

armynews

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Issue No. 177

JUNE 2010

pulse of the army



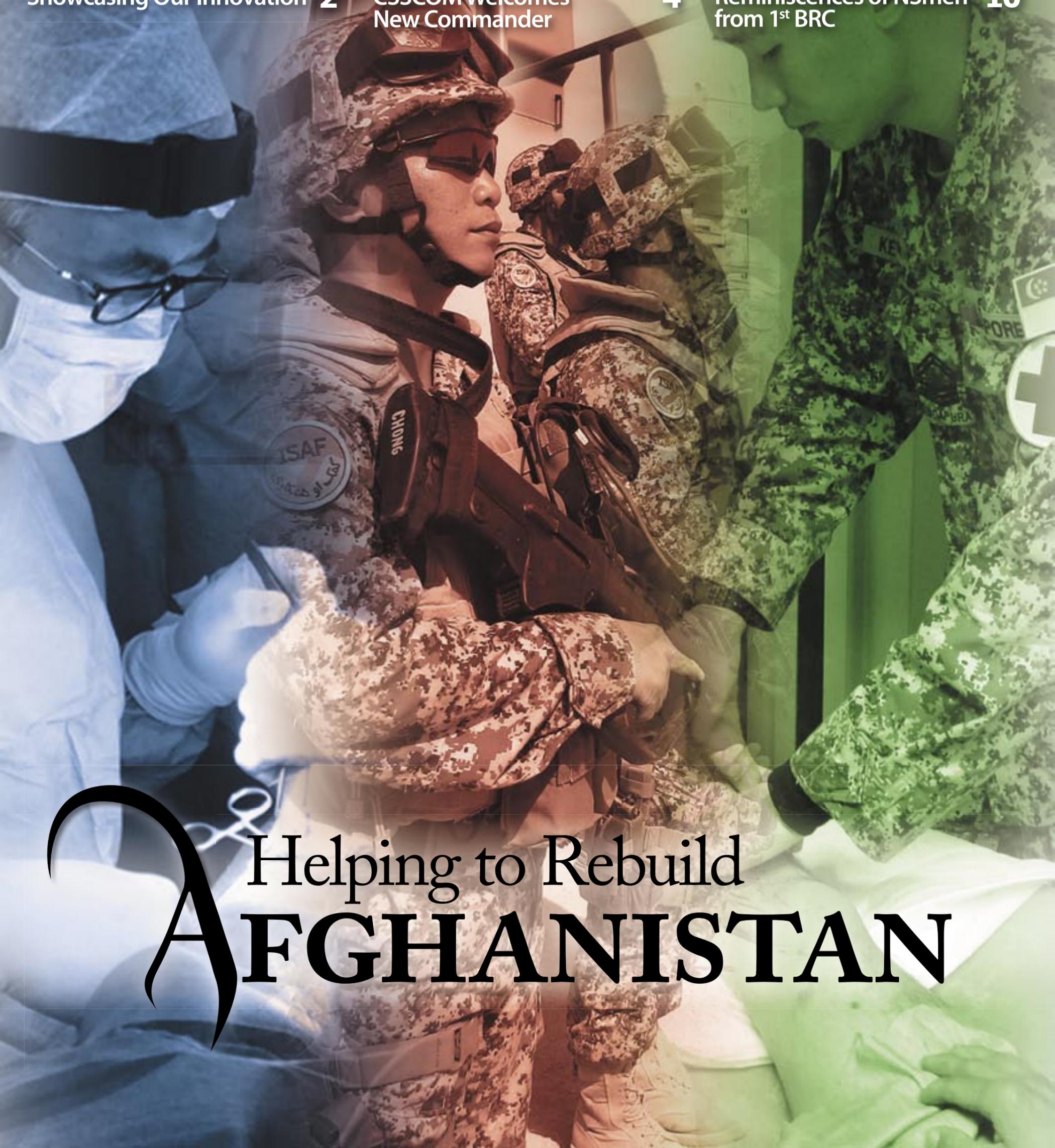
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Helping to Rebuild **AFGHANISTAN**

Showcasing Our Innovation

Story by Jonathan Chan / Photography by Mark Ng



DPM Teo speaking on the importance of innovation at this year's MINDEF PRIDE day

\$207 million. That is how much money the SAF saved in the last financial year through servicemen's innovations and work improvement ideas. On 8 June, the innovative contributions of some 127 individuals, groups and units from MINDEF and the SAF were recognised at the MINDEF Productivity and Innovation in Daily Efforts (PRIDE) Day held at the Housing Development Board Hub in Toa Payoh. At the awards ceremony held that afternoon, guest of honour Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean highlighted that efforts to transform the SAF at the organisational level is a major productivity improvement that must be embraced at all levels. He added, "It is therefore critical that the PRIDE movement that we started in 1981 continue to grow and spread throughout MINDEF and the SAF, to always want to achieve the most with the resources allocated to us."

Apart from the awards ceremony, an exhibition was held for visitors, including members of the public, to view a wide range of creative ideas that have helped the SAF and MINDEF to increase efficiency and cut costs. Visitors were also treated to games, performances by the SAF Music and Drama Company and the SAF Military Police Command, and live radio shows hosted by deejays from Power 98FM and JIA 88.3FM.



Team Leader 3WO Lim and two members of his team posing for a shot with an inflated boulder

Inflatable Obstacles: Simple & Effective

Among the award winners at this year's MINDEF PRIDE Day was Team Cougar 1 from HQ Commandos which won the Best WITS Project (Operations and Training Category) with their design for inflatable obstacles. Army News looks into this simple but innovative idea.

Importance of Obstacles in Training

Obstacles on the battlefield, whether naturally present or planted by the enemy, impede the movement of forces. It is

thus important that they are present in drills and exercises so that our training are realistic and effective. This however is dependent on the easy availability of realistic obstacles. Thanks to a creative idea by Team Cougar 1, they are now easily available for incorporation into drills and exercises. The innovation marries the concept of mobility and convenience with operational realism. Team leader 3WO Lim Chun Heng shared the circumstances that gave rise to the project, "Counter mobility and obstacles are an important aspect of engagements against enemy forces, including their Armour. Boulders and trees are excellent natural obstacles for block and harassment operations. The easiest way to indicate the presence of obstacles during training is to demarcate the ground with white tape. However, white tape is a poor simulator of the natural obstacles and offers very low operational or training value to the troops. Hence, we sought an alternative obstacle-simulator that is both realistic and practical."

The Eureka Moment

3WO Lim candidly shared the unusual background that provided the creative spark for the innovation, "The idea of using inflatable objects came to us in a very light-hearted manner. While observing the inflatable jumping castles for kids during a family day at Pasir Ris, it occurred to us that we could make obstacles out of balloons!"

Fired up, the team quickly pursued the idea and developed it into feasible working prototypes. The inflatable structures would be made out of PVC and could be inflated in about 20 minutes. They would be manufactured in different shapes, colours and sizes to simulate a wide range of natural obstacles. For example, a tree trunk is simulated with a patchy greyish-brown cylindrical inflatable measuring eight metres in length and one metre in diameter. Likewise, a boulder would be simu-



Inflatable Obstacles come in all shapes and sizes to simulate actual obstacles (photo courtesy of HQ Commandos)

lated with a spotted brown or grey sphere inflatable of about 1.5 metre in diameter.

