

Country Report by Singapore Armed Forces Veterans League (SAFVL)



As presented by BG (NS) WINSTON TOH and COL (RET) Lau kee Siong.

Honourable LT GEN Hsan Oo, President VECONAC. We thank you and the Myanmar War Veterans Association for the leadership as President of VECONAC for this 29th VECONAC Executive Board Meeting and the 16th VECONAC General Assembly.

Honourable MAJ GEN (RET) Dato Paduka Seri Haji Shari Bin Ahmad, We also wish to thank you and Brunei ESABD for the kind hospitality and for organising this meeting.

Fellow Veterans, Ladies & Gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

1. Singapore Armed Forces Veterans' League (SAFVL) celebrated our Silver Jubilee as well as Singapore's 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee. We had a significant year of achievements and I would like to cover the report in five main areas:
 - a. To remain engaged, relevant and current.
 - b. To be a role model and ambassador towards our National Education.
 - c. To imbue in our members the concept of active ageing.
 - d. To be a responsible member of our international and regional veterans' community.
 - e. To care for our veterans.

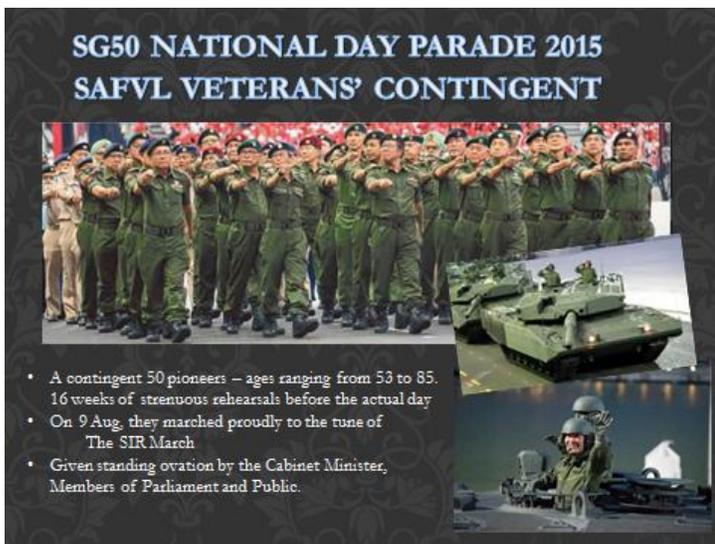
TO REMAIN ENGAGED, RELEVANT AND CURRENT.

2. At our 25th Jubilee Anniversary Dinner, our Defence Minister Dr Ng Eng Hen who was the Guest of Honour said, "To ensure the next generation of SAF soldiers understand the world we live in and why it is crucial to be able to defend Singapore, we need you as Veterans to tell the story. This can have an enormous impact on our young generation." The other impact is the publication of a book of 25 stories collected from our veterans, which was launched by the Minister at the dinner. They were distributed to schools, SAF

institutions and national libraries to share our real-life carrier experiences in our national defence.



3. In Singapore's 50th Golden Jubilee Celebrations, we took part in various national events, the most significant of which was the National Day Parade. Fifty of our Veterans took part in the parade. They put on uniform they first wore when we started our defence force 50 years ago. Our Veterans, representing the Pioneer Generation, demonstrated their grit, relevance and determination, with some participants up to 85 years old, marching proudly to the standing ovation of our citizens and national leaders.



4. We continue to be visible, with Veterans attending every passing our parade, sharing their stories and experiences at each parade reception with the participants and their parents. This is how we keep close to the ground, engaged ourselves and stay relevant to both SAF and the nation at large.



5. Singapore has a very diverse racial and religious society. Our government has been inculcating and developing racial and religious harmony, urging our people to stay together as one. SAFVL also do our part in this nation building process. On every different festival occasion we bring members of different races and religious background together to celebrate as one people and one nation, understanding each other's culture, creating racial harmony as well as building cohesion among the different races.



