



PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
SINGAPORE

Speech By DPM Teo At The National Security Conference 2017

DPM Teo Chee Hean | 26 September 2017

DPM Teo Chee Hean's speech at the National Security Conference 2017, delivered on 26 September 2017.

"Prepared Workplaces for a More Resilient Singapore"

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Deputy Secretary-General, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning,

The strong turnout today shows that our business community is taking the terrorist threat seriously.

The Threat of Terrorism

The terrorist threat to Singapore is at the highest since the JI group was dismantled in 2001. The conflict in Marawi, South Philippines, the seizure of chemicals which can be used to make bombs in Java and the arrest of ISIS supporters in Malaysia remind us that ISIS and its affiliates are also active in our neighbourhood.

Since 2015, 11 Singaporeans have been detained and six were issued with Restriction Orders, more than in the previous seven years. We have also deported foreigners working here found to be radicalised. You would have read about a Singaporean who has joined ISIS and has made a video to encourage Singaporeans and others to join them or carry out terrorist activities here in East Asia. The video is made in English and attempts to appeal to the local audience.

Our security agencies are working hard to detect, prevent and deal with potential attacks. At the same time, strong community support is essential to keep Singapore and Singaporeans safe. This is why we launched SGSecure to sensitise, train and mobilise our community. Home Team officers, together with volunteers from the community, have engaged over 220,000 households to prepare them to respond to a terrorist attack. Members of the community have also stepped forward to be trained as responders.

Strengthening Workplace Preparedness

To complement our efforts to prepare Singaporeans, we need to also prepare our businesses as well. We tabled the Infrastructure Protection Bill last month. This Bill will help raise the capabilities of event organisers and building owners to secure places where we gather or work. Our companies can also develop business continuity plans to cope with the potential destruction of property, and support affected employees to recover and

return to work. In many ways, a plan to counter a terrorist attack is not too different from the contingency plans which your companies have for emergencies such as fires. You need to prepare for it so that you can protect your workers and you can have business continuity.

Our goal is to strengthen the preparedness of our workplaces. This means (i) preparing our workforce to deal with the terrorist threat; (ii) creating protected workplaces, with response plans ready to kick in should an incident occur; and (iii) partnering the community to maintain vigilance and improve our readiness to respond.

Prepared Workforce

First, we have to prepare our workforce so that employees protect themselves and their colleagues in the event of an attack.

The Public Service will take the lead, and train our public officers on emergency preparedness, such as first-aid, and the use of automated external defibrillators.

Many companies have also started preparing their staff to be trained in fire-fighting and familiarised with evacuation routes and contingency plans. There is little time to think about this and start planning when things happen. You must plan beforehand; your staff need to know what to do and need to be well organised. This can make the difference in survival during an emergency. The SGSecure Guide for Workplaces, which will be available to all companies, was developed jointly by the Ministry of Manpower, the Home Team and tripartite partners. This Guide lays out in simple and concrete steps what companies can do.

We urge every company to appoint and register your SGSecure representative with the Ministry of Manpower as the point-of-contact should there be an incident. He or she can also be your SGSecure advocate to prepare other employees.

Protected Workplaces

Second, we must protect our workplaces and develop effective contingency plans. We saw how this can make a real difference during 9/11. Morgan Stanley took their contingency plans very seriously before the event, and carried out drills to make sure employees knew how to evacuate quickly. When the North Tower was struck by an aircraft, the company's Director of Security urged his colleagues in the South Tower to leave immediately. Employees were already on their way down the stairs when the South Tower was hit about 20 minutes later, and the majority of Morgan Stanley's employees evacuated safely. So by having a plan, being alert, conscious about what is happening, taking decisive action and putting the plan into action with everyone knowing what to do made a difference.

To help companies create a response plan to secure their workplaces, we have enhanced the bizSAFE framework to include the risk of terrorist attacks. You should look at it comprehensively, including safety issues, fire issues, terrorist issues, and their interconnections. Business leaders undergoing the enhanced bizSAFE certification will learn how to identify risks, and develop risk management plans for their companies. These plans will be audited by qualified personnel as well.

Today, we already have more than 22,000 bizSAFE-certified companies. The enhanced bizSAFE requirements will raise their preparedness level. We will work with the key trade associations and tripartite partners to have 27,000 companies that meet the enhanced bizSAFE requirements by 2020.

