

Leading

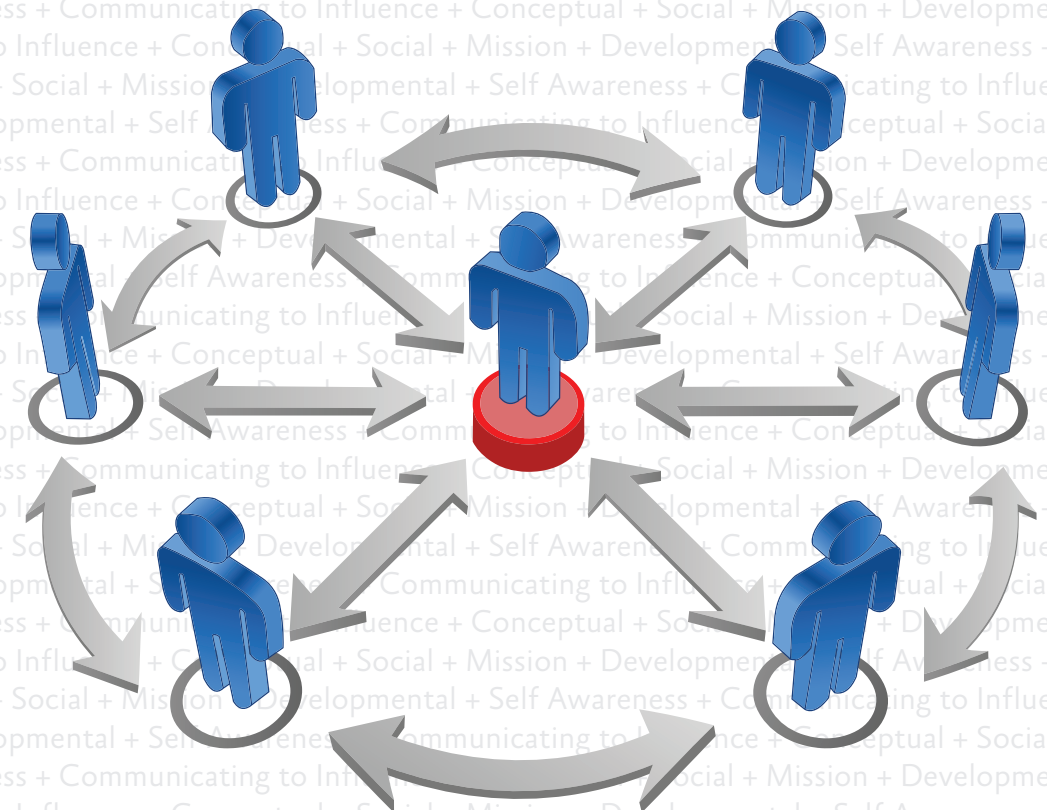
IN THE THIRD GENERATION SAF

The Third Generation SAF comprises soldiers, sailors and airmen from diverse backgrounds working together to achieve mission success across an expanded spectrum of operations. How should we lead in the Third Generation SAF? This monograph contains the reflections of the Chief of Defence Force and the Service Chiefs on this topic. They provide suggestions, insights and points of emphasis. Most of all, they provide role models for improving our own leadership—drawing wisdom from those who practice the art of leadership and applying insight from the science of leadership, harnessing the lessons learnt by those who have come before us, and distilling purpose from our own leadership journeys. May we be inspired to lead well.



Leading

IN THE THIRD GENERATION SAF



POINTER Monograph No. 9
A Reader for Leadership Development

Leading

in the Third Generation SAF



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FOREWORD

We live in an age of uncertainty. The 2008 economic crisis has heightened global awareness of challenges and vulnerabilities in the American economy. Apart from the debt crisis in the European Union, there is also the risk of failed states in other parts of the world and conflict breaking out in the Middle East. In short, while conventional threats remain relevant, the new world we live in is also increasingly volatile.

The internal environment is also changing rapidly. Information communication technologies and the prevalence of the internet have made the world “flatter.” A smaller and more interconnected world allows faster mobilisation of force and greater coordination of effort. The pervasive media environment and greater public scrutiny have influenced the conduct of military operations. We now have to increasingly engage in operations other than war, but more importantly, also have to be able to explain and communicate our actions better.

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) has responded to these tectonic shifts by transforming into the Third Generation SAF. In doing so, we have moved from being “joint” to being truly “networked.” Our vision is to be a networked force and a networked organisation with a network culture. As we navigate the changes and uncertainties that lie ahead, we will have to reference and rely on our core values, one of which is leadership.

Leaders, now more than ever, have an important part to play. Taking note of the changing environment, our leaders must be anchored to the fundamentals while being flexible enough to remain relevant. In this regard, my fellow Service Chiefs and I have penned down our thoughts and exhortations in this monograph. These form a practical perspective of lessons and reflections on leadership that we have gained over the years. To be read in conjunction with the previous monograph *Called to Lead*, which documented the reflections of our past leaders, these lessons will collectively offer some insight into leading the Third Generation SAF well in the future.

Having ascertained our calling, we must turn to the real business of leading well. It is impossible to lead well in the face of an evolving context if we are unprepared or unwilling to adapt. We must continually update our leadership competencies and styles but remain true to our values.

I trust that this monograph will inspire you to lead the way towards our Third Generation SAF.

LG Neo Kian Hong
Chief of Defence Force
Singapore Armed Forces



BACKGROUND AND ORGANISATION

This monograph captures the reflections of Chief of Defence Force (CDF) and each Service Chief. These reflections incorporate very sound guidelines for leaders in the Third Generation SAF.

In the process of crystallising their reflections, memory aids such as mnemonics and communication aids such as taglines and stories have been used by the authors to help them organise their thoughts. These aids must not be viewed as a “cheat-sheet” to leadership. They also should not be taken as a “command” to enact leadership exactly as spelt out. Rather, they represent the organised thinking of leaders who have reflected deeply on their own leadership. These aids do not mean that the larger SAF Leadership Framework has been superseded. In fact, their reflections reinforce the continued usefulness of the SAF Leadership Framework for discussing leadership.

THE SAF LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK AS AN ORGANISING FRAME FOR THIS MONOGRAPH

The SAF Leadership Framework depicts a triangle encompassed by a circle. The triangle depicts four ways in which leadership attributes desired in the SAF are organised: the meta-competencies of the self, styles, competencies and values. The circle describes how leadership is meaningful to the SAF. Leadership by SAF leaders is meaningful to the extent that they take the context, the mission and desired outcomes of the SAF into account. Together, both the circle and the triangle form the building blocks or language for describing the leadership to be manifested in SAF leaders.

Each component in the SAF Leadership Framework has been further elaborated in various SAF publications and developmental tools. For example, the *SAF Core Values Handbook* clarifies the foundational values expected of every soldier, sailor and airman in the SAF. The Leadership Competency Model (LCM) unpacks the Competency component of the SAF Leadership Framework into four

competencies (conceptual, social, mission, developmental) and one meta-competency (self). Each of these competencies is further described in terms of specific skills for a total of 14 skills required to lead the SAF. These skills are further operationalised as feedback for leadership development through the Multi-Source Leadership Feedback System (MSLF).

The styles dimension of the SAF Leadership Framework was the first to be tackled by the SAF Centre for Leadership Development (CLD) when the SAF Leadership Framework was proposed in 2004. However, it quickly became clear that although one’s leadership style was the most visible element, it is dangerous to have leaders adjust their leadership style without first attending to other more foundational parts of the SAF Leadership Framework.

To ensure that a leader’s behaviours are authentic, he must internalise his identity and values as a leader, grow his leadership legitimacy by developing his leadership competen-



cies, and nurture his self-awareness and capacity for further development. When these are achieved, a leader will be able to appropriately calibrate his leadership style to the unique needs of the organisation. More importantly, when he adapts to the fluid demands of the missions that the SAF is involved in, he will not be perceived as a leadership chameleon. Hence, to attend to one's leadership style without investing in other aspects of leadership is folly.

Having elaborated on the triangle, let us proceed to the circle portion of the framework. Firstly, the foundational element of the circle addresses the mission and purpose of the SAF. It is closely connected to the values portion of the triangle. This signifies that SAF leaders must clarify the mission and purpose of the SAF, and align their own values to the SAF Core Values. This alignment of personal and organisational values is at the heart of what it means

to be professional, and to be professionals, in the military.

The right side of the framework describes the outcomes demanded of leaders in the SAF. It is the *raison d'être* for being leaders in the SAF. The SAF leader ultimately leads to ensure the safety of the nation. In addition, he must maintain a healthy support for National Service, ensure high levels of engagement are demonstrated by all soldiers, sailors and airmen, and remain relevant and responsive to the evolving demands of national security.

Too often, when these outcomes are cascaded down to unit and work year objectives, the focus shifts primarily to work accomplishment—ensuring that local objectives are met. The SAF leader must realise that what one does as a leader has a DIRECT and VISIBLE impact on the high level outcomes that transcend these

local goals. These leader actions directly affect SAF and national level outcomes which unit and work year objectives are subservient to.

This leaves us with the left hand side which is the focus of this monograph—the context and environment in which we operate in and how it affects the way we lead in the SAF.

All in all, the SAF Leadership Framework remains an appropriate approach to describing the leadership necessary in the SAF. It incorporates attributes needed at the individual level and takes into account factors of the operating environment, the national culture and impera-

tives, and the desired outcomes at all levels of analysis. By explicitly including these attributes and factors at the individual, organisational and national level, the SAF Leadership Framework is what some academics would describe as a “meso-level” framework.

The SAF Leadership Framework remains relevant as an organising frame for discussing leadership. This monograph utilises the framework to explore how leaders can lead well, drawing on its components to varying degrees to provide insights on leadership for different levels and contexts.

FROM LEADING WELL TO DEVELOPING ONE’S LEADERSHIP

At the end of each article are reflection questions for you, the reader, to ponder. These questions reinforce the points made by each of the Service Chiefs. You are strongly encouraged to attempt these reflection questions both individually and collectively with team members. As you attempt these reflection questions, you will find yourself practising some essential habits of leadership development (LD)—reflection, seeking and giving feedback, creating and learning from stories, education through reading widely and taking ownership of an individual development action plan. If you need more information about any of these LD practices, please do not hesitate to approach CLD.

May you build upon the insights from our CDF and Service Chiefs to further the quality of leadership in the SAF.





Reflections 1:

Leadership in the Third Generation SAF

by Chief of Defence Force LG Neo Kian Hong

CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

This monograph begins with an article by our CDF, LG Neo Kian Hong. He reflects candidly on his experiences in various high key appointments and operations to provide insights into the leadership implications of shifts in the SAF's operating environment. He paints a high level view of the global, regional and internal environmental changes, and the leadership competencies and styles that can handle the challenge of leading a Third Generation SAF.

CDF utilises the mnemonic FRINGE to help leaders remember the requisite leadership skill sets necessary for operating in situations that are increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. In such situations, there is a need to **F**Rame to make sense of the situation and create shared perspectives in order to move forward and address issues together. Next, there is a need to **I**ntegrate to ensure internal coherence within the organisation and configure the correct expertise for specific missions. Given the increasing complexity of operations today and in the future, there is a need to **N**etwork and collaborate with agencies beyond the SAF. He also reminds leaders that it is their responsibility to **G**room subordinates for the future so that tacit knowledge learnt from our various operations can be disseminated. Finally, he exhorts leaders to **E**ngage the hearts and minds of our soldiers, sailors and airmen. Engaging our people correctly is an increasingly important skill set to possess. CDF feels that these leadership skill sets will, in time, transit from fringe to mainstream culture in the Third Generation SAF.



Saving Lives in Afghanistan: 2WO Mazlan bin Mohd Khalid (from right) and MAJ (Dr) Koh Choong Hou transferring a casualty onto a waiting ambulance.

INTRODUCTION

The past decade has seen numerous surprises and complex change. Many were fundamentally shocked by the September 11 incident—a direct attack on a symbol of economic strength at the heart of the world’s only superpower. The increasing interconnectedness of world finances and economies, highlighted by the 2008 financial crisis, complicates the resolution of Europe’s underlying structural problems. A rising China and the incumbent United States (US) jostle for global influence, yet their economies are closely connected and interdependent. Concerns over energy security and climate change were intensified by the Japan nuclear reactor disaster, leading many to question the viability of nuclear power as an alternative energy source. Many observers have commented that the world has become more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

Facilitated by social media and fuelled by rising inequality, people are demanding greater avenues for participation and are more critical of their leaders. Few imagined that a Tunisian fruit seller, Short Message Service (SMS) and Facebook would together catalyse the Arab Spring and lead to regime change in Egypt and Libya. This release of pent-up feelings is not limited to autocratic regimes. Across the world, social media is empowering electorates. We are likely to experience even more geo-strategic dislocations in the future.

