

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

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**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM,  
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SECURITY AND DEFENCE ON STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR  
SINGAPORE'S NATIONAL SECURITY HELD ON TUESDAY, 20 JULY  
2004 AT PARLIAMENT SITTING**

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Mr Speaker, Sir

1. In August last year, when I was appointed Co-ordinating Minister for Security and Defence to review the security situation in Singapore, I asked myself two questions. First, what does National Security mean in an age in which transnational terrorism is the biggest security threat facing all countries in the world including Singapore? Second, how can we best organize ourselves to continue to keep Singapore safe and secure against the threat of terrorism which threatens our economy and society?
2. These two questions are simple to state but the answers are complex and difficult to formulate. The questions are not unique to Singapore. Every country in the world is confronted with these two questions and is struggling to shape responses which are appropriate to their circumstances and situation. Over the past twelve months, I have discussed the subject at length with my colleagues, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister for Defence in the Security Policy Review Committee, and with government officials and knowledgeable analysts and commentators.

3. I have also led a number of study visits to various countries (including the United States, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain and some of our neighbouring countries) to meet with my counterparts in the defence and security fields in order to gather a range of perspectives on how other countries deal with their security concerns and how they have organized themselves to ensure their national security in the new security landscape.
4. After a year of deliberation, study, discussions and many meetings, I have arrived at two main conclusions: First, national security in an age of transnational terrorism, cannot be divided into separate tasks, eg. external defence against a military threat and internal security against terrorists and criminals. Rather, all countries including Singapore, have to deal with a continuum of security challenges ranging from state-directed military threats to low-intensity conflict to ideologically inspired and globally pervasive terrorism. Second, to cope with the new security challenges, we need to deal with security threats today on a “whole of government” basis instead of dividing the tasks into watertight compartments to be dealt with by separate Ministries. Formulating and implementing an integrated and co-ordinated security policy is best done by setting up a Co-ordination Unit at the centre of government ie. the Prime Minister’s Office, which will co-ordinate strategic planning, policy formulation and capability development in security and intelligence to cope with the threat of transnational terrorism.
5. The above conclusions have been accepted by the Cabinet. The purpose of my Ministerial Statement today is to explain how we have come to these conclusions and the measures which we will take to restructure our Government machinery to meet Singapore’s new security needs.

### Transnational Terrorism

6. Transnational terrorism has become a central concern for all countries in the world today. Transnational terrorism poses a serious and immediate threat to Singapore’s national security. Singapore is a prime target for terrorists and we have to live with the real

prospect of a terrorist attack. This threat will be with us for a long time. We must be prepared for a long-drawn campaign against an enemy capable of conducting organised, deliberate and prolonged attacks.

7. Sir, transnational terrorism is terrorism that is globalised. It has a global network with a global reach. It has an agenda that is unconstrained by geographical or political boundaries. Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda does not only target the United States. It also seeks to destroy its allies in the West, overturning the international political order in the process, in order to establish pan-Islamic caliphates. Al-Qaeda has a network of affiliated terrorist groups across the globe, including the Jemaah Islamiyah in this region, who subscribe not only to Al-Qaeda's deviant ideology, but also to its extreme methods of terror. Attacks are more lethal and dangerous than ever before. If the terrorists are able to get their hands on weapons of mass destruction, I have no doubt that they will use them. Their ruthlessness leaves no room for negotiation.
8. More dangerously, these terrorists are not mere criminals. They have shown a degree of strategic sophistication that belies the extremism of their methods. The Madrid bombing is a clear example of a terrorist attack designed to achieve the strategic effect of changing a government, and dividing the US and its allies. Similarly, the kidnapping of hostages in Iraq is designed to affect the responses of countries in supporting the Iraqi Government and the US-led coalition.<sup>3</sup>
9. Since 9-11, many commentators, analysts and security officials have discussed extensively about the nature of terrorist threats facing countries in the world today. I will not burden Members with recounting the innumerable opinions, books, reports and speeches which have dealt on this topic. In my view, the nature and significance of what transnational terrorism means to the world today is aptly summed up in a speech given by George Shultz, former Secretary of State of the United States, delivered in May this year. Mr Shultz said : "(Transnational terrorism) is the method of choice of an extensive internationally connected ideological movement dedicated to the destruction of our international system of co-operation and progress. ...."