A Durable Solution

The PVC inflatable structures generally have a life span of two years under normal usage. Furthermore, the same inflatable structures can be reused during many training exercises making them extremely cost effective. The inflated structures also do not get deflated easily and hence do not require manpower to frequently re-inflate them. 3WO Lim revealed, "We conducted a trial test and found that the obstacle lasted up to five days without losing its shape."

Easy Mobility

One great advantage of the inflatable obstacles is their portability as they can be quickly deflated and moved. Light and compact, the deflated obstacles can be easily stored or moved to another training location.

Caring for the Environment

These reusable inflatable obstacles eliminate the need to chop down trees or move boulders around to provide realistic training during exercises. They hence help to protect the natural environment of the training sites and contribute to our Army's effort to be eco-friendly.

Successful Implementation

There is no better way to test an idea than to put it into practice. Since its creation, inflatable obstacles have been used successfully in both local trainings as well as overseas exercises. During exercises conducted between Armour and Commandos, the inflatable obstacles have proven to be both practical and beneficial in raising the level of training realism. SSG Ee Kian Yong, a team member, elaborated, "Because we were able to realistically create the scenario with these inflatable obstacles, we were able to successfully practice our drills in stopping a convoy of armoured infantry. As a result, the troops were able to improve their drills on harassment operations. Previously, the armour personnel often failed to spot the 'obstacles' and continued driving past the 'ambush point' without stopping as the white tape used to demarcate the obstacles was ineffective."



The inflatable obstacles successfully simulate real obstacles, causing armoured vehicles to halt or alter course (photo courtesy of HQ Commandos)

SAF Medical Corps Shares Expertise at ICEM

Story by Jonathan Chan / Photography by Mark Ng

"Conduct of the Military Medicine Track of the 13th International Conference on Emergency Medicine (ICEM) is a significant milestone in establishing the SAF Medical Corps as a world class medical service. It also allows us to benchmark our practices and standards against current international medical advances and research around the world," said LTC (DR) Chua Wei Chong, Chief Army Medical Officer. LTC (DR) Chua also chaired the half-day Military Track of the conference on 12 June. Singapore is the first country in Asia to host this premier medical conference, held from 9 to 12 June at the Suntec City Convention Centre. The conference saw an attendance of about 1,800 medical delegates from more than 50 countries.



LTC (DR) Chua Wei Chong opening the Military Medicine Track of ICEM

As one of the leaders in pre-hospital and trauma care in Singapore, the SAF Medical Corps was invited to organise the Military Medicine Track which was well attended by both local and foreign delegates. Five distinguished foreign military doctors also spoke on their areas of expertise.

One of them, LTC William White, the Director of Trauma Education at the Defence Medical Readiness Training Institute of the US Army Medical Department, shared on preparing trauma teams for combat operations. He drew from past experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan to illustrate the numerous complications that can arise in a field hospital. LTC White shared, "Right now we are entering a whole new paradigm shift with regards to trauma management in an austere environment. We believe in helping as many people as we can and there is nothing secret or classified about our medical practices."



LTC White is glad for the contributions made by the SAF medical overseas missions to Afghanistan

Another speaker, Professor Viktor Meineke, the Director of the Bundeswehr Institute of Radiobiology, spoke on dealing with the aftermath of nuclear attacks.



Dr Crawford appreciates the realism of the practical sessions



MAJ (DR) Loh Hong Ye presenting his experience in Afghanistan

Other areas of discussion include the psycho-social resilience in the military and the application of lessons learnt in military medical practice to civilian practice.

Our own medical officers also took to the podium. They shared on various topics, including the SAF experience in Afghanistan and the SAF Medical Corps' research and expertise in the management of heat injuries. It is indeed heartening to note the acknowledgement of the SAF Medical Corps' professionalism by foreign experts, as reflected in LTC White's words, "I have known the SAF Medical Corps for some time. Last year I was here on a surgical conference and I met many of your medical personnel right before they were deployed into Afghanistan. They are extremely well trained and very well



LTC (NS) (DR) Mak explaining the importance of ATLS to the SAF Medical Corps

equipped. We are certainly looking forward to more joint activities with Singapore."

Prior to the ICEM conference, a 2-day Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) workshop was conducted by the SAF Medical Corps to provide participants with an internationally recognised certification in the immediate and emergency care of trauma patients. Course Director LTC (NS) (DR) Kenneth Mak elaborated, "In 1991, the SAF recognised the relevance of ATLS to the Medical Corps mission of providing medical coverage for SAF operations and initiated an ATLS training centre. Today, all SAF Medical Officers undergo the ATLS course." LTC (DR) Chua added, "After completing the ATLS course, doctors should be able to identify an emergency situation, make quick interventions that could save a life and prevent deterioration of the casualty. The response by foreign doctors to this course was encouraging and so overwhelming that we had to turn down some applications that came in later."

Held from 7 to 8 June at the SAF Medical Training Institute, the course attracted 22 doctors from countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Malaysia, Canada and India. The course was run entirely by the SAF Medical Corps own ATLS instructors who gave lectures, conducted practicals and administered the test. Dr Ian Crawford, an emergency care physician from Manchester, England was appreciative of the way the course was run, "The course has been excellent. The effort taken to simulate actual casualties is tremendous. The realism of the training here gives me more confidence to handle actual emergency cases."

Dr Katherine McNamara, a resident medical officer in Fremantle Hospital, Australia similarly praised the overall organisation of the course, "Everything ran very smoothly. The lectures are very informative and the instructors have provided very useful guidance along the way." For LTC (DR) Chua, the successful conduct of the course is an affirmation of the high standard achieved by the SAF Medical Corps, "We are honoured that the SAF Medical Corps was asked to conduct this course as part of the ICEM. It recognises the high level of proficiency the Corps possess."

CSSCOM Welcomes New Commander

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Derrick Heng

It was perfect weather for a parade on the evening of 21 May as the Combat Service Support Command (CSSCOM) family bid a fond farewell to their commander COL Ngien Hoon Ping and welcomed the incoming commander, COL Tan Peng Kuan.

In 2005, COL Ngien led the effort to create CSSCOM to better support the changing needs of the 3rd Generation SAF. In 2006 CSSCOM was officially formed with COL Ngien as its first commander. He overcame the initial challenges of a new formation by continually engaging the ground and being open to feedback. He shared, "I held to a very open system and culture and we were never defensive about feedback received. I encouraged feedback because we should be thankful that people are giving us feedback so we can work towards solving problems." Fostering a cohesive community from a diverse group, each with its own area of specialisation, is never an easy task. But under COL Ngien's leadership, the various CSSCOM components of HQ Supply, HQ Transport, HQ Army Medical Services, HQ Maintenance and Engineering Support and HQ Army Logistics Training Institute came together under the shared vision of One CSS.