In this relentlessly evolving operating environment, the Third Generation Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) needs to be full spectrum, adaptive and resilient. A full spectrum SAF effectively fulfils its broadened set of

responsibilities. As an instrument of foreign policy, the First Generation SAF undertook basic defence, while the Second Generation SAF organised itself for forward defence. By deterring aggression, the SAF gave Singapore political breathing space. The Third Generation SAF is expected to serve Singapore’s national interests in addition to its defence. An adaptive SAF continuously transforms in order to stay relevant. It makes sense of ever-changing security threats and social expectations, adopting appropriate strategies to counter them. A resilient SAF has the strength—due to both overall system robustness and the tenacity of individual soldiers, sailors and airmen—to bounce back from failures, sustain prolonged operations and overcome adversity in complex and uncertain situations.

The SAF has long emphasised leadership, which it considers a core value. In 2004, the SAF 24-7 Leadership Framework and the SAF Leadership Competency Model were promulgated to guide leadership development in the SAF. Both framework and model remain relevant today.

Indeed, for the Third Generation SAF to be full-spectrum, adaptive and resilient; for it to thrive amidst contemporary challenges, leadership is and will continue to remain a key component. In particular, leaders must utilise a range of capabilities to Frame, Integrate, Network, Groom and Engage in order to deal with complex problems faced today. These are practical skill sets for operationalising the core leadership competencies of the SAF. We can use the word mnemonic “FRINGE” to help us remember these five priorities.

FRAME THE ISSUE

It is the job of leaders to make sense of situations and to provide a framework for guiding them forward. At Singapore's independence, our first Prime Minister (PM) Lee Kuan Yew shared his plan for the way ahead—first ensuring security, then making sure that every Singaporean has a living and stake in the nation.

Framing provides a common map for navigation. It aids communication, helps explain intent unambiguously, persuades people to move forward together and provides hope in dire situations.

Framing is even more important now that we live in rapidly changing times where the future is often uncertain. Former PM Lee also said that “Singapore cannot run on autopilot.” The same is true of any organisation, including the SAF. Every organisation is set up and optimised for a specific time and place. As the context changes, systems may have to be dismantled and rebuilt. There may be no previous plans or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for one to reference. To be adaptive, leaders may have to frame and re-frame complex problems regularly and rapidly.

In 2003, fear and panic gripped Singapore during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) pandemic. The SAF was asked to assist the Ministry of Health (MOH) when there was a threat of community outbreaks. At that stage, the problem was viewed as a *crisis of SARS* and administrators in MOH

had already established good procedures to deal with the disease in the hospitals. However, the consternation was paralysing the nation. When we framed the issue properly, we realised that we were facing a *crisis of fear* among the population, not just a crisis of SARS in the hospitals. Fear caused people to stay at home and brought the economy to a near standstill.

With this framework in hand, we organised the inter-ministry operations group to deal with SARS in the hospitals, limit and prevent community outbreaks, and manage public communications to reassure the public. This included disseminating relevant information with help from media and community leaders, and ministers going out in public to allay fears.

To enable every leader to frame situations well, the SAF needs the disciplines of a learning organisation.¹ First, we must be globally oriented. In an increasingly interconnected world, what happens somewhere else also affects us. Second, we must have action learning habits, rapidly assimilating lessons based on our past experiences and those of others.² Third, we must have the leadership competencies of creative and critical thinking, using systems thinking to understand correlations and interdependencies.

To enable every leader to frame situations well, the SAF needs the disciplines of a learning organisation.

1. LG Desmond Kuek, “Leadership for Our Times,” *Reflections on Leadership* (2009), *POINTER* Supplement, 5.
2. To further hardwire the elicitation of insights and knowledge transfer, the SAF Centre for Leadership Development has introduced the Action Learning Process (ALP) in all three Services since 2009. This includes the Before, During, and Post Activity Reviews conducted for every exercise and operation.

INTEGRATE AND COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS

In order for the SAF to conduct full-spectrum operations, our services must be tightly integrated and collaboration with both local and overseas partners improved. Integration will enable the full potential of the SAF to be applied to a variety of missions. Better collaboration will allow us to tap into the competencies of other agencies and armed forces to achieve our missions. This is increasingly important as some missions cannot be accomplished by one agency or even country alone.

A recent example of SAF-level integration is the Special Operations Task Force, where commandos, naval divers and the air components were wired together for counter terrorism operations. Since 2009, three SAF task groups—comprising Army, Navy and Air Force personnel—have been deployed aboard a Landing Ship Tank (LST) with embarked Super Puma helicopters to contribute to internation-

al counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden. Our people operate, live and play together on board the LST. They overcome differences in Service cultures and deepen mutual understanding, executing their responsibilities as one integrated and coherent task group.

Nationally, the Island Defence Task Force works closely with the Home Team and other government agencies on homeland security and civil contingencies. In the aftermath of the Asian Tsunami in December 2004, our Joint Task Force worked closely with forces from many countries to assist Indonesia. Other examples of collaboration include our contributions to the multinational stabilisation and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, and to regional maritime situational awareness through the Navy’s Information Fusion Centre in the Changi Command and Control centre, where the SAF operates as part of a wider coalition effort which transcends national boundaries.

The Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) integrates the Army’s Commandos, the Navy’s Naval Diving Unit and other SAF elite forces under one central command.





Personnel from the RSAF and Army orchestrating an integrated strike mission.

Besides collaboration in operations, we also collaborate in our daily work. Through our increasingly “matrixed” organisation, we tap deeper expertise, optimise our limited human resources and enable better systems thinking. In addition to improving internal synergy, functional hubs (e.g. human resource and logistics that are networked across all services) also collaborate with other organisations and service providers through exercises, integrated workforces and outsourcing.

Exploiting these synergies requires more than integration across physical domains (e.g. interoperable computers, communication

links and dual reporting structures). It also requires a shift in mindsets and the leadership competencies of communicating to influence and interpersonal effectiveness. Furthermore, we as leaders must foster a culture of integration and collaboration. Instead of instinctively protecting our narrow “turfs,” we must reach out across “silos.” While guarding against groupthink, we must provide opportunities for our people, through formal courses as well as informal interaction, to establish unity of purpose—by understanding higher-order objectives, appreciating the concerns of other agencies, and forging friendships across the SAF, nationally and internationally.³

3. SAF’s tri service courses currently include the Undergraduate Professional Military Education and Training programme, Tri Service Warfighters Course, Joint Foundation/Intermediate/Advanced/Senior Leadership Courses, and the Command and Staff Course. The Senior Commanders Programme involves participants from across the numerous government security agencies.

NETWORK AND CONNECT FOR SUCCESS

In his work on the evolution of societies, Donnelly said that societies first started as tribes.⁴ Over time, institutions were developed, followed by markets. We are now witnessing the era of networks. Networks are driven by common ideas and interests. A person with multiple interests and views may subscribe to numerous networks. Today, we live in a hyper-networked world where many people are constantly connected to social networking websites via their smart phones. Networks rapidly propagate news and opinions, as seen in our recent train breakdowns and elections. Furthermore, the flash mob phenomenon and the ongoing Arab Spring demonstrate that networks can also facilitate civil demonstrations and uprisings.

On the other hand, networks can also be exploited to gain ideas and seek opinions. Some companies find that they can gain insight into their customer base very quickly and thus serve their needs better. Draft policies can be tested before they are implemented. Many organisations are thus expanding into the social media space. In 2011, America's Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) solicited "innovative research proposals in the area of social media in strategic communication" to "allow more agile use of information in support of operations."⁵

Networks will allow the SAF to tap into concepts and ideas much faster. We can access knowledge, experience and competencies

across ranks and appointments, virtually without boundaries. Through our Learning Network (LEARNet) initiative, explicit knowledge created (e.g. through our Specialist Staff Headquarters system and the recently created SAF Centre of Operational Learning) can be made widely accessible. This will accelerate innovation.

Networks will allow us to hear our people much better and gain more from their contributions. Internally—through Intranet forum pages and web based surveys, Enterprise System for Innovation, Learning and Knowledge (e-Silk) document repositories, and Communicator on the Singapore Government Email System (SGEMS)—we can seek their opinions, co-create ideas and bring them along on our journey. Externally, our CyberPioneer, NDPeeps and ConnexionSG Facebook pages are initial forays at connecting the SAF, through social media, to a more participative citizenry. To remain relevant, we must be more responsive to both internal and external feedback.

Thrust into this new environment, we can choose to be swept along or we can take the challenge head on and ride this tide of change. We are currently exploring the further exploitation of Information Communication Technologies through the iForce project. To continue moving forward in a networked SAF, our leaders will have to become digital natives.

4. Peter Donnelly and Robert A. Foley, eds., *Genes, Fossils and Behaviour: An Integrated Approach to Human Evolution* (IOS Press, 2001).
5. "Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMISC)," DARPA BAA 11 64, 14 July 2011, https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=6ef12558b44258382452fcf02942396a&tab=core&_cview=0



Former SAF Sergeant Major SWO (Ret) Jeffrey Chung grooming the next generation of leaders.

GROOM THE FUTURE

With complexity increasing and the pace of change accelerating, we need to ensure that our next generation is able to perform in this stressful new environment.⁶

We continue to invest heavily in the education and training of our National Servicemen by strengthening existing courses and implementing new initiatives. Basic Military Training (BMT) has been redesigned significantly over the last couple of years to enhance the learning experience for new recruits. The newly established Military Domain Expert Course builds domain knowledge, leadership, and organisational management skills for the Military Domain Expert Scheme (MDES) Corps. The Undergraduate Professional Military Education and Training (UGPMET) Programme

is yet another example of the emphasis that the SAF places on training and educating its people adequately. Graduates of the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College (GKS CSC) continue on to a full time joint Singapore Armed Forces and Nanyang Technological University (SAF-NTU) Masters Programme.

Our strength lies in transferring tacit knowledge through grooming and development. Besides supporting our people with professional military knowledge and continuing education, it is the commander's responsibility to groom and develop the next generation. This is more important than ever before. The new generation of leaders will have to deal with more complex issues and therefore will need to mature faster than the previous generation. They will have less time to learn to frame,

6. Former Chief of Air Force MG Ng Chee Khern highlighted the importance of grooming in "Effective Leadership: Contextual and Invariant Dimensions," *POINTER* 33, no. 1 (2007): 11.

integrate, collaborate and network. Networking will ensure that even as they analyse and make decisions, they will have access to a wider range of experiences and knowledge, both explicit and tacit. The culture will be one where seniors make themselves available for consultation and juniors feel comfortable in seeking advice and comments from seniors or experts across the network.

Leadership development will not only be seen in the schoolhouses but also as a continuing practice in everyday life, be it in the units or headquarters, facilitated by practices such as storytelling, coaching, and tools such as the Individual Development Action Plan (IDAP) and the Multi-Source Leadership Feedback (MSLF).⁷ It will not only be carried out through the trainer-trainee or commander-subordinate relationships, but also through webs of networks, both locally and internationally. Officers, MDES and Warrant Officer Corps all benefit from these developmental opportunities. For instance, in October 2011 a team of Army Sergeant Majors visited Exercise Wallaby in Australia and the Australian Warrant Officer and Non Commissioned Officer Academy for exposure, engaging in professional discussions with their foreign counterparts.

It is the commander's responsibility to groom and develop the next generation.

This culture of grooming will result in the formation of self organising teams to deal with myriad complex issues. It will allow young

leaders to tap into a wide range of experiences, perform well and grow quickly. It will facilitate the inculcation of core values and the fostering of a shared identity and culture, further strengthening the “steel in the soul” of our leaders.⁸ It will also allow more senior leaders to keep in touch with developing issues and understand the evolving challenges that junior leaders face.



Engaging the next generation, one child at a time.

ENGAGE THE HEART

In the past, we may have felt less need to explain our policies and actions to the general public. This is no longer the case. An increasingly educated public and more participative stakeholders will demand more transparency and accountability. This should not be viewed as a problem. Instead, it is merely a different situation to be adapted to, or even an opportunity that we can capitalise on.

As a nation, we have encouraged parents to be partners with our school teachers in the edu-

7. The IDAP was introduced in 2006 to help leaders in their self development and runs parallel to the performance appraisal cycle.
8. Former Defence Minister, the late Dr Goh Keng Swee, famously spoke of how the SAF must have “Steel in the Soul” to defend the nation.

cation of their children. Is it surprising that parents want to know what their sons go through during National Service? We live in a global city popular among multi-national corporations for locating their regional head quarters, that closely measures great companies by their transparency and best practices. Should we be surprised that the SAF, a world class organisation, is scrutinised in the same way?