The movement's objectives are in four layers or phases :

i) to drive the international community's people and influences out of the Middle-East (the religious core of the Muslim world);

ii) to overthrow all Arab regimes that are in a working relationship with the international community;

iii) to gain a more entrenched and threatening foothold in the most populous parts of the Muslim world which have traditionally been different in their outlook from Muslims on the Arabian peninsula (South East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia) and inside the Western world (Europe); and

iv) eventually to eliminate all vestiges of the international state system from a unified Islamic theocratic rule. ....”

Mr Shultz concluded that today:

“The international state system is under determined attack by a religiously motivated movement using terrorist attacks of dramatic lethality as its weapon of choice.

The war is against this movement, not just the weapon of terror.”

10. In this new security environment, the danger to us comes from an enemy without shape or country, and with the capacity to continually threaten Singapore and Singaporean interests. Today, national security means that we must be prepared not just to deal with the contingency of a conventional military conflict, but also to be always alert and ready to confront threats at the other end of the security spectrum, particularly those posed by transnational terrorism.

11. We have already enhanced homeland security by implementing various measures to safeguard Singapore. But the impact of transnational terrorism will be felt in many areas, and the responses to the threat will be provided by many agencies.
  
12. With transnational terrorism, the traditional approach of delineating the boundaries between ministries and agencies, so that each is solely responsible for a particular area, will no longer work. The experience of other countries since the 9-11 attacks, as well as our own, shows the inadequacy of the stovepipe approach. The separation of responsibilities between the Ministry of Home Affairs for internal security and the Ministry of Defence for external defence leaves gaps in the defence of Singapore against transnational terrorism. Furthermore, no ministry or government department has developed the full range of competencies or capabilities to deal with this threat. The resources needed to deal with terrorism reside in many agencies. For example, aviation security draws on the resources of MINDEF for air defence, and of MHA for implementing the air marshal programme. Maritime security depends on the Police Coast Guard and the Navy working together with the Maritime and Port Authority to secure our port and territorial waters.
  
13. The key to ensuring National Security today lies in strengthening coordination and integration among government agencies involved in national security, particularly between the external and domestic intelligence agencies, because intelligence is a crucial weapon in the fight against transnational terrorism.
  
14. In times of crisis eg. when we were fighting SARS last year, there is no doubt that all government agencies will work together to deal with the problems at hand. However, we should not wait for a crisis to happen. We must anticipate such problems and deal upfront with inter-agency issues that relate to national security policy and plans where there is no clear ownership among the various government ministries and agencies. We need to ensure that the policies and plans of individual agencies are aligned to and consistent with the national mandate. To this end, co-ordination in the development of national security

strategy, policy and plans is most effective if it is driven from the centre of government, which is the Prime Minister's Office.

#### National Security Co-ordination Secretariat

15. The Government has therefore decided to set up a new National Security Co-ordination Secretariat (NSCS) in the Prime Minister's Office. The NSCS will be overseen by a Permanent Secretary for National Security and Intelligence Co-ordination (NSIC) who will report directly to the Prime Minister through the Co-ordinating Minister for Security and Defence. The PS (NSIC) will chair two Committees :
  - i) a National Security Co-ordinating Committee comprising PS (FA), PS (HA), PS(D) and other Permanent Secretaries to co-ordinate national security activities; and
  - ii) an Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee comprising the above three PSs and the Heads of our Intelligence agencies to oversee the work and progress of counter-terrorism intelligence efforts.
16. To assist the PS (NSIC), the NSCS will incorporate two key agencies, the National Security Co-ordination Centre (NSCC), and the Joint CounterTerrorism Centre (JCTC).
17. The National Security Co-ordination Centre (NSCC) will focus on national security policy co-ordination and planning. NSCC's operations will include developing programmes for risk assessment and public awareness and launching a national security course for public officers. NSCC will also monitor the on-going development of capabilities to address threats stemming from biological, chemical, radiological and cyber-terrorism as well as initiatives to enhance aviation, maritime and land transport security. A very important responsibility of NSCC is to build up, together with our think-tanks, a better and deeper understanding of the ideology which fuel the anger and motivations of terrorists. More details are contained in the Fact Sheet which I am asking the Clerk of Parliament to give out to Members now.