With COL Ngien at the helm, CSSCOM rapidly grew its capabilities as evident in its efficient support of major SAF overseas exercises such as Exercise Wallaby in Australia and Exercise Forging Sabre in the USA. CSSCOM also provided critical logistics for SAF overseas operations like the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief mission after the earthquakes in Sumatra last year. Since the creation of the SAF Integrated Motor Transport Line in 2007, CSSCOM has extended its transport services beyond the Army to the other two Services. To ensure that new sophisticated platforms such as the High Mobility Rocket System are able to perform flawlessly, CSSCOM continually upgrade its facilities and workforce skills so that a high maintenance standard can be provided.



COL Ngien (left) handing over the command of CSSCOM to COL Tan

In expressing his appreciation for the support of his men, COL Ngien said in his farewell speech, "CSSCOM's success story cannot be attributed to just one or a few of you. It has succeeded because all levels of leadership and Combat Service Support warriors across Our Army believe in our mission to sustain the World Class Army that is the SAF. We think operational, we live CSS."

COL Ngien has moved on to assume the appointment of Director Joint Operations.

Incoming Commander COL Tan Peng Kuan is no stranger to the CSSCOM community having held appointments such

as Commanding Officer 1st Transport Battalion and Head Plans in HQ Supply and Transport. As the new Commander CSSCOM, COL Tan shared with Army News some of his aspirations for the formation, "We'll be building on the foundations that COL Ngien had laid out and continue our focus on operations and training. Locally, we will be supporting the Youth Olympic Games as well as the National Day Parade. Overseas, we will continue to support training like Exercise Wallaby. Another key milestone this year will be the upcoming Integrated Headquarters which will bring together the commands of the various CSSCOM components under one roof to facilitate greater command and control.

COL Tan is a firm believer in people-centric leadership. He intends to lead CSSCOM with that philosophy, "The most fundamental thing lies within our people. We need to continue to engage them and engender commitment to defence. We also need to continue to develop and build on the professionalism and competency of our people and seek to attract and retain capable people with the right value to ensure continuity." The diversity within CSSCOM is something COL Tan believes they can leverage on, "We're developing deep domain competencies within the respective CSS formations but task-organising them to provide integrated CSS services. One good example is the Forward Support Groups that we task-organised to support overseas exercises.

There is no doubt that COL Tan is looking forward to working with the CSSCOMmunity to bring CSSCOM to greater heights. He shared, "I'm excited and this is not the first time I've worked with the CSSCOMmunity. I will build on the current CSSCOM's strengths to support the next spiral of development in the Army and to focus on our people's learning and growth."

Army News wishes COL Ngien and COL Tan all the best in their future endeavours!

Enhancing Medical Care and Support in the SAF

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Mark Ng



The new resuscitation room with medical equipment and supplies accessible at an arm's reach, enhances critical care in the medical centre

The present SAF medical centres are well-equipped and staffed with trained personnel to handle a wide range of medical contingencies. To further raise the level of medical care and support for our servicemen, the SAF Medical Corps is constantly upgrading and enhancing its health service. Army News has a sneak preview into these latest improvements during a visit to the Rocky Hill Camp Medical Centre, the newest to open its door in conjunction with the opening of the Basic Military Training Centre (BMTC) School 4 on Pulau Tekong.

Designed for Efficiency

One striking feature of the new medical centre is the enhancement to emergency care. The resuscitation room in the Medical Centre has been configured to the standard of hospital A&E departments. CPT (DR) Boon Jiabin, Pulau Tekong Medical Officer In Charge described the improvements, "The new resus room enables all round rapid care to the patient. Previously, we stored medical supplies in a trolley, where we can only access one drawer at a time to retrieve items. Now, we have cabinets with a well-designed shelving system which put critically needed equipment and supplies within easy reach of the medical officer and medics. This is important because in a critical care situation, speed, accuracy and access are imperative." The improved resuscitation room design has also been incorporated into newly built medical centres in Paya Lebar Air Base and Selarang Camp. New medical centres being constructed in Seletar Camp and Changi Air Base will have similarly equipped resuscitation rooms while those in existing medical centres will be retrofitted.

The new resuscitation bay is just one of the many improvements that were implemented following a review of the processes in a medical centre. The work flow from patient arrival to leaving the dispensary was mapped and studied. In converting what was previously a School of Infantry Specialists' premise into a brand new medical centre, every square inch of the place was utilised to maximise patient care. COL (DR) Tan Peng Hui, Commander of the Military Medical Institute elaborated, "This medical centre is designed with our patient in mind. Its layout allows quick access to every space with minimum of cross traffic activity. The resus room, where we care for some of the sickest patients, is designed for speed of care." Other design features of the Rocky Hill Medical Centre include two separate entrances, which if required, can separate febrile patients from others when during a flu outbreak.



Now patients can have their blood pressure measured by the automated machine quickly and accurately.

ample, after we have referred servicemen to the hospitals for a MRI scan, we can view the findings online while the hard copy report is being sent to the SAF." This enhanced integration with Singapore's public healthcare system has immense benefits for servicemen as hospitals will get to access to records of their treatment received within the SAF. Fully rolled out in all SAF medical centres, this health information sharing system will receive a further boost in April 2011 when 50 General Practitioner clinics are integrated into the system.

Providing a Positive Experience

To enhance patients' experience during their visit to the Rocky Hill Medical Centre, the reporting sick process has been streamlined using automation. Following registration, servicemen can have their height, weight and Body Mass Index (BMI) measured by a fully automated BMI measuring machine. The machine, equipped with an ultra-sonic sensor automatically computes the BMI and produces the results in a printout. It eliminates the manual process of height and weight taking. Servicemen can also have their blood pressure taken by an automated blood pressure machine. This digital machine, which replaces the manual method of using a mercury sphygmomanometer and a stethoscope, is quick and minimises human error.

With its streamlined processes, quick access to critical health information and introduction of new medical technology, the new Rocky Hill Medical Centre is able to deliver better patient care. ME3 Imran Ali, Senior Medic at the medical centre described the new facilities, "We treat about 40 to 50 patients a day on average and the improvements in the medical centre have made the daily operation of the centre very efficient." Concurring with him was REC Gerald Lim who shared with Army News his experience, "Today was my first time reporting sick in the Army and based on my experience I think the School Four medical centre is definitely on par with any private clinic."

Better Decisions with More Information

Leveraging on technology is part of the SAF's 3rd Generation transformation. The new Rocky Hill Medical Centre showcases how health information technology (IT) has been tapped to improve the efficiency, quality and safety of patient care. For example, in addition to accessing the SAF Electronic Medical Record System (PACES) from the desk of their consultation rooms, medical officers can also obtain medical information from external sources. By plugging into the Electronic Medical Record Exchange (EMRX) system, medical officers are able to view online serviceman's hospitalisation history or A&E attendances provided by the Ministry of Health. EMRX, which was fully rolled out across all SAF medical centres in April 2010, also shares serviceman's vaccination and laboratory test results with the hospitals, enhancing in-patient care for servicemen. From their PACES terminals, MO in medical centre can also access the Critical Medical Information Store (CMIS) System, which is a national database of critical patient information including medical alerts and drug allergy.