Businesses watch the SAF and public support for National Service carefully because they want to know that their investments are safe here. Parents watch the SAF closely because they have entrusted their most important investments with us: their children. It is thus natural for us to engage our stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

The SAF is also changing internally. Our people are better educated. More than two thirds of Full-Time National Servicemen hold 'A' Level or Diploma qualifications and better. They want their ideas to be considered and views to be heard. They want to understand the purpose of the duties they perform. To properly motivate them, we need to engage and align our objectives to ensure that our effort is coherent and effective. Engaging our soldiers in the past was a primarily physical effort, but now we must engage them intellectually and emotionally.⁹ We must understand that things are confusing in times of rapid change and people are hesitant to act. They may also have good ideas that should be heard. All this means that we need to spend more time explaining why and how we do things.

Engagement is also sensible because we are able to secure ideas and buy-ins from all those involved. Feedback during the early stages of thinking allows more perspectives to be considered. The organisation will become more generation savvy, culturally agile and practical when introducing new policies. Engaged and actively participating soldiers will be energised to execute their broadened responsibilities and display more resilience in the face of adversity. More broadly, this added commitment will directly contribute to nation building.

Over the years, the SAF has significantly developed the scope and scale of its efforts to engage its people. We conduct cascade sessions when introducing new initiatives, design positive experiences for our recruits (e.g. Graduation Parades at The Float @ Marina Bay), hold leadership group discussions across echelons and strengthen our feedback systems. Externally, commanders visit the homes of soldiers to touch base with their families, building trust and assuring parents of the SAF's commitment to their welfare. Open Houses, the SAF-Schools Partnership Programme and BMT Visits for New Citizens all help the SAF reach out to various segments of the general public.

In Engagement, we must not be thin-skinned, averse to feedback or demoralised by criticism. We must instead cultivate openness and transparency by being willing to engage, receive ideas and feedback, and explain how we carry out our business. The social competencies of Communicating to Influence and Interpersonal Effectiveness remain key skills.

9. Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, eds., *Improving Organisational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1993). Note that engagement must be both intellectually stimulating and individually considerate.

Through Engagement, we will secure trust and confidence and continue to be an organisation that is relevant. Therefore, leaders at all levels must engage their people more frequently and holistically.

CONCLUSION

The increasingly interconnected world has created a more complex operating environment. To remain relevant, the SAF needs to be full spectrum, adaptive, and resilient. Leaders in the Third Generation SAF must first frame evolving situations so as to provide a common map for navigation. Next we must pursue closer integration and better collaboration to harness the full potential of available partners and means in overcoming challenges. SAF leaders must be able to network, exploiting technology to identify and to respond to emerging issues. We must groom our people to accelerate their learning processes and engage both them and our stakeholders to gain their trust and confidence.

The acronym “FRINGE” will help us remember these five priorities because some of these tenets currently remain on the “fringes” of our thoughts.

While I have articulated the five priorities that I feel are needed for the Third Generation SAF, I must emphasise that our core values and culture remain fundamental. For instance, values such as discipline and fighting spirit underpin individual resilience. While we can identify the correct target and press forward resolutely, we may still fail if we are not guided by our values and anchored by our shared culture.¹⁰

These points are all outward-oriented, because today’s conflict space is too complex for any one gifted leader to succeed based on genius and charisma alone. Instead, leaders must look beyond themselves and work closely with others, as the skilful combination of an entire team’s abilities is the key ingredient for mission success. In the Third Generation SAF, leaders will have to focus on how their followers think and behave.

10. I discussed the importance of Values in “Values Based Leadership in the SAF,” *POINTER* 33, no. 4 (2007): 14.

LEADERSHIP SELF REFLECTION

FRAMING THE ISSUE FOR THOSE WE LEAD

Being relevant in our leadership begins with being current in our respective spheres of influence. In our most immediate circles, we need to know the superiors we are accountable to and the peers and subordinates we lead. Next, we need to know our organisation and the environment it is embedded in: Our nation. Finally, we need to be knowledgeable and current in world and regional events. Without being current, a leader cannot begin to properly frame an issue to help him and those he leads make sense of the situation.



FOR REFLECTION:

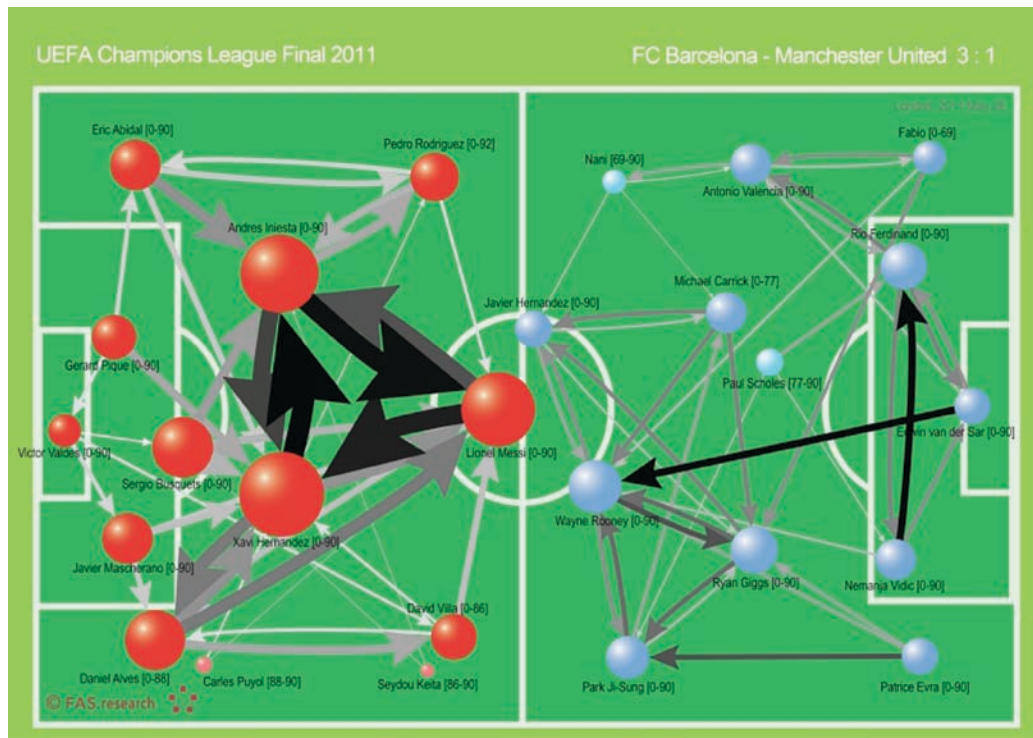
Staying current is different for each circle. Reflect on what each of these efforts entail and fill in the following table:

AIM	WHAT ACTIVITIES WOULD YOU DO?	HOW MUCH TIME WOULD YOU BUDGET?
Be informed of trends and topics in our region & the world		
Track trends and topics in our nation		
Know our organisation intimately		
Know our superiors, peers and subordinates individually		

LEADERS MUST BE RICH IN PERSONAL NETWORKS, CENTRALLY EMBEDDED IN MANY SOCIAL NETWORKS, AND SPAN BOUNDARIES BETWEEN NETWORKS

CDF's article exhorts leaders to integrate and collaborate with others, and to network and connect with others for success. Leadership scholars who examine the social networks that leaders are part of often find that the most effective leaders are very centrally embedded in such networks.

In addition, such leaders are also very richly connected to many others in the organisational network. To illustrate these concepts, the diagram below depicts the influence of players in a football match:



Source: <http://www.fas.at/cases?id=158&view=detail#jooming>

CDF additionally urges leaders to reach across Service and organisational silos. Scholars define leaders who help provide connections between disparate groups as demonstrating **boundary spanning behaviours**.¹¹

11. "Boundary spanners provide critical links between two groups of people that are defined by functional affiliation, physical location, or hierarchical level." Robert L. Cross and Andrew Parker, *The Hidden Power of Social Networks: Understanding How Work Really Gets Done in Organisations* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004), 74.

FOR REFLECTION:

Reflect on your personal networks. A simple social network analysis of your leadership can be conducted in the following steps:

1. List the people in the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and SAF whom you can rely on for help and feedback.
2. Count the number of such people you can name. As a reference, for formal feedback using the SAF Multi-Source Leadership Feedback System (MSLF), you need at least two superiors, six peers and six subordinates. Do you have enough such people to rely on for feedback?
3. Look at the list of people you have identified ...
 - a. What percentage come from your own Service?
 - b. Are people from another Service missing from your list?
 - c. What percentage are from another department or unit?
4. Now go back to your list. You are now free to add to your list people who are not from MINDEF or SAF.
 - a. What percentage of this expanded list is composed of MINDEF/SAF personnel?

THE NATURE OF SUCH NETWORKS AND CONNECTIONS: BEING PEOPLE OF INFLUENCE

Why would people want to respond to you when you seek to integrate and collaborate, to network and connect for success? Simply put, people respond to you because you have influence. The SAF defines leadership as “the process of influencing people to accomplish the mission, inspiring their commitment and improving the organisation.” To arrive at a place of influence, knowing people and being known is a good start, but it is not sufficient. To help one arrive at a place of influence, one can be given power and authority over others. However, power legitimately bestowed is helpful but insufficient to arrive at more enduring forms of influence. To have enduring influence, one must move beyond positional influence to also exert personal influence.¹² This means that one must excel at what one does and remain useful and relevant to people around us. Lastly, one must care for and take care of people around us. This last point about developing those we lead is emphasised in CDF’s article.

IN SUMMARY

Rate the amount of influence you wield:

On a scale of 1 (lowest reliance on) to 10 (highest reliance on), what sources of influence do you rely on to get things done?

Social connections: Knowing people and being known by people	
Having information: Knowing things that are of use to others	
Your position, rank and authority: The legitimacy of your position in the matter	
Expertise: Being an expert in the subject domain	
Reward and Utility: Making the other party see the benefits you bring to the table	
Coercion: The ability to administer punishment for non-compliance	
Grooming: Making the experience something the other party will grow from	
Personal appeal and charisma	

12. For more reading on the issue of power, refer to J. P. R. French, Jr. and B. Raven, “The Bases of Social Power” in *Group Dynamics*, eds. D. Cartwright and A. Zander (New York: Harper and Row), 607-623.



Reflections 2:

Practical Aspects of Leadership

by Chief of Air Force MG Ng Chee Meng



CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

What do leaders do? Leaders study the context, set directions, implement policies and create the conditions to ensure that their people succeed. While simple to articulate, it is hard to execute. To be effective, leaders must successfully navigate the iterations between sense-making, planning, executing and supporting.

In this next article by the Chief of Air Force MG Ng Chee Meng (CAF), CAF shares his perspective on how leaders can excel in these tasks. In it, you will find a hands-on, practical perspective that is founded on sound knowledge and deep insight.



Chief of Air Force MG Ng Chee Meng interacting with RSAF senior officers and USAF personnel in a light-hearted moment during a joint exercise.

INTRODUCTION

As a large and complex organisation operating in an uncertain geopolitical environment, the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) needs effective leaders to shape the way forward and maintain our relevance in the evolving security landscape. But what makes an effective leader? Amongst many underlying requisites, I have found effective leadership to encompass two key ingredients:

An aspiring leader must start by equipping himself with a sound intellectual understanding of leadership.

First, an aspiring leader must start by equipping himself with a sound intellectual understanding of leadership. Having a keen knowledge of leadership theories will provide one with a solid foundation to lead. For example, John C. Maxwell's book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, is a good resource to learn about the practical aspects of leadership. In addition, there is a whole spectrum of leadership models available in existing literature, covering leadership styles ranging from Servant Leadership to Machiavellian Leadership. The more widely one reads about leadership, the better equipped one will be to lead.

Second and more importantly, effective leadership is founded on one's ability to assimilate all the different styles of leadership and meld them together for practical application. Successful leadership, I believe, is characterised by the skilful application of a clever mix of leadership approaches, often in varying combinations, to tackle different issues in the SAF. An effective leader possesses the ability to carefully judge each situation at hand and apply his own blend of leadership styles to address the

Servant leadership is a popular leadership model developed by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970. It is founded on the basis that a servant leader achieves results for his organisation by placing his people's needs as his highest priority. A servant leader focuses on enhancing the growth of the people in his organisation. He asks himself how he can help his people to solve problems and promote their personal development, because he understands that only motivated and committed individuals will unfold their full potential and fulfil organisational expectations.

