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The Commandant
Directing Staff And Course Participants

A very good morning to all of you.
My sincere thanks to the Commandant for inviting me to talk to all of you and share my perspective on some aspects of Malaysia's national defence policy. I have been asked to touch on the orientation of our defence policy; deterrence, forward defence and total defence; Defence Arrangements and Agreements; as well as current issues on defence and sovereignty.

Orientation of Defence Policy

The ultimate objective of our national defence policy is to maintain peace and protect Malaysia as a free nation with all our fundamental institutions and values intact. In other words, like any other nations, our national defence policy is a manifestation of our goal to protect our national interests. The policy while confining to military instruments, complements the nation's domestic and foreign policies.

The national defence policy is a capability driven policy and not formulated based on any specific threat. This is primarily due to the fact that we do not foresee any potential conventional threat emerging in the near future. What we meant by capability driven is that the armed forces possess the necessary wherewithal to protect our national interests. In fact, "strong defence capabilities" is one of the ten fundamental principles advocated by Islam Hardhari or civilisational Islam.

I have to mention here that way back in the 1970s, when there was fear of communist expansion in Southeast Asia and the Domino theory, we had a threat-based policy. In hindsight it has proven to be imprudent. It has been almost two decades since we departed from the threat-based policy. We are glad that it has thus far proven to be a wise policy.

Immediately after independence, our defence was tied to the umbilical cord of former British colonial masters. The Anglo-Malayan Defence Arrangement provided the security umbrella. It was a logical choice then, as a newly independent nation, economic development was an immediate priority for without economic development there cannot be internal stability.

However, the Indonesian "*Konfrontasi*" taught us valuable lessons. One of them was that as an independent nation we need to develop indigenous capability in defence to secure peace and stability as well as maintain our nationhood. At the same time, we also realised that we need to contribute towards ensuring the sustenance of regional peace and stability that are conducive to our continued economic well-being.

It is in view of these that since the 1970s self-reliance has become the cornerstone of our defence policy. However, we have to accept the fact that there are limitations in terms of local defence industry support and R&D in defence science, the two prerequisites for self-reliance capability. Financially too it is not feasible. Consequently, we set modest targets of being fully self-reliant on maintenance of internal security as well as meeting low and medium level external threats.

Deterrence, Forward Defence and Total Defence

Our defence policy advocates defensive defence posture and the use of force only as a last resort. Accordingly deterrence is one of the key military strategies enshrined in our defence policy. An integral part of deterrence is its value which, in turn, is translated into credibility. According to Gavin Kennedy *the value of deterrence is measured by the probability of a non-attack*.

Within the context of a nuclear strategy, for example, the destructive nature of nuclear weapons themselves provided the ultimate deterrence value. For example, the rivalry between the former Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War era did not erupt into a major conflict could be attributed to the fact that both countries possessed nuclear weapons.

Another example would be the near stand-off between India and Pakistan about two years ago. Both countries fought

three wars since their independence. I would say that only the nuclear parity between them deterred a fourth war.

However, within the context of conventional weapons deterrence has a different interpretation. For deterrence to work, it is absolutely necessary that it has to be credible. A credible deterrence will depend not only on the assets that you have, but also on the quality of manpower, and state of preparedness, as well as your willingness to use force when the need arises.

In other words your whole argument rests on your potential enemy believing that you have the ability to attack and prevail, believing he can expect a massive retaliation when provoked. Deterrence works on the enemy's intentions making him come to the conclusion that it is not worth the risk of using force as the cost may far outweigh the intended benefits. Deterrence is regarded as a peacetime objective.

Our major procurements such as MBTs, submarine, IGLA, MLRS and Sukhois are precisely to cater for enhancing deterrence capabilities. Furthermore, we are also looking at enhancing air mobility, fire power, naval combat and command & control as well as surveillance capabilities.

The other military strategy advocated by the defence policy is the concept of forward defence. The central purpose of this strategy is to destroy your enemy outside your territory before the enemy has the opportunity to land on your shores.