18. The JCTC will focus on counter-terrorism intelligence co-ordination, and will be the focal point for strengthening the cooperation in counter-terrorism intelligence between the Security & Intelligence Division (SID) of MINDEF and the Internal Security Department (ISD) of MHA, particularly in the area of strategic intelligence needed for policy making. Working under the guidance of the Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee, JCTC will have the challenging task of developing and enhancing the co-operative modus operandi between our two Intelligence agencies (SID and ISD) that have hitherto worked largely independent of each other. JCTC will not be directly involved in operations but it will have full information access to ISD, SID and other relevant agencies pertaining to its conduct of strategic analysis on an all-source basis. In other words, JCTC will act as an integration node in the production of strategic counter-terrorism intelligence from its inputs from all sources for integrated analysis and assessment. JCTC will then be able to provide the higher level strategic picture that is needed to formulate national strategy and policy and plans for the development of national counter terrorism capabilities.

19. Sir, co-ordinating the responsibilities and work of a number of Ministries and agencies is always difficult. But whatever the difficulties, we must succeed in better co-ordinating planning, policy and intelligence because failure to do so will mean a degraded capability which will not be adequate to deal with the threat of transnational terrorism.

#### Measures taken after 9-11

20. Even before 9-11, we have been concerned with the issue of terrorism. Several of our Ministries and agencies have been developing capabilities to deal with specific threats eg. chemical and biological threats. 9-11 has reinforced the urgency and importance of dealing with terrorism and, where necessary, we have put in place several ad hoc co-ordinating arrangements to protect Singapore and Singaporeans from terrorist attacks. The Security Policy Review Committee that I chair has provided strategic policy direction and guidance. Adhoc committees of Permanent Secretaries have been set up to

co-ordinate the development and implementation of strategic responses to various threats including aviation security, land transport security and maritime security.

21. Through these ad hoc arrangements, much has already been achieved in hardening Singapore against terrorist attacks. Since 9-11, we have put in place enhanced security measures that cover our land entry points, airport, ports, critical installations and key public areas. We have also improved our capabilities to deal with explosives, and chemical and biological threats. The work we have done over the last three years has raised our overall vigilance and readiness, and helped to close obvious capability gaps that were identified.
  
22. But it is unwise to depend on such ad hoc arrangements in the long run. They must be replaced by robust institutional structures. The Strategic Framework for National Security will address the issues I have discussed, close the gaps which we have identified and put in place the machinery to enable the Government to systemically deal with the security issues which confront our nation.

### National Resilience

23. Enhancing Singapore's national security cannot be left to the Government alone. The people and the business community must play their part. The Government's efforts to deal with the threat of transnational terrorism can only be effective with the full participation of all Singaporeans. Everyone has a part to play in Singapore's national security. The key ideas behind the Strategic Framework for National Security will be disseminated to create awareness through a public document titled "The Fight against Terror: Singapore's National Security Strategy" to be launched in August at a National Security Seminar.

### Conclusion

24. Sir, the most fundamental duty of Government is to protect the lives of our citizens and their property and interests. Fulfilling this duty requires constant vigilance and bold thinking to pre-empt and prevent terrorist attacks. In this connection, I would like to pay



a tribute to our security and defence agencies, especially MINDEF, MHA, SID and ISD for their sterling efforts and hard work in keeping Singapore safe from terrorist attacks despite the turbulent and dangerous security environment in the last few years. The Strategic Framework for National Security will now establish the baseline which will enable us to further evolve our security strategy to deal even more effectively with the long term threat of terrorism that is constantly evolving and adapting.

25. When the National Security Co-ordination Secretariat and its agencies are properly staffed and fully operational, our Government ministries and agencies will be better placed to work even more closely and effectively with the people and the business community to keep Singapore safe and secure. I urge Members to support the Strategic Framework for Singapore's National Security which I have just outlined and I welcome your ideas and views to continuously improve our efforts to safeguard Singapore's future.

Thank you, Sir.

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