This model of leadership is quite distinct from that espoused by Niccolò Machiavelli in *The Prince*. In Chapter XVII of the famous political treatise, Machiavelli controversially claimed that, "It is much safer for a prince to be feared than loved, when of the two, one had to be dispensed with." In the context of the Italian princedoms of Machiavelli's times, he argued that this was necessary, because people who feared the prince — their leader — were much less likely to revolt against him.

situation. The ability to do this is developed and refined over time by constantly translating what one has learned from theory into actual practice and continuously reflecting and building on one's leadership experiences.

I will leave the reader to seek out the myriad leadership theories on his own and focus on sharing some of my personal experiences on practical aspects of leadership. By doing so, I hope to reinforce the point that besides hav-



Led by LTC Paul Tan, the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Task Group from the Singapore Armed Forces adapted to adverse environmental conditions and overcame challenging situations when they deployed to Afghanistan in 2010.

Effective practical leadership requires a leader to first understand the context, so that he can make accurate sense of the issue at hand and correctly judge the way forward for the organisation. To ensure that his people are aligned to a common objective and move in the way the leader has envisaged, he also needs to manage the complexities involved in the process and create the necessary environment to provide his people with the best chance for success.

ing a sound intellectual understanding on the subject, successful leadership is ultimately founded on one's ability to apply a combination of different leadership approaches to solve real-life issues effectively.

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF LEADERSHIP

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF A SITUATION

Understanding the context is key to exercising effective leadership. When confronted with any situation, this ability is critical in helping the leader make sense of the issue and correctly judge what needs to be done. This is all the more important because many real-life situations in the SAF are far from straightforward. Leaders in the SAF will often face situations wherein myriad and diverging demands need to be met. Moreover, a leader will always encounter new and unprecedented situations, and leadership approaches that worked on previous occasions may not necessarily apply in the new ones.

In order to correctly determine the way forward in any situation, the first thing that a leader must do is ascertain the specific set of circumstances or facts that surround each particular situation. To this end, a leader must be discerning when looking at a broad range of data. He must have the ability to synthesise data across seemingly unrelated issues and look out for patterns, relationships and linkages that will help him explain things and put them in perspective. He must also be circumspect in looking at the situation and not be swayed by his own biases or the opinions of the majority. He must consider many important factors, such as the demographics of the workforce, the existing organisational culture, the amount of time and other resources available, the sense of urgency among the people (or the lack thereof) and the stakes involved.

For example, where quick decisions need to be made in time-critical situations such as contingency operations or combat, a leader may have to lead in an authoritative and decisive manner, getting his subordinates to follow strict orders without question. Conversely, if a problem is highly complex but there is ample time available to solve it, a leader may lead in a more nurturing and participative way, involving his subordinates in the decision-making process and empowering them to discover solutions through their own exploration.

In short, understanding the context provides a leader with a better lens to look at any situation. It will help him chart the correct way forward for his organisation and determine the necessary direction to take. It will also help him decide on the best leadership approaches in driving the organisation towards the desired end-state.

SETTING DIRECTIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION

A major role of leadership lies in charting the path for an organisation to progress. In this aspect, an effective leader is a broad-based strategic thinker who, aided by a keen understanding of the context, dares to point the right way forward for his organisation. Where necessary, he must also have the moral courage to step outside his own comfort zone to do what may seem counter-intuitive and against the prevailing view. When required, he must convince the people in his organisation to take necessary risks for the organisation to progress. Let me cite a personal example to illustrate what I mean.

The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) has always accorded high importance to safety, and for good reason. The long established idea that "Zero Accidents is an Achievable Goal" has guided the RSAF in the success-

ful planning and execution of our training and operations over the years. However, while preventing accidents remains critically important in the RSAF today, some time in early 2010, I noticed that a subtle cultural shift had taken place in the RSAF. Gradually and insidiously, it appeared that our airmen had extended the zero-accident philosophy to also place strong emphasis on achieving zero human factor (HF) errors in their daily work.

While the idea of zero HF errors was intellectually appealing, I felt that the way the RSAF was pursuing it could inadvertently tip the balance between the need for us to uphold safety on one hand and our courage to be innovative and take calculated risks on the other. The concern was that over time, pursuing the goal of zero HF errors would cause our people to become overly cautious and fearful of committing mistakes, and such a fear would strongly impede the RSAF's ability to exploit the full potential of our advanced platforms and weapons systems. Furthermore, the Air Force could end up building unnecessary layers of redundancy in pursuit of zero HF errors, thereby severely stretching our resources.

After discussing the problem with the RSAF's senior leadership, I was convinced of the need to address the issue and set about communicating it to the rest of the Air Force. I composed my thoughts into an article entitled "The Problems of Espousing a Zero Human Factor Errors Philosophy" and disseminated it to the RSAF in October 2010. Writing this article was not easy, because convincing people to adopt a larger appetite for taking (calculated) risks had to be carefully balanced against the continued need to emphasise safety in the RSAF. Furthermore, empowering our people to push our operational envelopes also meant running the risk that

big mistakes might be made if people pushed too far. Nevertheless, I persisted because I was convinced that the RSAF could encounter bigger problems if we held on to the flawed ideal of zero HF errors.

In retrospect, addressing the zero HF errors issue was something that required a careful realignment of the direction in which the RSAF was heading. It required me to analyse the situation carefully, identify the problem accurately and trust my own judgement and leadership instincts. Indeed, in many situations facing the SAF, our leaders will be called upon to point the right way forward and lead the organisation in adjusting its trajectory or changing course if necessary. Making these tough decisions requires not only careful judgement, but also confidence and persistence to carry them through, as well as courage to bear responsibility for the outcomes. In situations like these, a leader must fall back on his intellectual understanding of leadership and trust his own leadership experience and instincts to make the right call. He must also check his own thinking and consult others in his leadership team. As long as a leader is convinced that there is a problem to be solved, he must have the confidence and moral courage to surface the issue and implement the necessary solutions to address it.

MANAGING COMPLEXITIES IN IMPLEMENTATION

When a direction for the organisation is set, a leader needs to communicate it effectively to his people and align them in a common effort towards achieving the desired end-state. While doing so, it is also important for the leader to anticipate the complexities that are associated with implementation and manage them accordingly. Let me elaborate using my experience with Project CARDINAL.



Air Warfare Officers brainstorming on ways to better develop learning strategies during a CARDINAL activity.

When the RSAF embarked on our Third Generation transformation back in 2006, the senior leadership recognised that our people were key to continued success. We saw that besides exploiting the latest technologies and re-structuring ourselves to better perform our missions, it was equally important for our airmen to be well-trained to carry out their professional duties and to be engaged and committed to the organisation. As such, the RSAF launched Project CARDINAL in April 2007 as one of the key components of our Third Generation transformation. CARDINAL was designed with three strategic thrusts in mind: to Develop Professionals, Realise their Potential, and Engage the Heart. The aim was “to drive the Air Force towards a tipping point ... where ownership would be engendered to percolate the RSAF’s People Development culture ... and allow our airmen to see themselves as criti-

cal to the success of CARDINAL and the Third Generation RSAF.”

Since 2007, many initiatives have been introduced in line with the three strategic thrusts of CARDINAL. In the first spiral of the RSAF’s transformation, initiatives such as the Command Effectiveness Programme and the development of the Personal (PCR) and Professional (ProCR) Competency Roadmaps for every vocation in the Air Force were important first steps for the RSAF to strengthen the competencies of our airmen. The review of the SAF’s career constructs and efforts to create more Continuing Education opportunities would also better enable RSAF servicemen to realise their full potential in the SAF. Activities such as CARDINAL “Air Time” and CARDINAL Learning Days also provided effective platforms for constant communication with the ground in order to

recognise their efforts in People Development and create greater buy-in.

When I assumed the appointment of the Chief of Air Force at the end of 2009, I took stock of CARDINAL's progress in the RSAF. I noted that our efforts in the first spiral had reaped positive results. It was evident that the RSAF had done well in designing our People Development framework and putting the necessary policies in place. It was also clear that we had created the structures which would allow us to bring CARDINAL to the next level. But while the vision and strategic thrusts of CARDINAL were clear, the implementation of CARDINAL was actually a very complex undertaking, because instilling a positive and proactive culture of People Development in the Air Force naturally involved looking at very "soft" and subtle behavioural patterns among our people.

More fundamentally, I recognised that CARDINAL should not be seen by our people as an end in itself, but rather as a means to a larger and more important objective—mission success for the RSAF. After all, the RSAF will not be able to fulfil its missions if it does not

have dedicated and committed people who are professionally competent and well-trained to operate its systems. I felt that it was necessary for everyone in the Air Force to recognise this fact and look at CARDINAL from the perspective of mission success, so that they would own the outcomes of CARDINAL and view People Development as part and parcel of their daily responsibilities.

After many discussions with the senior leadership, I built on our collective ideas and crystallised my thoughts on CARDINAL. I was convinced that the success of CARDINAL hinged on how far our people could infuse it into their daily activities on the ground and how much it was owned and implemented by each and every airman in the RSAF. I wrote an article to all Air Force commanders in October last year, building on the three key CARDINAL thrusts—Developing Professionals, Realising Your Potential and Engaging the Heart—to articulate what was necessary for the RSAF in the second spiral of our transformation: Developing a Strong and Competent Workforce, and Creating Positive Work Experiences for our people (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Focus Areas for Project CARDINAL in the Second Spiral (adapted)

Under the ambit of DP and RYP, the RSAF must channel our efforts in developing a strong and competent workforce. One of the key ways to achieve this is by consciously infusing CARDINAL into our daily activities. This includes transforming the way we conduct operational training and consciously nurturing future generations of commanders for the RSAF. This is important because our people must be proficient in order to effectively translate our advanced hardware and new operational concepts into fighting capabilities.

Under the ambit of RYP and ETH, the RSAF must endeavour to create positive work experiences for our people. We want our people to enjoy coming to work, find meaning and purpose in their jobs, and do their best for the RSAF. In addition to reminding our people about the importance of their jobs, creating the opportunities for our people to derive actual positive experiences from their work will count for much more. To this end, we must set high standards for our people, create an environment in which they can thrive, and recognise their good work. These are important because an engaged and competent workforce is key for mission success, both now and in the long run.

Moving forward, the complexities of implementing CARDINAL must continue to be properly managed. Among other things, a disciplined and task-organised approach is needed to ensure that the RSAF's People Development efforts will continue to be driven and implemented in a concerted manner. At the same time, an active two-way communication with the ground will also need to be sustained, so as to constantly align our people to CARDINAL's objectives and motivate and energise them towards achieving the common goal. From this example, it can be seen that besides being able to point the organisation in the right direction, managing the complexities associated with implementation are also part and parcel of the responsibilities of an effective commander.

CREATING THE NECESSARY ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS

Besides setting directions and managing complexities, a leader must also create the necessary environment to offer his people the best chances for success. As I have mentioned earlier, the ability to apply an appropriate combination of leadership approaches is central to this influential aspect of leadership. I will elaborate using an air logistics example.

A leader must also create the necessary environment to offer his people the best chances for success.

Not long after becoming the Chief of Air Force, I examined the state of engineering and logistics in the RSAF. Through my observations, it seemed that a two-fold problem

existed within the Air Logistics Organisation (ALO). Firstly, it was apparent to me that the community would soon face manpower constraints due to a shrinking national engineering resource pool, while demands on the community would invariably rise with the Third Generation transformation of the Air Force. Secondly, it appeared that many people in ALO were burdened by excessive and redundant processes which had been built into the community's practices over time, in part due to the zero HF mentality that I described earlier. I felt that the engineers in ALO needed to be empowered to remove some of these barriers to their own productivity, so that ALO could continue to meet its demands in five to ten years' time.

Although the problem in ALO was a complex one, it was an issue which the RSAF had time to address. I felt that the best way to approach it would be to first persuade the ALO community to recognise the issue, so that they would own it right from the start and drive the resolution process by themselves. I started by getting the right people on board. I spoke quite intently to the Air Staff and to Head Air Logistics (HAL), discussing the issues with them at great length. I told HAL that I saw an impending problem, and would have to rely on him and his community to find the answers for themselves and the Air Force.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the ALO community initially voiced some resistance. When I put forth my ideas on how ALO had to find better ways to improve operational efficiency and remove the layers of redundancy within the organisation, some engineers reminded me of the painful lessons that the community had learnt from the A4 Skyhawk crisis of the mid-1980s.¹

1. The A4 Skyhawk crisis resulted from the severe degradation of the airworthiness of the A4 aircraft fleet in the mid-1980s. The crisis reached its peak when the RSAF lost four aircraft from July to October 1985.