CPT (DR) Boon explained, "With this system, we have access to critical information in real time all the time. For ex-



Medical Officers now have access to patients' data collected in public hospitals thanks to the Electronic Medical Record Exchange

BMTC School 4 Inaugurates

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Mark Ng

Rocky Hill Camp on Pulau Tekong has filled multiple roles over the years. Previously, it housed the School of Infantry Specialists before becoming a part of Basic Military Training Centre (BMTC) School 1. On 4 June it made its latest transformation into BMTC School 4 at an Inauguration Parade that also saw LTC Mohammed Jasni Bin Jamaludin take command as the school's Commanding Officer.



LTC Jasni believes that a solid BMT foundation is critical for developing our 3rd Generation soldiers

The inauguration of BMTC School 4 is the latest development in Our Army's continual effort to strengthen its BMT system. Moving away from the previous 2-school system, the new BMTC now has four schools each commanding seven companies. This allows for a better span of command and control. With more regulars on the ground, they are also able to share their military experience thereby enhancing the recruits' learning experience and inculcation of the army values. This closer supervision is something LTC Jasni is looking forward to foster. He said, "This system of four schools, each with seven companies, allows the schools to devote more time and effort for a closer supervision and engagement over the recruits, review our performance and subsequently make training quality gains. I believe it will give the school HQ more time and opportunity to engage both the commanders and the recruits."

LTC Jasni also revealed that continual improvement in BMT is more than just structural change. Commanders have been re-profiled while the BMT content has been re-designed to be interactive and engaging through the BMT LEARNet facilities. This will help to meet the expectations of today's recruits who have higher-order learning needs. The BMT curriculum was also updated for a better balance between physical, intellectual and the emotional engagement. For example, commitment and core values-related instruction now include current affairs discussions, defence awareness projects and regional affairs talks. LTC Jasni elaborated, "The OCs in BMT have many ideas on how to engage the recruits. Recently, in one of the company, the recruits were brought to the canteen to watch the funeral of the late Dr Goh Keng

Swee on television. Later the commanders held a discussion with the recruits on Dr Goh's contributions to defence and the importance of that to the survival of Singapore. Moments like these allow us to instil commitment to defence which is something as critical as military training."

Previous occupants of Rocky Hill Camp probably will not recognise the new BMTC School 4. Part of its transformation included extensive renovation to make the school completely self sufficient. Apart from developing more accommodation blocks for seven companies, School 4 now possesses its own medical centre (see story on page five), swimming pool, standard obstacle course ground, track and field and an expanded canteen. These new facilities will allow all the essential training to be done in School 4. Although located a little further inland on Pulau Tekong than the rest of BMTC, a regular ferry service between School 4 and the other Schools keeps it connected to the rest of BMTC.

LTC Jasni is no stranger to training recruits having served as a Training Officer in BMTC in his younger days. As a commander, LTC Jasni is firmly committed to the idea of moulding our 3rd Generation soldiers and believes it starts at BMT. He explained, "The complexity of the 3rd Generation battlefield requires our soldiers to be equipped with the necessary physical and cognitive skills set, to learn and adapt quickly and continuously. This must be inculcated starting from BMT. The BMT's core mission of training soldiers in their basic soldering tasks and building their character based on the SAF core values will ensure that our soldiers are ready for tomorrow's operation."

OSM: Recognising Our Servicemen and Women on Overseas Missions



“As a responsible member of the international community, Singapore has to do our part to help — indeed it is in our national interest to do so. While the SAF’s primary mission must still be the defence of Singapore’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, we remain committed to contributing to international security operations as these too can affect the vital interests of Singapore,” said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean in his speech at the Overseas Service Medal (OSM) Presentation Ceremony held on 19 May at Headquarters Medical Corps in Nee Soon Camp.

DPM Teo presented the OSM to 85 recipients in recognition of their contributions to the SAF’s deployment efforts. Of the 85 OSM recipients, 37 personnel had served in Afghanistan. DPM Teo also shared, “Our contributions in Afghanistan are not large, but they are in niche areas where we can make an operationally useful contribution to the coalition effort.”

Helping to Rebuild Afghanistan

Story by Jonathan Chan / Photographs courtesy of Medical Team, WLR Team & TF-U

The SAF Medical Team: Alleviating Pains, Hastening Recovery

For four and a half months from November 2009 to April this year, a 13-man SAF Medical Team was deployed to the field hospital in Camp Holland in support of the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Equipped with operating theatres, intensive care units, emergency rooms and wards, the field hos-

pital provides round-the-clock emergency medical care for International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) troops, Afghan national security forces and Afghan civilians. The team included medical officers, nursing officers and medics. Besides performing a wide range of duties in the wards and emergency rooms, the Medical Team also took on the additional responsibility of providing assistance during surgical procedures when required.

The deployment has been a fulfilling experience for the team as they were able to fully practise what they have been trained for. DPM Teo commended the members for their professionalism, “During their 4-month deployment, the Medical Team attended to over 2,500 patients and more than a hundred emergency cases. Their tireless efforts earned them the trust and appreciation of our ISAF partners and the local Afghan population.”

Working Alongside International Experts

The Medical Team also had the opportunity to learn from their foreign counterparts. ME3 Zainal Abidin, an emergency room medic who was also the team’s Sergeant Major elaborated, “At the field hospital we worked with the Netherlands Armed Forces and the Australian Surgical Team. We worked in multi-national groups, each consisting of a Singaporean medic, a Dutch medic and an Australian doctor. To improve and enhance our working relationship we conducted cross training. This



The SAF Medical Team treating a casualty

helped us to better understand each other and get used to the different working protocols.”

Such close interaction with foreign medical personnel was an eye-opener and broadened the team’s experience. It is a testament to the SAF Medical Corps’ professionalism and ability to collaborate effectively with other international medical tasks forces. ME4 Lum E Von, a ward nurse in the field hospital, shared her takeaways, “The experience was enlightening as I got to appreciate the different healthcare approaches. For example, the Dutch nurses have a different procedure for cleaning wounds. Learning about different approaches to the same problem has taught me to be more adaptable.”

Powered by A Humanitarian Spirit

The daily routine of the Medical Team was vividly described by ME3 Abidin, “Each day, we begin by getting the equipment ready and standing by for the patients. When alerted by the hospital command post we will immediately send the ambulance out to pick up the patients. After bringing them to the emergency room, we stabilise them and send them to the operating theatre. Less serious cases will be sent to the ward for recovery. The emergency room will be cleared and ready for the next patient.” With no weekends and holidays for four and a half months, it is mentally and physically exhausting for the team as they have to remain alert at all times. Yet, the indefatigable medical team continued to attend to every casualty during their deployment - powered by their humanitarian spirit as highly dedicated and professional medical personnel.

ME3 Abidin explained, “We are not only soldiers but also medical professionals. The well-being of our patients regardless of their nationality is of the utmost importance. It is satisfying to see a patient admitted with critical injuries subsequently leaving with a smile. The will and determination shown by the patients really inspired the team to do its job well.”

ME4 Lum exemplifies the spirit of dedication demonstrated by the team. She said, “As a ward nurse I guard the route to recovery. Patients come to us from the emergency room or operating theatre and we make sure that they are well cared for and given the best conditions to recover quickly.” She recalled a lady patient who left an impression, “She had stepped on a land mine and had her leg amputated below the knee. The open wound got infected and there was a high possibility that her leg would be amputated even more. She pleaded with the doctors to save her leg. We did. We gave her very strong antibiotics and regularly washed her wound. When she was sent to the operating theatre for the second time, her infection had subsided enough for the surgeons to sew up her wound, without a second amputation.”