Partnering Your Community

Third, companies can partner your community to strengthen vigilance and boost your collective ability to respond effectively to crises.

For instance, the Association of Banks Singapore organised the fifth Exercise Raffles last month with the support of the Monetary Authority of Singapore. This Exercise brought together 139 financial institutions, building management and government agencies to test the financial industry's contingency plans against physical and cyber-attacks.

I encourage other trade associations, as well as companies with experience in business continuity planning, to take the lead in their respective domains. For our small and medium sized companies, you can approach SPRING Singapore for support. Premise owners have a big role to play. They can and should also participate in Safety & Security Watch Groups (or SSWG), where they share best practices with their peers and receive advice from the Home Team.

Building Racial and Religious Harmony, Social Cohesion and Community Trust

Our business community can also make significant contributions to raise the level of trust and mutual understanding in our community. Racial, religious and social harmony, social cohesion and community trust. This will help reduce the likelihood of social tensions, strife, and security threats. This is also important for resilience for companies, communities and our nation in order to recover from an attack.

If we look around our region, in the Southern Philippines and South Thailand, and Myanmar, such tensions have erupted into violence; and there have also been a number of attacks in Malaysia and Indonesia which has also seen a rise in the number of arrests made. Our racial and religious harmony is a key strength for us. But as we can see from elsewhere in our own region, and countries beyond, that this is not the natural state of affairs.

We have arrived at this state of peace and harmony of our racial and religious groups because we have deliberately introduced important institutions, laws and regulations to help prevent conflict and keep all communities together. This has laid a strong foundation for our progress. Singaporeans of all races and faiths now live together in HDB precincts and blocks, not because this was a natural thing to do, but because we arranged for this to happen. We study together in national schools, eat together in food centres, serve National Service together and work together in your companies.

We made changes to our parliamentary system to have Group Representation Constituencies to assure our minority communities that they will always have representation in Parliament and this is important to make all communities be a part of Singapore. Similarly, the changes to the Elected Presidency ensure that members of the major racial communities in Singapore can hold the highest office of President if this has not happened after five continuous terms, or thirty years. President Madam Halimah Yacob is our first President from the Malay community in 47 years. Let us give her our full support.

We enjoy harmony because we have these guide-ropes to help us progress on our journey towards our aspiration to be one united people regardless of race, language or religion. And we also have guardrails to make sure that as we climb we do not accidentally fall over. And it is because of that that we have peace and harmony which we enjoy today. It is something quite unique and also structured. We should treasure and keep nurturing it. This requires the commitment and continued support of all communities and Singaporeans.

Our business sector has a key role to play in helping to build cohesion, harmony and trust in Singapore. This is an important complement to the actions to strengthen the preparedness of our workplaces. Leadership is key. Leadership and leadership emphasis make a difference. For instance, if you walk around the company and you noticed something is causing a wastage of resources, you would want to do something about it because it affects your bottom line and you feel compelled to do something about it. If you see something unsafe in your workplace, you would want to do so as well. This concerns the safety and well-being of your employees and it affects your repute and business continuity as well. Similarly, you should also look at whether your workplace premises are safe from potential terrorist attacks. Very often, if someone wants to attack a place, they would do a reconnaissance first. If your security personnel are alert and you have good systems in place, this may well deter an attacker. But if he is able to

saunter into your company and premises, then they might think that it is a soft target. Deterrence is important as it may affect which target the terrorist chooses. Prevention and mitigation are equally important. If your staff know what to do and they act appropriately, you can mitigate the effects of an attack quite considerably.

If you can deter an attack, the situation will be much better. But if you can prevent and mitigate an attack should one occur, it will help you minimise your losses, and help you to recover.

Each individual has a role to play, and needs to know what to do individually. Thereafter, organisations, businesses, churches, places where people gather, community organisations, and schools, these are workplaces where employers and leaders can make a difference to our overall safety.

Conclusion

Our businesses can prepare our workforce, protect our workplaces and partner the community to keep Singapore and Singaporeans safe and secure.

We must work together, stay alert, stay united and stay strong. Let us work together, keep ourselves, our workers and our businesses safe, and ensure that your business continues to thrive and prosper even in the face of these terrorist threats. Thank you very much, and let us all work together to make this happen.

Topics: Multi-racial and multi-religious society, Safety and security

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