ME3 V. Rajash conducting a brief to his Weapon Load Crew team members before the commencement of weapon loading on an F-15SG fighter aircraft.

They emphasised that after the crisis, ALO had made very deliberate decisions to trade a degree of operational efficiency in exchange for deeper specialisation, so as to restore confidence in the airworthiness of the RSAF's aircraft fleets. They cautioned that attempting to regain operational efficiency by changing the current ALO structure risked retrograding to the 1980s and having to re-learn painful lessons.

Despite the initial resistance, it was evident that ALO had to face up to the impending decline in the engineering manpower resource pool and the growing complexities of future warfare that would increase demand for technical and engineering expertise. I continued to persuade the Air Force Engineers that they needed to do something about the problem before it hit hard. I also explained that the present context was different from the 1980s, and that the quality of engineers today, coupled with the quality of "ops-logs integration," gave me full confidence that ALO had the ability to transform successfully.

Today, Project CAYLEY is the fruit of more than two years' work by HAL and ALO. The community had their people take a fundamental re-look at the entire ALO construct. They are now very much energised by Project CAYLEY and its carefully designed plans to transform ALO to meet the engineering demands of the Third Generation RSAF. Among others, the efforts under CAYLEY include redefining the RSAF's engineering expertise, re-structuring ALO, transforming the professional training for Air Force Engineers, creating capacity through enhancing productivity, merging first and second line maintenance operations into Integrated Maintenance Flights, and enhancing the contributions of Operationally-Ready National Servicemen, in addition to re-branding ALO.

Notably, all the above solutions did not come from me. I am not an Air Force Engineer by vocation and I do not have the same deep level of engineering expertise as my engineers. I have consistently believed that our people have it within themselves to figure out the solutions once they can visualise the problem. Therefore, throughout the entire resolution process for CAYLEY, I empowered my engineers to explore their own boundaries and to derive their own solutions to the problem. I merely facilitated the process and value-added to the decision-making process where I felt I could contribute. Otherwise, I stayed out of the way and gave my engineers the latitude and moral support to explore all the possibilities.

In sum, the ALO problem was addressed by getting the right people to own the issue, and creating the appropriate environment for them to explore and arrive at their own solutions. Under the prevailing context of the situation, I felt that the best way to address the issue was to simply play a facilitating role and empower the community to find their own answers to the problem. Through such an approach, I am confident that the efforts under Project CAYLEY are indeed the right ones to bring ALO forward and enable them to meet the engineering needs of the Third Generation RSAF.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is effective only when its range of methods are assimilated and appropriately put to practice.

I hope that the various examples in this essay have illustrated the point that besides equipping oneself with an intellectual understanding on the subject, leadership is effective only when its range of methods are assimilated and

appropriately put to practice. Depending on the context of a situation, a successful leader effectively judges what direction his organisation needs to take, manages the complexities that are involved in the implementation process and creates the necessary environment to provide his people with the best chance for success. In fulfilling these practical aspects of leadership, an effective leader relies on all that he has learnt about leadership and applies the most appropriate mix of leadership methods to deal with each real-life situation in the SAF effectively. Finally, he also takes the effort to reflect upon and learn from each of his experiences, thereby sharpening his leadership skills over time. In this sense, successful leadership is realised through a fulfilling journey of constant learning and practical application. Best of luck on your own leadership journey.

LEADERSHIP SELF REFLECTION

1. “The more widely one reads about leadership, the better equipped one will be to lead.”

- a. What leadership related books have you read in the past six months?

- b. CAF provided 2 extreme styles of leadership in his article: In your own words, describe what you understand of each of these different styles of leadership.

- c. How have you been described by others with regard to your leadership abilities? What leadership styles have you been associated with?

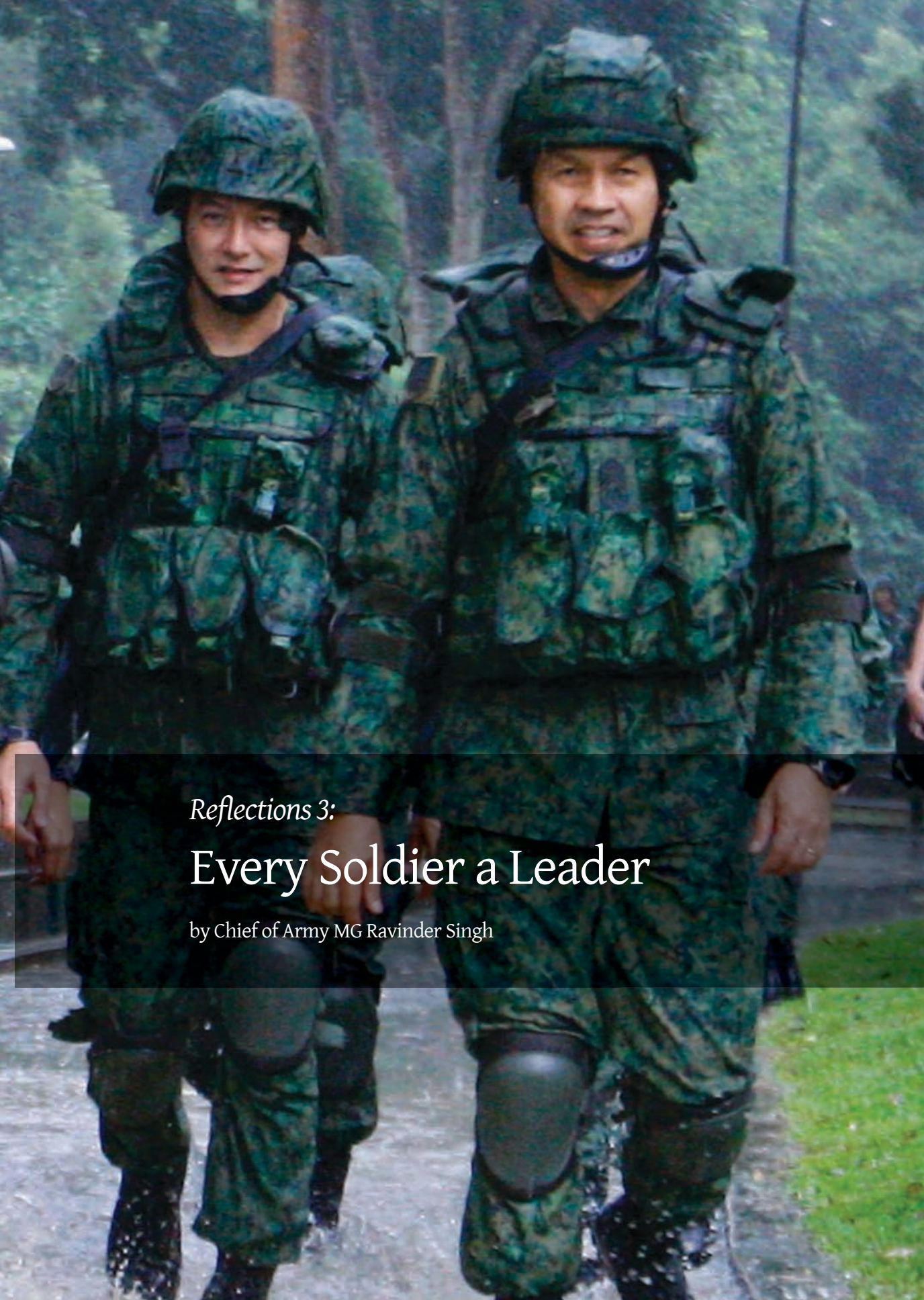
2. “Successful leadership ... is characterised by the skilful application of a clever mix of leadership approaches.”

It is not sufficient to be competent in one leadership style. One must also demonstrate style flexibility, i.e. the ability to switch between leadership styles as required. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), how well can you adopt different leadership styles according to the demands of the situation?

3. The span of leadership tasks described by CAF in his article has similarities to that described by leadership and management scholars. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), how well do you:

Evaluate the context, taking into account the key elements for planning	
Derive a strategy or direction for getting the job done	
Coordinate activities to ensure a common direction of progress	
Anticipate and manage complexities in implementation	
Organise people and resources for optimal deployment	
Maintain control to ensure that things happen according to plan and measure up to standards	
Create the necessary environment for success	
Command and lend emphasis to maintain momentum	





Reflections 3:

Every Soldier a Leader

by Chief of Army MG Ravinder Singh

CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

While CAF asks what leaders do, the next article by the Chief of Army MG Ravinder Singh (COA) asks who the leaders are. Quite simply, in the context of the Third Generation SAF, every soldier is a leader.

Every soldier must lead because good leadership must occur at every level—leading oneself, one's peers and one's team. COA outlines the outcomes expected of leadership at each of these levels, so that Service level objectives of cohesion and engagement can be realised.

We lead well because it is expected of us. But those who lead are also those being led. Those who have been led must now take the lead, starting with leading themselves.

Reflect on what COA has to share and take the reflection survey provided at the end of the article.



COA engaging our NSFs after accompanying them on a route march.

INTRODUCTION

At a retirement dinner held last year to honour the service and dedication of retiring Warrant Officers and Specialists (WOSPEC) in the Army, a Senior Warrant Officer shared his experiences and reflections after more than 30 years of service. He spoke about the many satisfying moments in his career as a WOSPEC leader and shared an insight on leadership, “The Army can appoint you as a Commander but it’s your Soldiers that make you a Leader.” This simple yet powerful statement describes what it truly means to be a leader in our Army. While commanders are appointed and vested with authority, leadership is acquired through everyday actions that earn the trust and respect of soldiers.

The Army can appoint you as a Commander but it’s your Soldiers that make you a Leader.

IN OUR ARMY, SOLDIERS COME FIRST. The Third Generation Army has operationalised many new platforms and fighting systems, such as the Leopard 2 Main Battle Tank (MBT), High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), Terrex Infantry Carrier Vehicle, Skyblade miniature Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and Advanced Combat Man System (ACMS). We will continue to field new weapon systems, platforms and command and control (C2) systems over the next few years in order to fully realise the vision of a Third Generation Army. While the weapons, platforms and C2 systems may be capable and optimised for our security needs, they can only be as good as the soldiers that operate them. The soldier is at the heart of every fighting system in the Army. It is our soldiers with their commitment and dedication that will make the difference, whether achieving deterrence in peace or a swift and decisive victory in war.

IN OUR ARMY, LEADERSHIP IS CRITICAL. Our Army is a large people-centred organisation comprised of a diverse range of soldiers—Full-Time National Servicemen (NSF), Operationally-Ready National Servicemen (NSmen) and Regulars—all working together towards the common aim of ensuring the security of Singapore. Leadership is thus critical. While structures, processes and systems can help synchronise and coordinate the many operations and tasks in the Army, only leadership can engage the hearts, hands and heads of our soldiers, inspiring them to step up and give their best, and at times even rise above themselves in service of the nation. We need leaders who can inspire commitment and dedication in each and every soldier. Leadership is the driving force of the Army.

IN OUR ARMY, EVERY SOLDIER IS A LEADER.

During a recent visit to an urban exercise, I was brought to a commanding point above the urban objective to view the final assault and capture of the objective. The brigade commander who was the Director of Exercise started the briefing by informing me that I would not be able to see the soldiers in the final assault because they would be taking an indirect approach and would secure the building room by room, floor by floor, with most of the fighting done indoors by small teams of soldiers. He concluded by saying, “Sir, if you see them, they would be dead!” Urban operations are unlike conventional operations, where commanders from the company to the section level can see and directly orchestrate the assault. Today, we expect our soldiers to operate more independently and coordinate amongst themselves as they clear an urban objective room by room. The section commander may be in a different room from the point team, the platoon commander on a

different floor and the company commander in a different building. Each soldier is equipped with a specific sensor and weapon for his task and role. When he becomes the point man, he is effectively the eyes, ears and brain of the team, and is expected to share information, coordinate and lead the fight. The modern battlefield is more complex, bringing increasing challenges and greater uncertainties. It requires every soldier to take the initiative and exercise situational leadership at the tacti-

cal level. The Third Generation Army leader must be able to harness the capabilities of each and every soldier to fight and win in this complex environment.

There are many different ways of describing what leadership is, what it entails and how to do it well. Much has been written on these subjects and they are all relevant and useful ways of recognising and developing the leadership qualities within each of us. I would



like to reinforce the Singapore Armed Force's (SAF) leadership doctrine through a different perspective of leadership that starts with the inside, us as individuals, and expands outwards as peer leaders and finally team leaders. This can be described as "Leading Yourself," "Leading Your Peers" and "Leading Your Team."