ME4 Evon with her dutch counterparts stabilising a local Afghan casualty

Valuing Life

The experience has taught the team not to take what we have for granted. ME3 Abidin said, “I no longer take life and peace in Singapore for granted. ME4 E Von added, “When you bring injured kids out to play, they truly forget their pain and injury and are just thankful to be alive. Some have fractured legs with big heavy screws in them. Their resilience makes me reflect on the value of life. We complain about traffic jams in Singapore but in Afghanistan they do not even have public transport. Some civilians walk half a day just to visit their relatives in the ward.”

Team and Family Support

“What helped sustain us through the four and a half months was the knowledge that we were not there in Afghanistan alone. We had the support of the team and our families in Singapore,” said ME4 Lum.



ME3 Zainal is grateful to his wife for her strong support throughout his deployment

Indeed, the SAF has taken great effort to ensure that the team remained well connected to their families in Singapore. Mrs Zainal Abidin was apprehensive when she first knew of her husband’s deployment. She said, “I was worried because Afghanistan is quite a war-torn country but my husband constantly assured me that their safety was well taken care of. He told me that they will be working closely with the Australian and Dutch Army and that they were very friendly. I got to call him once a week and on my part, I always asked him to do his best for the reconstruction effort. I am so proud and happy for him. His kids knew that their father was away serving the country and they were very understanding.”

While in Afghanistan, the team members were constantly there for each other. ME4 Lum explained, “Although I was the only female in the team, they were extremely encouraging and understanding. During pre-deployment training the entire team would wait for me if I fell behind in my physical training.



The 17-man WLR Team in Afghanistan



The WLR deployed in actual operation for the first time

I trained extra hard so that I would not become a burden to my team. During actual deployment when we had to do physically intensive work like loading our stores, I did not want to be the one standing aside saying that I was too tired.” She continued, “Through various cohesion activities like birthday celebrations and a New Year celebration, we were constantly reminded of each other’s presence there as a team.”

WLR Team: Providing a Peace of Mind

The sterling performance of the 17-man Weapon Locating Radar (WLR) Team in Afghanistan gave the personnel in Camp Holland peace of mind. DPM Teo shared its background, “From September 2009, we deployed for the first time a Weapon Locating Radar Team in Tarin Kowt, the capital of Oruzgan province. The decision to deploy this

capability was in response to a request from the coalition forces, following an increase in the number of rocket attacks on Tarin Kowt and the coalition base there.” Rockets are fired into the camp to disrupt the reconstruction efforts and to cause anxiety and stress within the camp, affecting the personnel’s ability to effectively perform their tasks. By providing early warning of rocket attacks, the team alleviated anxiety within the camp. Whenever the alarm was sounded, camp personnel would take cover in the nearest hardened shelter.

MAJ Vincent Koh, the detachment commander, described the deployment, “We certainly made significant contributions as Camp Holland previously did not have any equipment to provide them with early warning of rocket attacks. Most of its accommodation consists of armoured containers and some tents are not as well protected. Naturally, this caused quite a bit of stress among the soldiers. With our presence, we could sense that the people are more relaxed knowing that the team is watching out for them and is keeping a sharp look out for rocket attacks.”

Constant Vigilance

The radar is manned by just two operators, each seated in front of a screen. A nearby red button is pressed whenever an incoming rocket is detected. Working in shifts, the operators man the radar 24/7. The commander also offers them a much-needed cup of coffee and temporarily relieves them while they take a break. The radar maintenance team is on continuous standby to keep the radar operating throughout the deployment. For every day of the five months that they were in Camp Holland, the team performed its tasks with utmost professionalism and dedication.

Perseverance and Commitment

3WO Hoo Tuck Leong, a radar operator, described his experience, “Staring continuously at a screen in a small room is stressful and lonely. The knowledge that the safety of the many people in Camp Holland depends on our vigilance is a heavy



The WLR team salutes as the Singapore flag is raised alongside the flags of our foreign counterparts



3WO Hoo Tuck Leong sharing his motivations

weight on our soldiers but it is also a motivation for us to persevere. I knew that if I do not do my job, my fellow operator, who is equally tired, will have to cover for me." It was this sense of camaraderie that helped the team to persevere and overcome the challenges faced.

Maintaining a 24-hour watch for months was no mean feat for a small 17-man team. The radar operators worked in pairs

and on shifts. MAJ Koh explained, "This shift system was maintained continuously for the 117 days that we were there. There were no off days or medical leave for anyone. We relied on the bond we forged to take care of one another during the mission."

United in One Mission Objective

In such a compact team, all the members must be confident that they can depend on one another to watch their backs and fulfil their duties. As the detachment commander, MAJ Koh felt a responsibility to ensure this. He said, "The pre-deployment training was heavily focused on individual competency like shooting skills, physical fitness and operator proficiency. We also fine-tuned the specific signs and cues that indicate approaching rockets on the screen to avoid ambiguity during actual deployment. When all of us put the mission as our top priority, any personal issues became easy to reconcile. We were united in a common mission objective."



MAJ Vincent Koh describing the team's contributions in Afghanistan

The interdependency of the team went beyond their professional realm. In fact, 3WO Hoo's greatest takeaway was not technical. The experience has been beneficial to him on a personal level as well, "My main takeaway is friendship and learning to be open to one another. To live together for five months can be tough, I learnt a lot in terms of interpersonal skills and developed many lasting friendships. In Afghanistan, there were no secrets among us. We sometimes brought our personal matters into the open so that we could discuss them and move on. When one of us was very quiet we could tell that something was wrong. We would then silently support him and give him a comforting environment to straighten out his thoughts."

Nothing Beats the Real Stuff

Although it was gruelling, the team appreciated the opportunity to experience a real operation. 3WO Hoo elaborated, "This deployment was the first actual operation where every action or inaction could make the difference between life and death. It was only when I was flying into Afghanistan on the military transport plane and was told to put on my bullet proof vest and full combat load that the reality of the situation struck me. As much as it was initially nerve-racking, it was also fulfilling. I remember people coming up to us in the canteen and thanking us for protecting them."

As a token of appreciation for their role in saving lives, Commander Taskforce Uruzgan (TF-U), BG Marc Van Uhm presented the team with a Command Coin during the handing over ceremony at the end of their tour. MAJ Koh added, "The deployment has definitely given us more confidence in our ability to deal with real situations and live up to Our Army's mission of being Ready, Relevant and Decisive."

The highly commendable teamwork and professionalism displayed by the WLR team has indeed done Singapore proud. It is not surprising that DPM Teo included them for special mention during his OSM speech, "I would like to commend MAJ Koh and his team for rising to the challenge. Their skills, professionalism and dedication to duty provided reassurance to the ISAF members at the base that they can go about their duties with confidence, knowing that they have more warning time to get to safe cover in the event of a rocket attack."

The SAF Surgical Team: Saving Lives in Afghanistan

Following the mission success of the 13-man SAF Medical Team, an 8-man Surgical Team was similarly deployed to Afghanistan for two months from 1 April to 31 May.

