shoulder-to-shoulder with their regular fellow officers. Overall public confidence in SCDF being capable of coping with emergencies reached 99 per cent, while 95 per cent of respondents recognised SCDF’s key roles of carrying out firefighting, rescue and emergency ambulance services. Overall satisfaction with SCDF services was at 96 per cent.

In many ways, even more will be demanded from NS officers of the future. Whether it is to fight crime or save lives, more scenarios will call for sensitivity, judgement and flexibility. The people around NS officers – their family members and loved ones (“the other home team”), bosses, colleagues, neighbours – will also have to play their part to support the men in blue.

All the enhancements of gadgetry and equipment, management and skills, will have to be applied with an even deeper sense of mission and a warmer human touch. What will keep NS officers going are the HT core values that will be inherited by each generation of NS officers from the ones before. What will hold throughout are the same basic responsibilities since 1967 – duty to the country, devotion to the community, and, when called upon, daring to go the extra mile to keep Singapore safe and secure. This the NS officers in blue will surely do, alongside their regular fellow officers – as they have always done, throughout the 50-year history of Home Team National Service.



Photo courtesy of MHA.

**SINCE 1967, NATIONAL SERVICE (NS) OFFICERS OF THE SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE AND SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE HAVE MORE THAN STEPPED UP TO THE CALL TO SERVE ALONGSIDE REGULAR OFFICERS – ON THE GROUND AND IN SENIOR APPOINTMENTS AT ALL LEVELS. THIS BOOK, *EVERYDAY GUARDIANS*, CAPTURES A BRIEF HISTORY AND THE KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF NS IN THE FIVE DECADES SINCE.**

Duty to the country is being performed ever more effectively in the Home Team. NS officers are equipped with more effective hardware, from Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to body-worn cameras, and more sophisticated skillsets in emergency medical service. But what qualifies them best is their deep sense of responsibility and dedication to keep Singapore safe and secure.

Devotion to family and community remain primary motivations. These men in blue remain warmly-supported by “the other home team” of family and loved ones, as well as bosses and colleagues, neighbours and fellow citizens. It takes a village to make an NS officer, and in return, these citizen guardians give their all back – not only at home, but also in overseas missions far away, representing their country and serving humanity.

Daring is evident in all that these NS officers do, wherever the need arises. Whether in a major disaster or neighbourhood incident, the courage is unquestioned, and the commitment untiring – to combat crime, preserve order and save lives.

It has been 50 years, but Singaporeans know they can rely on their NS officers even for 50 more, as the core values of the Home Team are passed on from one generation to the next. From these guardians drawn from amongst the community, help is always at hand, even when off-duty and in civilian life. Here are the stories of these everyday heroes.