LEADING YOURSELF

EVERY LEADER IS A SOLDIER. In our Army, all leaders start by being soldiers. A soldier has

to first lead himself. There are three aspects of leading oneself as a soldier that should be a foundation for leadership development: Clarity of Purpose first, Values second and becoming a disciplined, physically fit and competent soldier third.

CLARITY OF PURPOSE. Why are you here in the Army? As soldiers, we must first be clear about our purpose in the Army. Our Army's purpose "is to defend the sovereignty and security of





Being vigilant in Afghanistan.

Singapore.” How is our purpose as soldiers aligned to the Army’s purpose? With clarity of purpose, we become focused, committed, clear and decisive in our actions. Clarity of purpose will allow us to lead with passion and fortitude.

VALUES. What do you stand for? Values are about who we are and define our identity. Values are important anchors that ground us and guide our decisions and actions, especially in new and challenging situations. Values influence our actions and determine how we lead at every level. As soldiers and leaders we should make our personal values explicit and align them to the SAF’s seven Core Values: Loyalty to Country, Leadership, Discipline, Professionalism, Fighting Spirit, Ethics and Care for Soldiers.

BEING A SOLDIER

- **DISCIPLINE.** It is always easier to do what we like than what we do not. Discipline is doing what we have to even if we dislike it. For example, waking up early in the morning for physical exercise is not a natural habit for most of us, but discipline allows us to do this regularly and achieve our goal of being fit and healthy. When I speak to our NSF soldiers, I ask them if they have ever achieved anything significant, whether academically or in school sport, music or uniformed Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) groups, without discipline. While some may be born gifted, most of us require hard work to gain new skills and knowledge. Discipline is critical in soldiering: the nature of warfare requires a soldier to resist the natural instinct to flee in the face of danger. In the military, we develop personal discipline through physical fitness, regimentation, training and operational regimes.
- **PHYSICAL FITNESS.** Every soldier has to be physically fit to endure the challenges of the battlefield and prevail over the aggressor. A leader must have the physical fitness to lead and this is particularly critical when his soldiers are exhausted: they will look to him to see if he, like them, is too tired to continue or if he has the will and energy to persevere and lead them on to complete the mission. Physical fitness training leads to mental toughness and resilience. Whether it is the Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT), the Vocation Obstacle Course (VOC) or a route march, each activity is physically demanding and requires consistent effort and hard work. In the Army, physical fitness training is the basis of developing team cohesion.
- **COMPETENCE.** As leaders, each and every one of us needs to develop and maintain soldiering and leadership competencies. These include the competencies of our vocations and arms, competencies in specialisations such as operations and human resource, and finally, competency in leadership. As we operationalise the Third Generation Army, we need to develop and nurture the required competencies to lead with confidence at every level in order to maximise the potential of our platforms and systems, and our ability to integrate these into a cohesive and capable war-fighting system.

LEADING YOUR PEERS

EVERY SOLDIER IS A LEADER. Once we are able to lead ourselves, we can then begin to expand our leadership to influence our peers through a good understanding of the desired goal, building relationships with them and demonstrating commitment through our behaviour. Peer leadership requires us to have clarity of mission,



build trust and exercise leadership by example.

CLARITY OF MISSION. First, we need to be clear on the mission of the unit or the organisation. This is about making sure we do the right things the right way. The Army's Mission is "to deter and if deterrence fails to achieve a swift and decisive victory." What is the mission of your unit and how can you contribute to the mission of your headquarters and, ultimately, the Army and the SAF? Having a clear, concise and compelling mission allows us to internalise the necessary goal and outcome to achieve the mission. With clarity of mission, we can move decisively and be confident that our plans and actions are aligned to the SAF and defence of Singapore.

Once we are able to lead ourselves, we can then begin to expand our leadership to influence our peers ...

BUILDING TRUST. Leadership is built on both formal and informal relationships. The foundation of every relationship is trust. In the military, trust is even more important as we conduct operations with heavy equipment, live ammunition and explosives. Soldiers need to trust that their leader can lead them through operations and training to accomplish objectives without unnecessary casualties. Establishing trust requires us to build relationships with our fellow soldiers so that we understand each other, develop mutual respect and work together as a team. It also requires us to know their differences and build on their strengths.



LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE. In the SAF, we exercise the Core Value of Leadership through Leadership by Example. This means that as leaders we must take the lead in doing anything that we ask our people to do. We may never be the best in everything but the willingness to lead from the front sets a good example for our soldiers. Take the 24 km route march that every recruit goes through before graduating from BMT. Some of our soldiers might never have imagined that they would be able to complete a 24 km route march in full battle order when they first enlist. However, with their leaders giving them confidence that it can be done through systematic training and perseverance and leading them during the march, these soldiers successfully complete the 24km route march. In so doing, our soldiers learn that many things in life can be achieved through dedicated focus and effort. Good leaders set examples that others emulate and aspire to, and this starts a virtuous cycle of building and strengthening leadership within the Army.

Good leaders set examples that others emulate and aspire to ...

LEADING YOUR TEAM

EVERY SOLDIER'S LEADER. Leadership is both a privilege and a responsibility: a privilege because a leader has the opportunity to lead his team to become more than the sum of its parts; a responsibility as the team relies on him for direction. To be a good team leader, one must have clarity of vision and the ability to build a cohesive team with a high level of engagement.

CLARITY OF VISION. A leader must have clarity of shared purpose and values, clarity of shared objectives and, most importantly, a compelling and inspiring shared vision: one that sets

the direction and shows a clear path to the objective. A clear, inspiring vision gives the team confidence and motivates them to strive together until the goal is achieved. This vision must be a shared one, developed based on a deep understanding of the purpose, values and mission of the unit or organisation. A shared vision is both a powerful motivator and compass that shows the way ahead.

Our own Army's vision is:

Our Army – Ready, Decisive, Respected

Our Army is the bedrock of our Nation's defence.

We draw strength from our Regulars, NSFs and Operationally Ready NSMen. We thrive on the support of our Families, Employers and fellow Singaporeans.

Ready in peace, we are capable of dealing swiftly with the full spectrum of operations.

Decisive in war, we will fight and win to defend our country.

Respected and trusted by all, our Army is a national institution. We forge the fighting spirit of our people to secure our future and protect our way of life.

COHESION. One of the most critical leadership tasks is to build a strong and cohesive team. This takes time and effort but a cohesive team will be able to move quickly once a clear objective has been set and will be able to handle the many challenges and difficulties encountered. Cohesion starts with respect for soldiers and showing genuine concern for everyone in your team. It is the heart-to-heart or emotional connection that binds the team together. Cohesion



can be built through shared experiences such as rigorous physical training and military exercises. Adversity is usually a strong force that builds cohesion in a team. Strong leadership during tough, challenging or difficult periods will gel a team together and establish enduring bonds. A cohesive team has a high level of engagement and commitment. Recently, I visited a National Service (NS) infantry unit undergoing their Advanced Training Evaluation Centre (ATEC) evaluation on their seventh In-Camp Training (ICT). Everywhere I went, the soldiers talked about how they had known each other and grown together since their days in active NS. It was a matter of pride for them to share that with me. Not surprisingly, this cohesive unit did very well in their ATEC evaluation.

ENGAGEMENT. The institution of NS has meant that the SAF includes soldiers from the entire spectrum of society. Each comes with different inclinations, but all have stepped forward for a common purpose: to serve in the defence of our nation. It is our duty as leaders to engage every soldier and develop a strong sense of commitment to the SAF's mission. Engaging our soldiers means that they must understand the need for the defence of Singapore, appreciate the ability of the SAF to defend Singapore, and have confidence in their unit's ability to achieve its mission. Engagement also means helping our soldiers understand that they can

benefit greatly from the NS experience, developing resilience and maturity that will serve them well later in life. Last year, a significant number of national servicemen voluntarily extended their national service duty so that they could continue to serve in their units in local and overseas exercises, and support major events such as the National Day Parade. These soldiers demonstrated a high level of engagement because they were inspired by their leaders and peers to serve together for a good cause.

CONCLUSION

During a dialogue session, a soldier asked me which of the seven Core Values was most important to me. Without hesitation, I said, "Leadership." I could have said that all seven values are equally important but I chose to put emphasis on leadership as it is the main driver of our Army's development. This year we celebrate 45 years of National Service and many of our currently active national servicemen have fathers who served before them. Our soldiers are the heart of Our Army and it is good leadership at every level that inspires them to be dedicated, committed and engaged in the defence of our nation. It is leadership that will make the Third Generation Army ...

Ready, Decisive and Respected.

LEADERSHIP SELF REFLECTION

1. Leading yourself:

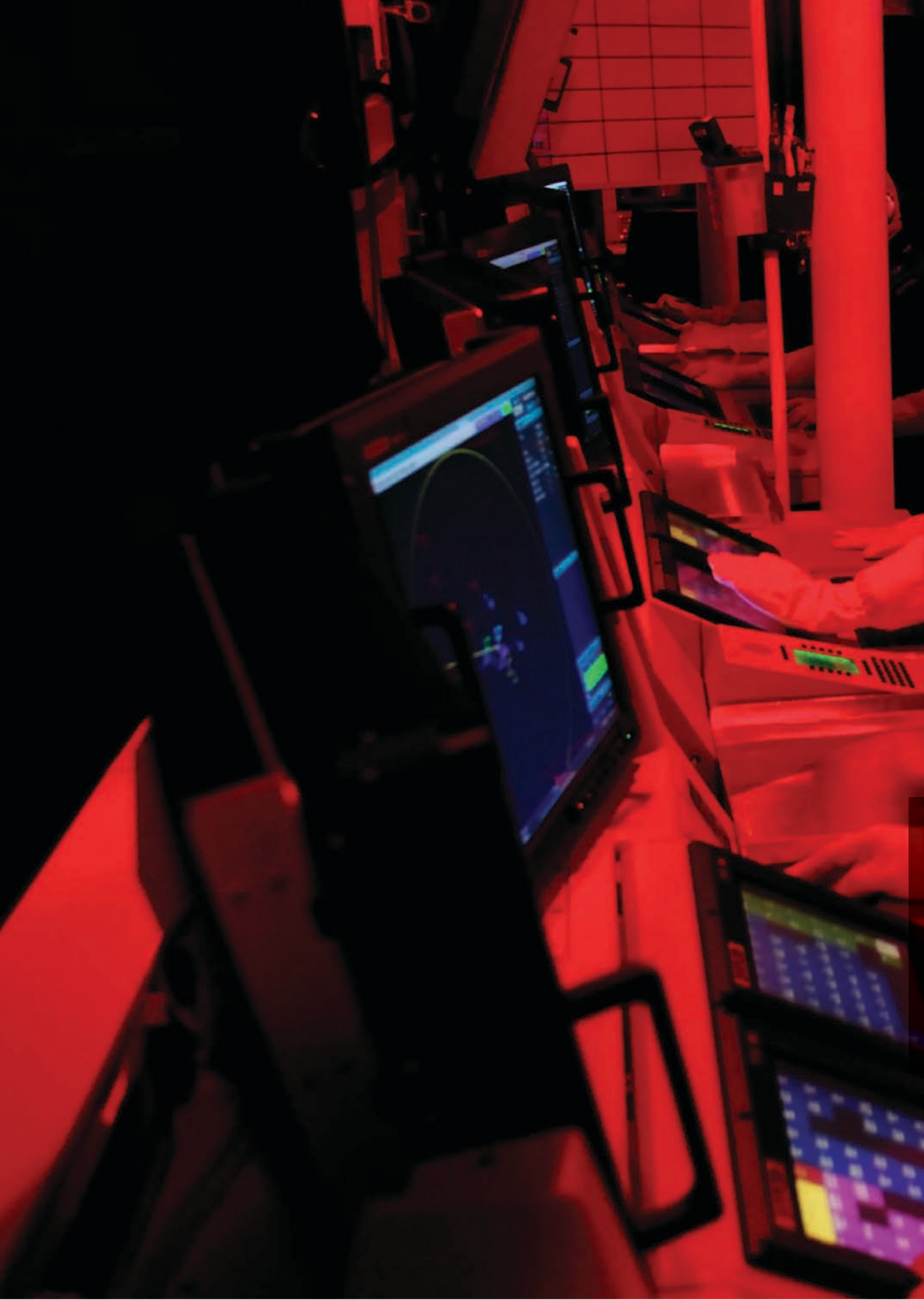
- a. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), how clear are you of your purpose within this organisation?
- b. Write about your purpose in this organisation. Share this statement with someone who will hold you accountable for your actions.
- c. How well do your personal values align to the SAF Core Values?