Ideally the concept of forward defence involves deployment of military well beyond the parameters of one's own territory. A good example in this regard is the US' deployment of military forces in East Asia and other parts of the world. The US' involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s was also part of their forward defence strategy. Australia at one time had bases in Southeast Asia for the same purpose. Australia's current involvement in the Five Power Defence Arrangements is viewed by some analysts as part of their forward defence strategy.

However, in the context of our defence policy, the concept of forward defence has a different connotation for we are not a global player. The thrust of our forward defence strategy is to detect and counter any threat at the periphery of our Exclusive Economic Zone.

The third strategy in our defence policy is the concept of total defence. The underlying principle of this strategy is that the defence of the nation does not solely rest on the shoulders of the armed forces, but the nation as a whole. It has five facets, namely Security Readiness, Social Cohesion and Solidarity, Civil Preparedness, Economic Resilience and Psychological Resilience.

However, I have to admit that the reality of this concept has yet to solidify. There is still a lack of national commitment partly due to the fact that we have not had serious threats to our sovereignty with the exception of "*Konfrontasi*". This is one area that we need to look at seriously.

Defence Arrangements and Agreements

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now touch on the other aspect of the policy, the bilateral and multilateral defence relations. These ties are very important for us as they provide significant avenues for enhancing our defence capabilities through training, exercise, acquisition of skills in specialised areas, and procurement of defence hardware. These ties also enable us to pursue defence diplomacy that contributes much towards confidence building and transparency besides complementing diplomatic relations.

The two General Border Agreements that we had signed with Thailand and Indonesia in the 1960s to overcome the communist threats along our common borders, provide the framework for defence cooperation. However, with the demise of the communist threat, the terms of reference of the agreement with Thailand have been reviewed to cater for the current strategic realities. Both the GBCs have also included terrorism as part of the agenda.

Formal defence relations have also been established with more than twenty countries in the region and beyond. In addition, we also maintain defence contacts with a number of other countries. Although the focus of specific areas of cooperation differ from country to country, generally they cover three broad areas, namely Military Training & Exercise, Defence Industry and R&D in Defence Science.

As regional cooperation is an important pillar of our defence policy, we are exploring the possibility of establishing formal defence relations with our ASEAN neighbours Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. We believe that a web of strong bilateral defence relations amongst the countries in the region would contribute towards regional resilience and transparency.

Although Malaysia has established diplomatic relations with the Peoples' Republic of China for three decades, we have yet to extend it to defence. We realize that there is a vast potential for defence cooperation with Beijing. And towards this end, we are working on formalising defence ties with China.

Since last year, we have started the Malaysia Defence Cooperation Programme. It is aimed to provide training for foreign armed forces personnel. Additionally, training opportunities are also extended to civilians in defence organisation. All the costs involved are borne by Malaysia. It is part of our commitment towards strengthening defence relations with developing countries and enhancing south-south cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Any discussion on our defence relations will not be complete if the Five Power Defence Arrangements or FPDA is not mentioned. Established in 1971, the FPDA comprising Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the UK has contributed significantly towards enhancing the professionalism of the Malaysian Armed Forces. Today it remains as the sole military arrangement in the region with a permanent operational headquarters. Its original role was to provide for the air defence of Malaysia and Singapore. Its role has now been expanded with focus on more joint and combined exercises. Over the years, FPDA exercises have become more sophisticated thus providing invaluable opportunities for us to train in a multinational environment. The FPDA is a testimony that workable interoperability can be achieved by willing partners without the need to develop a more formal military alliance status. To ensure that the FPDA remains relevant to the current security needs, the member nations are now looking at how best FPDA could assist member nations in capacity building in facing non-conventional threats.

Current Issues on defence and sovereignty

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us now move on to some current issues on defence and sovereignty.