This is the first time that the SAF has deployed a surgical team to Afghanistan. The team, which included three NSmen, comprises a general trauma surgeon, an orthopaedic surgeon, a general practitioner, an anaesthetist and four other medical personnel including nurses. With their various expertise, the team provided medical support to the ISAF personnel and emergency medical care for the Afghan locals.

NSmen Doctors Play Their Part

The deployment required much commitment and personal sacrifice on the part of the team, especially the three NSmen doctors involved in this mission. For CPT (NS) (DR) Mathew Cheng, who had previously served in East Timor, this was his second deployment. He said, "Although I knew I would miss spending time with my family, I recognised the importance and gravity of this mission. Being commando trained and having years of experience and private practice I willingly accepted the opportunity to help save lives in Afghanistan."

His wife, Mrs Cheng, who initially felt uneasy over her husband's deployment, later shared in his passion for the mission, "He would call me every two to three days and assure me of his safety. We would just let each other know that we were alright. Eventually, when I heard about what he has been doing for the patients I felt happy and proud of him."

The involvement of NSmen doctors in the deployment was also made possible by the support of their patients and colleagues here in Singapore. MAJ (NS)(DR) Philip Lau elaborated, "I acknowledge the support of my colleagues and patients in this endeavour. To participate in this deployment, I had to leave many of my patients in the care of my fellow

doctors. I am very grateful to my Medical Board for understanding the importance of this deployment to me."

Indeed, MAJ (NS)(DR) Lau joined the mission with a specific agenda. He told the story of his involvement in the deployment, "I was one of the initiators of this deployment. As the Chief Surgeon of a Combat Surgical Hospital, I felt it was necessary for our NSmen doctors to be exposed to an actual operational setting where they would have to treat war-inflicted injuries. After discussing this with the Chief Medical officer, LTC (DR) Chua Wei Chong, it was decided that we would send a team to Afghanistan. I went there to see how an SAF team would function in actual deployment. I wanted to verify our actual operational readiness and search for ways in which we can prepare ourselves for operation even better."



CPT (NS)(DR) Tan explaining his willingness to volunteer for the mission

CPT (NS)(DR) Tan Wah Tze who also volunteered his services summed up the sentiments of the NSmen, "As NSmen, we are essentially part of the operationally ready reserves. It is our duty and honour to contribute our experience and skills to the SAF deployment to Afghanistan."

Team Leader, MAJ (DR) Muhammad Idu appreciates their contributions. He said, "It is my first time

working with NSmen on deployment and I am glad that they are willing to share their wealth of experience with us. They are mature individuals, professional doctors and competent officers. We worked well together as a team."

Saving Lives and Livelihoods

The team was incredibly professional and single-minded in its mission objectives. When asked what was the worst case



CPT (NS)(DR) Cheng (right), an orthopaedic surgeon, hard at work in the operating theatre of the field hospital in Afghanistan. Scrub nurse ME1 Wong (centre) assists the two NSmen surgeons in the operation



In recognition of his contribution, Commander TF-U, BG C.J.M. van den Heuvel presented a Letter of Appreciation to MAJ (DR) Muhammad Idu. Part of the letter reads, "MAJ Idu is exceptionally dedicated to his medical and leadership responsibilities, and accomplishes well beyond that required of his normal duties. He happily worked additional hours, answering questions and updating information, ensuring that patient care was continuous and medical issues were resolved. His staunch work ethic and decisiveness built confidence amongst the hospital staff."

he had encountered, CPT (NS)(DR) Cheng did not recount the ghastly injuries he encountered. He answered simply, "The worst case scenario is when the casualty dies." The team was there to save lives and they were not deterred by the horror of war-inflicted wounds. The surgeons operated on up to five casualties a day. Of the 85 operations performed by them during the deployment, not a single patient died on the operating table - a strong testament to their professional skills and commitment.

The doctors did not just save life. In restoring the patients' abilities to use their limbs, they also saved their livelihoods. ME1 Wong Zhen Wen, a scrub nurse in the operating theatre recalled, "A man came in with his hand badly burned. Fortunately we were able to save his hand. He was incredibly grateful and repeatedly thanked us. He went around showing everyone his hand. As the locals there are not very well acquainted with medical advancement, they probably see us as miracle workers. His hand meant a lot to him because he was a farmer. Without it he would not have been able to make a living."



ME1 Wong expressing her joy in helping the patients recover

Challenges overcome

"One of the main challenges was adapting to the operational and austere conditions. Surgeons in Singapore operate in the comfort of a cool operating theatre and have access to familiar equipment. They are also adequately aided by many assistants. In Afghanistan we had to use the Dutch equipment and make do with just six pairs of hands compared to 15 to 20 pairs in Singapore," said CPT (NS)(DR) Tan, who is an anaesthetist in NUH. Thankfully, the pre-deployment cross training with the same personnel they would be working with in Afghanistan had helped them get acquainted with their foreign counterparts and their working styles.

To cope with less manpower, the doctors sportingly accepted multi-tasking during their deployment. CPT (NS)(DR)



CPT (NS)(DR) Cheng and family share a proud moment

Tan elaborated, "I sometimes performed simple tasks like adjusting the operating table or holding instruments. I did not feel that because I am a doctor I should not be performing such tasks. It was all about teamwork and working together to get the job done. ME5 Ng Geok Cheng who served as a nurse in the intensive care unit, considers the challenges she faced and overcame to be invaluable experiences. As the Head of the Operations and Training Section at the SAF Medical Training Institute, she is eager to share her newly-gained insight with her trainees, "I will draw from the wide range of actual cases I saw in Afghanistan to teach the medics. My experiences can be used as case studies to illustrate important learning points."

Reflecting on his recent experiences, CPT (NS)(DR) Cheng feels the series of medical deployments to Afghanistan are a significant milestone in the Medical Corps' progress, "I believe that the Medical Corps and SAF have really progressed and matured in the sense that they are now able to send more and more personnel beyond Southeast Asia to contribute to a far away country."

* CPT (NS)(DR) Mathew Cheng has since been promoted to MAJ rank as of 1 July.

Reminiscences of NSmen from 1st BRC

Story contributed by HQ 54 SAB



(From left) CPL (NS) Danny Ho, CPL (NS) James Lau and 3SG (NS) Bobby Ow

"We are still the elite," says 3SG (NS) Bobby Ow, with a laugh.

3SG (NS) Ow, aged 39, had just served his final In-Camp Training (ICT) with HQ 54 Singapore Armour Brigade (54 SAB) and is among the last remaining NSmen from the very first Armour Brigade Recce Company (BRC). He and his platoon mates enlisted in 1989 and served together in HQ 4 SAB, based in Sungei Gedong Camp. He completed his memorable journey with six good BRC buddies. They are CPL(NS) Lim Sheng Chin, CPL(NS) Danny Ho, CPL(NS) Bernard Ng, CPL(NS) James Lau, CPL(NS) Billy Foo and LTA(NS) Tee Seow Hong.

The first BRC was formed in 1989. "No one knew what it was about," recalled CPL(NS) Lim of that day he found out about his posting, "They told us we were to be the eyes and ears of the brigade."