2. Leading your peers:

- a. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), how do you think others will rate you as ...
 - i. Someone who is trustworthy
 - ii. Someone who leads by example
- b. When is the last time you have:
 - i. Sought feedback from others?
 - ii. Received feedback voluntarily given by others?
- c. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) ...
 - i. Are you viewed as someone who seeks to develop himself?
 - ii. How responsive have you been in acting on feedback received?

3. Leadership outcomes for your organisation:

- a. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) ...
 - i. To what extent does your team share a common vision with you?
 - ii. How cohesive is your team?
 - iii. How engaged are those whom you lead?





Reflections 4

Military Leadership in the Changing Environment

by Chief of Navy RADM Ng Chee Peng

CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

Leadership is fundamentally about the people we lead. People are the reason why we lead and it is through people that leadership outcomes are achieved.

This article by the Chief of Navy RADM Ng Chee Peng (CNV) is devoted entirely to those that we lead. Like the changing environment, those whom we lead are also changing in subtle but significant ways. We need to identify these changes if we are to adapt and lead well.

CNV uses stories to illustrate the emerging attributes of the serviceman that leaders must consider. He then makes use of a mnemonic to help leaders remember what they must do in leading their servicemen.

Read what CNV has to share. When you are done, attempt the reflection questions at the end of the chapter.



The pervasive nature of social media today is perhaps best illustrated by the anecdote of how colleagues sitting in adjacent cubicles prefer to have Facebook chats with each other instead of real conversations. While this may be an exaggeration, a recent Nielsen report revealed that netizens in Singapore were the heaviest internet users in the region, with 77% maintaining an active Facebook profile and 67% constantly making use of the private messaging functions on social networks to communicate.¹

On the other hand, there remain many who are not as receptive to social media, preferring face-to-face conversations over web cameras and video chat.

How is this related to leadership in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF)? To put it simply, the military leadership environment has been significantly altered. It has become increasingly challenging as a result of rapid changes in the larger society, including the rise of the new social media. The internet is not new. It has become so common that the United Nations has defined internet access as a basic human right.² Rather than just a passive tool to download information, the internet is now a platform for new media such as social networks and blogs. Our Generation Y and Z servicemen in particular, increasingly use these tools to communicate their thoughts, network with friends and advocate their beliefs. They have also come to expect the SAF to be more open to utilising the new media as a form of communication. At the same time, there are many others in the SAF,

even among younger servicemen, who may not be as receptive to social media and prefer more traditional means of interaction. As such, leaders in the SAF will need to use multiple modes of communication in order to effectively reach out to the people under our charge.

Another difference in today's environment is that we cannot expect our people to be passive and indifferent followers when our education system has enhanced their thinking and analytical skills. As a result of better education, our people seek greater personal development, have higher aspirations and are more outspoken. We will have to move to a more consultative and participative approach which is focussing on empowering our people while ensuring that they find meaning and purpose in their work.

The fact that these differences are not necessarily generation-specific adds to the challenge. There is a wide spectrum of expectations and preferences that cannot be attributed to a single generation. Simply put, a Generation Z recruit is as likely to choose face-to-face conversation and coffee over Facebook as much as a Generation X serviceman, who may in turn prefer to use coaching and facilitation methods to instruct his recruits and Facebook and Twitter to connect with his peers.

To lead effectively, our leaders must understand the complexity of our current environment. The servicemen and women who make up the SAF are a microcosm of society. As such, this organisation is not immune to changes in society and the expectations of Singaporeans.

1. Figures were obtained from the Nielsen Southeast Asia Digital Consumer Report 2011, which drew from a sample of more than 8000 digital consumers in Southeast Asia.
2. See Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Frank La Rue.

We must understand that the people we lead are multi-faceted, with differing aspirations, concerns and mindsets, spread over multiple generations. Therefore, our leadership styles and communication methods must also evolve. We cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach.

The people we lead are multi-faceted, with differing aspirations, concerns and mindsets, spread over multiple generations.

Nevertheless, we SAF leaders must hold fast to the core tenets of leadership in our DNA. We will need to stay true to these tenets, even as we adapt our communication and leadership styles in the midst of a changing environment.

LEADERSHIP IN THE REAL WORLD

What describes a typical serviceman in today's SAF?

THE CONNECTED SERVICEMAN

With their smartphones, today's servicemen are constantly connected to the internet, social networks, blogs and countless other information sources. Instant connectivity is now a reality. The use of such technology is common across all generations. Impromptu discussions between people are now easily conducted in cyberspace through chat applications on mobile devices. Connectivity does not just extend

our reach to the cyber world, it also extends our accessibility to each other through digital means.

THE EDUCATED SERVICEMAN

The education levels of our servicemen have improved over the years.³ Combined with an unprecedented ability to receive and disseminate myriad ideas and opinions, today's servicemen have different personal expectations and aspirations compared to their predecessors. While deploying people effectively to utilise their talents is not new, the task of keeping our people engaged is now far more difficult. Our servicemen today constantly seek to advance themselves. Many take up part-time classes, illustrating their motivation to further their education and upgrade their skill sets even while working. The rise in personal aspirations is observed across all generations, with our own in-house education and upgrading programmes being utilised by servicemen across all age groups.

THE CONCERNED CITIZEN

With greater affluence and education levels, today's servicemen hold higher expectations of their leaders. They are more likely to prefer a consultative and participatory approach with regards to their roles in society and the organisation they serve. They are also more likely to seek clarification when in doubt and are not afraid to take a stand and make their voices heard when they feel something is not right, even if they are not directly involved.

3. The Statistics Department of Singapore shows a 6.5% increase in diploma and professional qualification holders and a 23.1% increase in university qualifications between 2000 and 2010 among individuals between the ages of 25–39.



COOKING UP AN ENGINEERING PIECE

ME2 Leng Kok Wah joined the submarine community in 1998 as a chef. On his own initiative, ME2 Leng volunteered for courses at the Institute of Maritime Operations and Systems (IMOS) in an effort to upgrade himself and convert his vocation to a technical one. He did well in both the electrical and mechanical courses, topping the electrical course despite his initial lack of expertise, and successfully qualified as a submarine technician in 2009. ME2 Leng has been an inspiration to the next generation, with another submarine chef having decided to follow in his footsteps.

KEY TENETS OF LEADERSHIP – iLEAD

Given the changing profiles and increased expectations of our servicemen, it is clear that there must be a parallel evolution in leadership and communication styles for leaders to continue to motivate, inspire and care for those we lead. While there must be transformation in our leadership styles, there are also key tenets of leadership that must remain constant for the SAF as anchors and beacons across time and circumstance.

These key tenets of leadership are best summarised by the acronym iLEAD—*Inspiring* our people, *Leading* by example, having strong personal *Ethos*, *Achieving* the mission and *Developing* and caring for our people. The acronym iLEAD highlights the importance for all leaders to take ownership of these qualities and be accountable for living them out. We must hold true to these tenets even in the midst of change.

A “TIMELY” SUGGESTION

One Full-Time National Serviceman (NSF) Trainee used the well-publicised feedback box at IMOS to request for earlier bus services into Changi Naval Base. Despite his best efforts, he would invariably be late because the earliest bus simply arrived in base later than his reporting time. His concern for the community was highlighted by the fact that he was graduating from his course and any changes made would ultimately not benefit him. Nonetheless, he was more than willing to make the effort to convey his feedback and improve the lives of others after him. His suggestion was accepted and there are now earlier buses that ferry our servicemen to Changi Naval Base every morning.

Inspiring our people involves imbuing them with a clear sense of purpose and mission, and setting out a vision that is shared by all. This will enthuse our people by giving them meaning in their work, motivating them to take ownership of both mission and vision.

As leaders, we must be good role models and **lead by example**. We must be willing and able to undergo the same trials and challenges as those whom we lead. We must show the way through our actions, demanding even more of ourselves than of our people. They will observe not just what we say, but more importantly what we do. We should devote more to our teams to ensure their success—this may take the form of us fine-tuning their plans

even while our men are resting, or putting more time into our personal training and preparation to ensure high personal competency.

As leaders, we must also be guided by a strong **personal ethos** that serves as an internal compass guiding our actions and decisions, doing the right thing even when nobody is watching. Such personal ethos can be characterised by the qualities of integrity, discipline, moral courage, resilience and loyalty to Singapore. We must be trusted to act selflessly and in the best interests of the country.

Leaders in the SAF must stay focused on the mission and lead our people to mission success.



THE iCARE WAY

Project iCARE was launched as part of the Republic of Singapore Navy's (RSN) efforts to enhance the engagement of our people. The iCARE initiative focuses on four main thrusts—**C**ommitment to our people, nurturing our people to realise their **A**spirations, **R**ecognising their contributions, and creating a positive workplace **E**xperience. Through Project iCARE, the RSN seeks to build cohesive teams of servicemen and women who are committed heart and mind to realising the full potential of the Third Generation RSN.

A good example of how of Project iCARE has touched our people is in the case of ME4 Teng Han Leng. As a keen learner, ME4 Teng naturally took the chance to embark on a part-time degree when he was accepted into SIM University (UniSIM). However, he was also concerned that his operational schedule and commitments in the navy would conflict with his studies. His superiors at 171 SQN helped to schedule his duties and operational commitments such that ME4 Teng did not miss lessons and examinations. This gave ME4 Teng the peace of mind to focus on his studies and eventually graduate with good honours.

ME4 Teng joined the Military Domain Experts Course (MDEC) Phase 2 after graduation, where he clinched the prestigious Sword of Honour award. ME4 Teng has since returned to 171 SQN where he actively contributes as the squadron's Combat Systems Engineer and proudly leads his team of combat technicians.



Achieving the Mission requires us to ensure that our people understand the intent of our decisions and actions—they must know what needs to be done and how to go about doing it even when the leader is absent. Mission success is cardinal, and leaders in the SAF must be capable of making the hard decisions, trade-offs and choices to ensure that they are accomplished.

Comprehensive one-on-one engagement is possible if each leader puts in the time and effort.

Leaders must ***develop and care*** for those we lead. Just as we expect our people to be committed to the organisation, so too must we be committed to the personal and professional success of our people—looking after their aspirations, recognising their contributions and achievements, offering them opportunities for development and creating a positive experience and strong sense of mission for them in the organisation.

In order to develop and care for our people, we need to understand their aspirations, needs and concerns. One-on-one engagement with our people is crucial to establishing this understanding and helps us to better appreciate their inner universe through a personal lens. But in a large military organisation, how do we ensure that all of our people are engaged one-on-one? This can be done if we conscientiously engage each and every one of our direct reports, or subordinates, and they in turn do the same for their people.

This engagement can be done through interviews or informal chit-chats over lunch or coffee, not discussing work *per se* but their aspirations, needs and concerns instead. As Chief, I engage each and every member of my Naval Staff on a one-on-one basis. With each member of Naval Staff in turn engaging their direct reports one-on-one and so on down the chain of command, eventually every person in the RSN is thus engaged. Comprehensive one-on-one engagement is possible if each leader puts in the time and effort.

iLEAD IN THE GULF OF ADEN

In 2009, the vision “Mission Ready Together, Mission Excellence as One” was forged for the SAF’s contribution to the international counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, Operation Blue Sapphire (OBS), and it has remained in the hearts of those who led and participated in the operation. SLTC Richard Lim, Commander for the 2011 OBS (Maritime) Task Group strongly believes that the success of a tri-service mission such as OBS rests on having an effective and integrated team, and that strong leadership is vital for driving team dynamics.

From the start, SLTC Lim used the OBS vision to inspire his people. Whether it was during the pre-mission brief, Commander Task Group (CTG) dialogues or regular talks, emphasis was placed on explaining the “whys” of the mission, its importance to Singapore as a maritime nation and the importance for the RSN and SAF to project true professionalism as an instrument of both deterrence and diplomacy.

As Commander of the Task Group, SLTC Lim was strongly aware that his people’s lives were “in his hands” and that he could not fail them through poor planning and preparation. For the operation, SLTC Lim placed stringent demands on himself and all his officers. This meant being present for all training sessions and joining the various teams in their training scenarios in order to understand and appreciate their respective challenges. It also meant spending a lot of personal time thinking through the demands of the mission, developing scenarios and crafting Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) in order to better prepare the teams for each session.