Developments in the post Sept 11 era have shown that non-conventional threats have become foremost security concerns with terrorism posing serious challenge to international security. A key issue that has emerged out of this is the maritime security. There are concerns that maritime targets would be easily vulnerable to terrorist attacks as compared to land or air. In this regard, the Straits of Malacca, one of the busiest waterways in the world, has been singled out as a potential terrorist target in the region. Terrorist bombings in Bali and Jakarta have heightened these fears. Consequently, there have been calls for the US navy to patrol the straits to ensure it remains safe for navigation.

However, we are consistent in our position that we do not support the idea of foreign forces patrolling the straits. It is the duty of the littoral states to ensure its safety and security. The presence of foreign forces would not only impinge on sovereignty but could be counter-productive and trigger more terrorist activities as is the case in certain parts of the world. After all, the littoral states, namely Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore have the capability to patrol the straits. Therefore, the challenge for us now is to step up patrol along the straits and conduct frequent coordinated patrols in collaboration with our immediate neighbours.

We certainly welcome assistance of other countries including the US to enhance our capabilities. There are areas such as exchange of information and intelligence where we could work closely.

On the other hand, we are cautious with the US initiated frameworks of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI). The PSI, a strategy to combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, focuses on air, maritime and ground interdiction whereas the RMSI aims to develop a partnership to address trans-national issues. We recognize that in a globalised world we

are interconnected and interdependent and that no single nation could address all the threats on its own. However, we are not prepared to compromise on aspects that impinge on sovereignty and are inconsistent with existing international norms. As I have mentioned earlier we have the capability and provide us with the necessary information and intelligence and we will certainly act on it.

Similarly we are concerned with statements made by certain quarters on carrying out pre-emptive strikes as part of counter-terrorism strategy. We are of the view that counter-terrorism has to be based on cooperation and not pre-emption. Although we have been assured that Malaysia is not a target, but the statements and denials made time and again do not auger well for fostering international cooperation.

As part of an effort to ensure peace and stability in the region, Malaysia has been actively involved in peace negotiations between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Movement. The culmination of this is Malaysia leading a multinational team to oversee the implementation of the Govt of the Rep of the Philippines and MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001. Although the realization of full peace process may take sometime, we feel that their agreement to accept the multinational team is a significant progress in the peace process.

Malaysia is concerned over adverse developments that had taken place in southern Thailand. We have time and again made it clear that we respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Thailand and are prepared to work closely with the Thai authorities. We have no intention to harbour any of the trouble shooters in southern Thailand. Our recent decision to revoke the citizenship of suspected terrorists underscores this.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our resolve to work closely with the Thai authorities and our involvement in the peace process in Mindanao are reinforcements of Malaysia's commitment to work closely with regional countries on defence and security issues.

As for the traditional security concerns, the overlapping

sovereignty claims over the South China Sea islands have somewhat been well addressed and do not at this stage carry serious implications for wider strategic stability. However, the same cannot be said for the situation on the Korean Peninsula and the cross-straits relations between China and Taiwan.

The uncertainty prevailing on the Korean Peninsula remains a cause for concern. Stability on the Peninsula is of vital importance for the wider region because of the potential for events there to affect relations among the major powers. It would also have ramifications on economic welfare of the entire region. Malaysia hopes that the Six-Party Talks would provide avenues for a comprehensive and balanced dialogue with the DPRK including nuclear and missile issues.

The cross-straits relations between China and Taiwan seem to be deteriorating following increasing voices among Taiwan's leadership on seeking independence and their insistence on carrying out missiles test firing. Like the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan issue also has implications on relations among major powers besides repercussions on regional economic well-being.

You may recall that ASEAN leaders had adopted the concept of Security Community, as one of the three pillars of ASEAN. Although ASEAN is not a defence entity, the security community calls for closer cooperation in defence and security matters. It reiterated the need to resort to peaceful means of settling disputes and refrain from using force. Malaysia fully subscribes for the concept and to ensure the sustenance of regional peace and stability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have touched and shared my views on some fundamental aspects of the defence policy as well as some of the current defence and security issues affecting the region. I now look forward to hearing your views and answering your questions.

Thank you.