Not only was the BRC concept new then, even their surroundings were. In fact, the camp was so new that the men had to carry their own beds into the bunks, as CPL(NS) Lim fondly remembered. But it did not take long for the commanders and men alike to realise that the BRC was very different from the typical infantry unit. What they soon found out was aptly and succinctly summed up in their motto, "Ahead Always, in the quest to provide timely, accurate and relevant information to the advancing units behind."

Recce elements are easily identified by their jungle hat which they wear with pride. They are justifiably proud of their identity because they sweat for it. In the field, they carry much heavier loads than their infantry comrades. They are trained to carry out back-to-back missions, often with no rest for up to three days, covering long distance. Recce elements are equipped with various skills such as motorbike riding, combat survival and rendering medical aid, due to their mission requirements.

Then as now, the first Armour BRC operated in 4-man teams, comprising Team Commander, Deputy, R1 (basher) and R2 (signaller). CPL (NS) Ho proudly recalled the various challenges overcome, "We did everything from heli-rappelling to crossing water obstacles. Because of our tough and rigorous training, I think we are sort of like medium-range Rangers."

It was thus no surprise that the training requirements set for them were high. "Training was very tough, and there was strict discipline. We were punished for every infringement."

said CPL (NS) Lim. This included change parades, forced marches and being awoken by thunderflashes thrown into the bunk during turn outs.

The company was led by officers who were of a high calibre and commanded respect from one and all. CPL (NS) Ng recalled, "One officer got Best PT at OCS, and another was a Sword of Honour winner."

"And one was the Best Actor," quipped CPL (NS) Ho, referring to well-known local celebrity Tay Ping Hui, who was his Team Commander and Platoon Commander.

CPL (NS) Ng noted with pride the extremely high fitness level achieved, with a large majority clocking nine minutes and 45 seconds or less for their 2.4-kilometre run. A strong camaraderie that transcended ranks was another aspect that CPL

(NS) Lau remembered. He said, "Back then, the commanders and men all trained together as a company and were expected to be able to take over each other's roles. We suffered together, and that was what brought us closer."

The company was equipped with what was then considered state-of-the-art equipment, such as first-generation night vision goggles, dipoles and the 840 signal set. All this, plus combat rations, water supplies, personal items and assorted pieces of equipment had to be squeezed into four field packs which were much smaller than today's standard issue field packs. "Looking back, I really don't know how we managed to squeeze everything in," mused CPL (NS) Ho.

More than two decades on, the memories remain vivid for both commanders and men. CPL (NS) Ng identified the completion of his company-level 24-kilometre force march in less than four hours as his most memorable NS moment. He revealed, "We were walking bow-legged for the next few days."

While training was serious and tough, there were also lighter moments. CPL (NS) Lau remembered one serviceman who was 'excused cemetery' after an unusual incident. He recounted, "One night, we were in a cemetery on one of our training missions when the enemy suddenly burst out. Then this guy went berserk, saying that he had seen ghosts."

During the two decades, the NSmen from the first Armour BRC have gone on to establish successful civilian careers. They include pilots, doctors and lawyers. But the demands of their jobs and family lives have not dented the strong camaraderie built up during the many years of their military service together. In 2008, they held their 20th anniversary reunion which was attended by 80 per cent of the commanders and men. Even today, CPL (NS) Lau continues to meet his old platoon mates for lunch, as many of them work around the same area.

While CPL (NS) Ng feels "ecstatic" that his NS journey has ended 21 years years after his enlistment, he noted with a tinge of sadness the closing of a major chapter in his life, "Looking back, it was my duty and I just had to serve. Now, I hope we will be able to continue to meet as old friends."



On 21 May, the officers and men of HQ 54 SAB practised underslung operation as they undertook a heli-tasking mission. They successfully guided a Super Puma helicopter to pick up loads, each consisting four motorbikes, for transport to the locations where the recce teams await. CPL (NS) Hoo Hsien Chieh who was involved in the exercise shared, "There was a lot of teamwork. Two of us had to support the one involved in hooking up the load to the chopper. It was tricky as he had to steady the swinging catch under the helicopter."

Chip in for Charity!

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Mark Ng

While the Army Half Marathon (AHM) (in conjunction with the SAFRA Singapore Bay Run) has grown over the years to become a major sporting event that promotes physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle, our Army has not lost sight of the event's other important objective, which is raising funds to help the needy among us. Every year an Army-wide charity drive precedes the AHM during which every serviceman is encouraged to do his part to help achieve the target set. This year, the beneficiaries of this charity drive include the President's Challenge, Community Chest, SAF Benevolent Fund and the National Kidney Foundation.

President's Challenge

Back in 2000, our President, His Excellency S.R Nathan initiated the President's Challenge to increase awareness of how the community can help the less fortunate and to raise funds for the social service sector. The President's call to Singaporeans is to create a society of kindness and generosity by caring for the less fortunate in our midst as part of our social ethos, and in so doing, build a more cohesive society. The funds raised by the President's Challenge will help beneficiaries selected by the President's Office and identified as needy or are having difficulties raising funds on their own. Last year the President's Challenge raised about \$10 million for 37 different beneficiaries.

Community Chest

Community Chest was established in 1983 with a simple yet vital mission: to raise funds for the nation's many charities. It is about raising funds from the community for the community in need. Charities supported by Community Chest are then able to do what



Aaliyah, 8 yrs old, AWWA School (Picture courtesy of Community Chest)

they are best at — providing critical social service programmes.

Community Chest raises funds on a yearly basis to meet the needs of the social service programmes that they support. As fund-raising cost is covered mainly by Tote Board and Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, every dollar raised by Community Chest will be made available to social service programmes under its care. These programmes will help, nurture children to succeed, dignify the lives of the elderly, keep families together, and help people with disabilities lead independent lives

SAF Benevolent Fund

The SAF Benevolent Fund provides financial assistance to MINDEF/SAF personnel and their families who are in dire financial circumstances due to the serviceman's death or permanent incapacitation. Your generosity

will help the SAF Benevolent Fund to better assist our servicemen and their families greatly in their time of need.

National Kidney Foundation

National Kidney Foundation (NKF) is a charitable organisation that provides dialysis treatment and rehabilitative care to kidney failure patients at affordable, subsidised rates.

Their philosophy is to care for the patients holistically, aiming to help patients maintain a reasonable quality of life.

NKF also provides health-screening and public education services to raise the community's awareness on the importance of renal disease prevention.

The SAF sponsored the setting-up costs of the two NKF dialysis centres at Hong Kah and Clementi. Your contributions this year will go towards replacing 17 dialysis machines at the Hong Kah dialysis centre.