People development was also a key concern for the leadership of the Task Group. SLTC Lim dedicated time and effort in one-on-

one sessions with one of his junior officers, helping him understand the demands of his job as he was not specifically trained for it. When in-theatre, SLTC Lim explained his daily requirements and guided the officer in his preparation work. The junior officer went on to excel at his job, pleasantly surprising the Task Group with what he achieved.



ADAPTING LEADERSHIP STYLES AND COMMUNICATION METHODS

While the core tenets above form the foundation of leadership, we must recognise that their application cannot remain stagnant. We need to adapt both our leadership and communication styles to fit today's changing environment in ways that will allow us to reach out to the full spectrum of SAF servicemen.

Given the increasing education and expertise levels of our servicemen today, we particularly need to adjust our leadership styles to place greater emphasis on a participative and consultative approach, encouraging our people to step up and take initiative. While open-ended consultations and discussions are not appropri-

ate in certain circumstances, such as in the heat of battle, we must recognise that our people are now more inquisitive and must be prepared to provide cogent rationales for our decisions and actions rather than expect our answers to be accepted at face value. We should flatten our hierarchies as much as possible and create avenues for our people to provide input and feedback on issues. Getting our people involved in the decision-making process will give them a sense of ownership over the tasks at hand. Instead of micro-managing, we should empower our people to find efficient and effective ways to fulfil the tasks assigned. We should let them understand our intentions, direction and desired outcomes, then guide them in making and owning their decisions.

LEADERSHIP THROUGH EMPOWERMENT – THE CLUSTER CONCEPT

The typical warship's Combat Information Centre (CIC) used to be centred on the Principal Warfare Officers (PWOs), with operators and supervisors performing only rudimentary information compilation and reporting. Tactical decision-making was conducted only by the PWOs. Today, we have transformed the CIC concept to relieve the Cluster Chiefs of basic first-level tasks. Based on the directions set by the PWOs, the Cluster Chiefs now take charge of their respective warfare clusters, conduct their own cluster briefs, determine the optimal system parameters to employ, and provide tactical recommendations to the PWOs. The Cluster Chiefs now have the autonomy to direct their respective warfare areas and make decisions. While advanced technology and automation have improved the work process and made the cluster concept possible, the most important enabler of change has been the increased education and expertise levels of our servicemen, coupled with their motivation to participate actively in the warfighting requirements of the CIC.

This "Top Down Direction, Bottom Up Recommendation" approach has revolutionised the work processes in the CIC and has created greater capacity for the PWOs to focus on Warfare Commander roles and Task Group level operations. More importantly, it has allowed the Cluster Chiefs to participate in the decision workflow of the CIC and take greater ownership of their actions.

We must also be prepared to empower our people to make choices that influence their own development and aspirations, and try our best to meet their preferences. A good example is postings—we should try as far as possible to meet our people’s posting preferences, because a person who gets to do what he or she asked for is going to be much more committed and passionate. Of course, there will be occasions where preferences cannot be met due to reasons such as job availability, personnel suitability or Route of Advancement (ROA) requirements. In such cases we should explain why a person’s preference cannot be met, so that he or she can understand the logic and rationale behind the decision.

We must also get used to leading in “matrixed” or networked structures, with our people reporting to multiple channels. An example of this would be the network of functional hubs and Task Forces in the SAF. This requires us to understand the constraints, opportunities and perspectives posed by other parts of the network, and help our people navigate and overcome the challenges they face.

We must recognise that the broad spectrum of people under our charge today requires us to communicate with them through various means. In particular, we must increasingly use social media to connect with our people and

PASSION IS THE BEST MEDICINE

ME4 Kelly Foo, a Military Medicine Expert (MME) with the Navy Medical Services (NMS), always wanted to contribute beyond providing medical support to the operational units of the Navy. Armed with a degree in Health Sciences (Nursing), ME4 Foo wanted to be able to influence how naval medical operations were planned and executed.

ME4 Foo’s passion for her profession, consistent good performance and desire to push boundaries gave her superiors at NMS the confidence that she had what it takes to assume greater responsibilities and make substantial contributions to the medical service. In 2011, ME4 Foo was nominated for MDEC Phases 1 and 2, incorporating the Medical Officers’ Conver-

sion Course (MOCC). She graduated from the MOCC clinching the Top Knowledge Award, beating 48 other military doctors and experts.

ME4 Foo currently serves as the Chief Warrant Officer of NMS, where she is deeply involved in the conceptualisation and planning of the Navy’s medical operations, including projects and policies that influence the routes of advancement of MMEs. ME4 Foo successfully led a medical detachment during Operation Surya Bhaskara Jaya (SBJ) in Indonesia and is grateful for the opportunity to fulfil her professional aspirations.

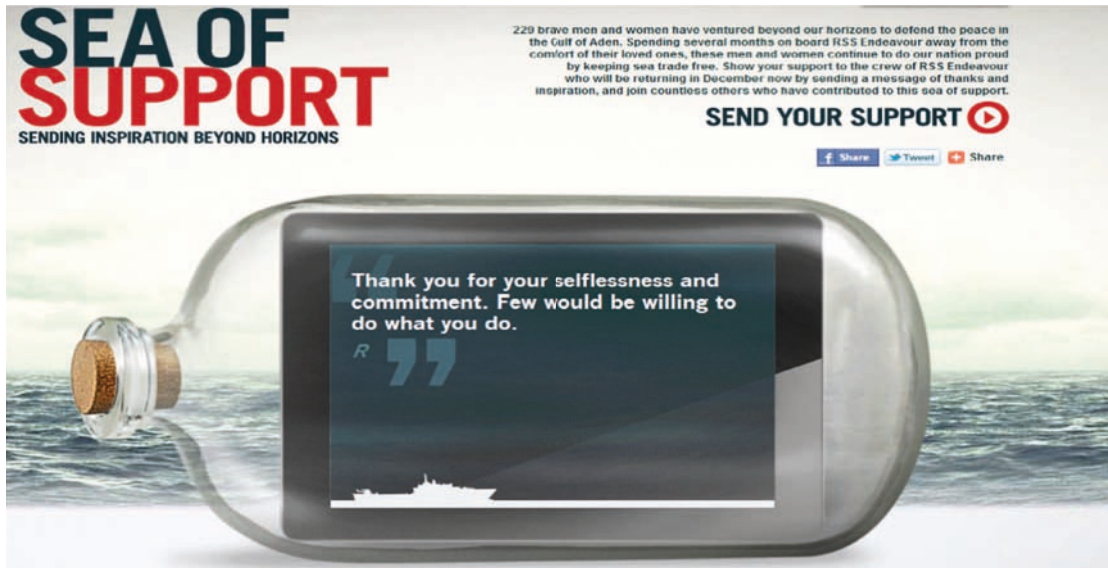
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Another way in which we can empower our people is by developing leadership skills at all levels. For example, Training Command (TRACOM) and the Naval Officers' Advanced School (NAS) have done well in providing modules in Coaching and Facilitation to our leaders, focusing on skill sets to nurture and engage our people. While correctional punishment and regimentation remain tools that we can use when necessary, we cannot rely on these methods alone—if the rationale for using these measures is poorly communicated, they can prove demoralising. Coaching and facilitation methods provide our people with more options and allow them to address the training and developmental needs of a wider spectrum of servicemen.

the wider public. However, the world of social media presents just as many dangers as opportunities. Social media is real-time, fast-paced and double-edged. While the transaction costs of getting one's views across social media are relatively low and we can touch the hearts of many, it also provides an avenue where highly public criticism can be levelled against our organisation and go viral with the click of a button. There is a thin line distinguishing personal comments from official statements and messages published on social media can easily be taken out of context.

As such, while we should use social media for engaging our people and the wider public, we must first ensure that our people are properly

prepared to operate in this new arena, so that they can understand the risks involved, leverage on the opportunities and avoid the potential pitfalls. Preparing our people for social media involves more than just implementing and enforcing policies that govern and guide online conduct. We need to build up our own "tribe," where our people are aligned with and have a deep sense of ownership over the organisation's vision, values and policies. We need to apply the iLEAD tenets of leadership in building and leading this tribe, and imbue our people with the instincts and skills to stand up for it. We need to nurture "voices" of advocacy and build up a reservoir of goodwill, such that our advocates both within and without will speak up for our organisation on their own accord.



A good example of the use of social media would be the “Sea of Support” webpage that was set up by 191 SQN to let the public show support for servicemen deployed on international counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden (GoA). The webpage provided a useful platform for us to strengthen bonds internally and externally with the public, and saw a strong show of support from fellow servicemen and members of the public. The deployed servicemen also appreciated the easily accessible way for their loved ones to communicate with them.

Nonetheless, there are also many in our organisation who are not well-disposed towards such means of communication. We must not forget the importance of personal interaction with our people. Engagement in the virtual realm cannot replace face-to-face engagement in physical reality. We must continue our dialogues and interactions and be present in the physical realm, reinforcing the mutual trust necessary to lead our people in operations.

ONE MORE THING

It is indeed remarkable how much technology has progressed and how quickly the advances in the virtual world are being translated into physical reality.

The challenge of leadership in this new environment does not lie in crafting novel leadership doctrines, nor is it about following the latest fads to make ourselves popular or appear trendy to those under our charge. Rather, the challenge is to adjust our leadership and communication styles to connect effectively with our people, while holding fast to the core of leadership—*inspiring our people, leading by example, having strong personal ethos, achieving the mission, and developing and caring for our people*. It is about applying the leadership tenets in a different context and harnessing both old and new tools at our disposal to connect with the diverse groups of people who serve with us in both the virtual and physical realms. As leaders, we must rise up to this challenge and chart the right course for the future.⁴

4. I would like to thank MAJ Kong Eu Yen, MAJ Augustine Lim and CPT Bertram Ang for the time and effort that they spent in helping me consolidate this monograph.

LEADERSHIP SELF REFLECTION

AVOIDING AN “AVERAGE LEADERSHIP STYLE”:

1. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), how well do you take the individual attributes of the person into account when leading?
2. What does it mean to be “individually considerate”?
Imagine a scenario where you have to write a testimonial for a serviceman. On a scale of 0 (all copy and paste) to 10 (completely individualised), does your testimonial comprise more “copy and paste” than text specific to the person?
3. Here is another way to think about adapting to individuals:
 - a. Think of a serviceman. Describe what he (or she) is like.
 - b. Now think of another serviceman. Describe what he is like.
 - c. Now repeat this one more time with another serviceman. Describe what he is like.
 - d. On a scale of 1 (same) to 10 (completely different), to what extent do you use the same adjectives (or descriptive words) in your three descriptions?

NOW APPROACH EACH OF THESE THREE SERVICE PERSONNEL. SEEK FEEDBACK FROM THEM ABOUT HOW YOU HAVE BEEN LEADING THEM. REPRODUCE AND HAND EACH OF THEM THE ATTACHED FEEDBACK SHEET.

STORIES ABOUT MY LEADERSHIP

In the space below, please share a story or two about my leadership as you have observed it.

FEEDBACK ON MY LEADERSHIP

Please share what you have observed about my leadership style. In the boxes below, please share aspects which have been consistent across situations and aspects which have varied.

What is consistent about my leadership?

What aspects of my leadership change according to the situation?

AFTERWORD

What is leadership? The exact definition varies depending on which leadership scholar you ask. Nonetheless, the gist of the many definitions generally revolves around inspiring people towards something beyond themselves. The SAF's official definition is specific: it is "the process of influencing people to accomplish the mission, inspiring their commitment and improving the organisation."

What does it mean to lead well? The answer to this question is more situational. Leading well means different things to different people. Hence, as CNV's reflections point out, it pays to fully understand what makes those you lead tick. It is not about populism and pandering to the crowd—because leadership at its heart is about people, one cannot be ignorant of those one leads. To be a practitioner of leadership is to be a student of human behaviour.

Good leadership also depends on the level you are leading at, as succinctly put forth by COA's reflections. Leadership that works for one level will not work well at the next level without proper adaptation. The issue of levels of leadership is so important that the SAF Multi-Source Leadership Feedback System (MSLF) is subdivided into three levels of direct, organisational and strategic leadership feedback.

Regardless of the level you are currently leading at, being able to adapt what you have learnt from one level to the next is critical for success. CAF notes that for successful adaptation to occur, one must be educated widely on the various theories and approaches to leadership, so that one possesses the toolset to deal with the situation at hand.

Indeed, being able to correctly frame the situation is a vital first step of leading, according to CDF. And the final word in leadership? It is about the people you lead. Without fail, each Service Chief reminds us in his own way to focus on our followers. In the midst of rapid transformation, as the SAF progresses to the Third Generation and beyond, this is one tenet that will never change—we lead well when we pay attention to those we are leading.

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