6. Our next project is capturing and archiving historical records of our experiences. Such records are useful for future generations when we have long left the scene. We have started recording experiences of our veterans on tapes and discs. The next move is to document them for easy access.

TO BE ROLE MODELS AND AMBASSADORS TOWARDS OUR NATIONAL EDUCATION.

7. Our Ministry of Defence recognised that SAFVL can play an important role in our National Education. Our Veterans with an average of 30 years' experience, will be the best resource to perform this task. The Ministry has aptly coined a term Commitment to Defence Ambassadors (or C2D Ambassadors). This selected group of Veterans will be the ambassadors, the resource people deployed to speak to school students and trainees from SAF institutions like the Officer Cadets School, Specialist Cadet School and Basic Training School. We now have 60 C2D Ambassadors, which will be increase to 200 by next year. C2D Ambassadors are specially selected and trained. Quarterly training sessions are also provided to keep them up to date on SAF and national matters.
8. This C2D Ambassadors programme is now in its second year and have undoubtedly create an immediate impact on the young generation. To date these 60 C2D Ambassadors were involved in 302 engagements benefitting 10,654 target audiences. Recently a Code of Conduct was introduced to uphold the standard and professionalism of these ambassadors.
9. Memorial services are organised not just because we are veterans. We provide a deeper meaning by inviting school students to explain to them the sufferings and atrocities of war and why each and every one must be reminded about the importance of national defence. On Remembrance Day, marking the end of World War II, 500 students are brought to the War Memorial Cemetery, and subsequently divided into 5 groups to 5 different battle sites around the island. There the C2D Ambassadors relate to them how Singapore fell and what we all must do as people to ensure we do not fall into the same situation again.

TO IMBUE IN OUR MEMBERS THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVE AGING.

10. Active aging is an important aspect of life, especially with Veterans of senior ages. We need to lead a healthy and gracious life, age gracefully and still continue to contribute to society. We encourage our Veterans to remain active. Quarterly golf games were organised. Recently our members participated in the Army Half Marathon run. Printed on their T-shirt was this bold declaration: "Old soldiers run marathons too." This slogan attracted much cheer and attention as well as inspiration among the running crowd, that old soldiers are still active participating in marathon. The Defence Minister was so enthused by it that he asked to take a picture with our veterans with their backs turned to show the slogan on their T-shirts.



TO BE A RESPONSIBLE MEMBER OF OUR INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL VETERAN COMMUNITY.

11. We have been participating in events organised by the World Veterans' Federation, Standing Committee of Asia & Pacific Region and VECONAC and vouched that we will continue to participate actively and be of assistance where we can.



12. Improvement of bilateral relationship with VECONAC members has been initiated with exchange visits between the Veterans' Association of Malaysian Armed Forces (VAMAF) and the SAF Veterans League (SAFVL). VAMAF visited Singapore in April 2016 and in return SAFVL visited Malaysian in Aug 2016. The visits have created strong ties between members of both organisations and have pledged to continue the programme in the coming years.



TO CARE FOR OUR VETERANS.

13. We may remain healthy and vibrant, but age will invariably catch up with us. We need to care for ourselves and also the people around us. Nobody owes us a living. We regularly invite medical professionals to give advice and assistance to members, if needed. Recently we had a medical team specialising in hearing aids to conduct hearing tests for our veterans. We manage to secure discounted rates for those who need the aids, and in addition payment is over a number of years and is interest free. We will continue to organise such medical and general health assistance programmes and activities for our members.
14. Home and hospital visits were conducted to veterans who are not well to help brighten up their day. SAFVL continues to provide ready assistance to some of our less well to do veterans with mobility aids like wheel chairs and walking sticks readily available to them.

CONCLUSION

15. It is the desire and determination of SAFVL to build and strengthen cohesion amongst our members as well as the veterans community to achieve a sense of purpose as they continue to maintain a responsible and active ageing lifestyle.