The NKF dialysis centre at Hong Kah will receive 17 dialysis machines from your donations

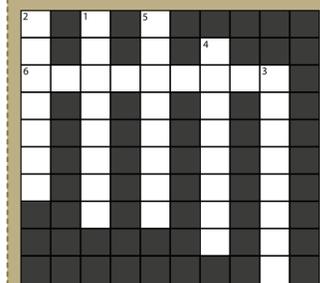
Passing On The Baton

APPOINTMENT	INCOMING	OUTGOING
COMD CIG	COL NICHOLAS ANG SOON LEONG	COL YEE KONG SENG FRANCIS
CO BMTC SCHOOL 4	LTC MOHD JASNI BIN JAMALUDIN	-
CO 38 SCE	MAJ LIM LEE KHAN KENNEDY	LTC FOO PEOW MENG ROY
HQ CIG/SMI INST ISM	MWO CHONG CHEE YEE	1WO KIM MOON CHONG
3 DISCOM RSM	MWO ONG KIM LENG	MWO CHONG CHEE YEE
HQ 29 SIB SM	MWO LIM SONG SIAM	MWO KRSHNAM S/O VEERASAMY
9 SIG BN RSM	1WO LOW PIT CHAO	2WO NGO CHENG MENG

Quiz Of The Month - JUNE / Issue 177

Send us the correct answer and win a pair of Golden Village movie vouchers. There will be 5 winners!

Q: Closing Date : 2 August 2010



- Down**
- The innovative inflatable obstacles could be _____ in about 20 minutes.
 - One striking feature of the new _____ centre is the enhancement to emergency care.
 - The _____ and professionalism displayed by the WLR team has done Singapore proud.
 - The SAF Day is an important occasion for all servicemen to reflect and _____ their pledge of loyalty and dedication to the SAF and the nation.
 - The SAF sponsored the setting-up of NKF dialysis centres at Hong Kah and _____.
- Across**
- The BRC is very _____ from a typical infantry unit.

Rank / Name: _____
Unit: _____
NRIC: _____
E-mail: _____
Contact No: _____

- This contest is open to all Army personnel except the executive staff of Army News Section.
- Each person is allowed one entry.
- Prizes are not exchangeable for cash. Winners can either collect their prizes from Army News or arrange for mail delivery.
- The judges' decision is final. Please send us your entries via mail or email us at armynews@startnet.gov.sg.
- Prizes not collected within a month of notification will be forfeited.

APRIL / Issue 175 Quiz Answers	APRIL / Issue 175 Winners
Answers: 1. Potential 2. Cafe 3. United 4. Harness 5. Laptops 6. Attitude	1) CPT (DR) LOO KAI GUO NRIC: SXXXX297H 2) MS WONG WAN EE NRIC: SXXXX701D 3) PTE SIM KIM HENG NRIC: SXXXX574F 4) 2WO VICTOR ONG NRIC: SXXXX418A 5) 2LT (NS) JESAL MANDALIA

Winners are to contact Army News at 6427 0642 for collection of prizes.

The First SAF Day

Source of Information: Centre for Heritage Services



The presentation of the SAF Flag to 3 SIR by the late Mr Lim Kim San on the first SAF Day in 1969. Looking on is the late Mr George Bogaars (left), Permanent Secretary to the Ministry [Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission]

The SAF Day on 1 July each year is an important occasion for all servicemen to reflect and reaffirm their pledge of loyalty and dedication to the SAF and the nation. Today's SAF Day is celebrated with a major ceremony held within the SAF and many smaller commemorative ceremonies organised by private sector companies for their NSmen employees. While many have no problem remembering 1 July as SAF Day, do you know in which year was the first SAF Day held?

The concept for an Armed Forces Day was mooted in early 1969. Shortly after, the first SAF Day was held on 1 July 1969 — four years after Singapore had gained its independence and embarked on its pressing task of building up a credible defence force.

The first SAF Day witnessed a 1,500-strong contingent of servicemen and women in a grand parade finale and march past at Jalan Besar Stadium. It was a day filled with parades, open houses and pledges of loyalty. The most solemn moment was the presentation of the SAF Flag for the first time to the 3rd Battalion, Singapore Infantry Regiment (3 SIR) by the then Minister for Interior and Defence, the late Mr Lim

Kim San. In his speech, Mr Lim said “Let no serviceman ever forget what the SAF Flag stands for and as we parade before the Flag, we give our pledge to the Nation and that we will be ever ready to defend it.”

The largest muster parade was held at the Ministry of Interior and Defence Headquarters at Pearl's Hill while smaller ones were held at various SAF camps throughout the island.

The formation of 3 SIR and 4 SIR in 1967 was a major milestone in the SAF history as they were the first two NS battalions raised following the introduction of National Service that year. Since then, the SAF has evolved into a 3rd Generation fighting force capable of conducting a full spectrum of operations, including overseas missions for peace support, provision of medical care and reconstruction efforts.

Look out for Army News' coverage of the 2010 SAF Day in the July Issue!

Building and Maintaining A Fighting Fit 3rd Generation Army

Story by Marcus Ho / Photography by Derrick Heng

Our 3rd Generation Army generates new operational demands to enable our soldiers to fight effectively in the evolving security landscape. As the combat load of today's soldier has changed over the years, so has Our Army's fitness culture. “Today, our people need to possess a broad range of fitness tailored to meet our new operational needs,” said Mr Christopher Song, an Exercise Scientist from the Army Fitness Centre (AFC). “Over the years, we have implemented a few strategies in our new fitness system in order to bring the new fitness culture to the ground.”

As Basic Military Training (BMT) plays an important part in building the initial fitness of the enlistees, it is no surprise that the AFC has given its fitness programme a close scrutiny. Mr Song elaborated, “We want to institutionalise scientific training and progressive training was one of the things that we looked at. As BMT is physically intensive, we examined how recruits can train daily without getting injured. One way is to alternate between the cardiovascular system and the muscular system, so that each has sufficient recovery time.” AFC also benchmarked our training against those in established armed forces such as the US Army. He shared, “From our studies, we realised that time-based training is more effective than distance-based and this also reduces running-related injuries.”



Mr Song is focused on promoting the fitness culture among servicemen

Besides helping soldiers to build up their fitness effectively and efficiently, the AFC also promotes the adoption of healthy lifestyle practices. Inevitably, having a healthy diet falls under this category. Mr Song said, “Although we are able to plan the diet of our people while they are in camps to ensure that they have a proper nutritional diet, it is important that they continue to maintain a healthy and proper diet outside of camp as well. To achieve this, we think it is important that they understand why we do it, and how they can still do so on their own.”

As such, that the AFC has been pro-actively educating our servicemen on how to stay fit and healthy. One strategy is to leverage on commanders to communicate the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle to the men on the ground. Mr Song added, “In the past, we were more passive in this aspect. But now we try to be more pro-active by approaching units and offering our expertise. From time to time, we also go down to camps to conduct trainings for the men. Even if they were to learn just the very basic stuff, it will help to refresh in their minds the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle.”

At the strategic level, the AFC is focused on changing how our people view physical training. “For NSF's, we are fairly confident of them being able to reach a certain fitness standard,” commented Mr Song. “But the challenge is whether they still have the attitude to exercise regularly after their two years of full-time National Service. We also want to move away from the old days where the Fitness Specialists (FS) were feared, and you would often be punished by doing more

exercises. This would often lead people to view physical training as something negative, and when they completed their service, they don't want to have anything to do with it.

“Instead, we want our FS to explain the importance of fitness modalities to our people today, and at the same time, encourage and mentor them. We believe that this will be much more effective in enforcing a fitness culture in Our Army.”



A high level of physical fitness is a key requirement for our 3rd Generation Army