



# SPEECH

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**SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR DEFENCE DR NG ENG HEN AT THE RSAF A330 MULTI-ROLE TANKER TRANSPORT FULL OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY CEREMONY AT CHANGI AIRBASE (EAST) ON 20 APR 2021 AT 1500HRS**

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Permanent Secretary (Defence),  
Chief of Defence Force,  
Chief of Air Force,  
Our Defence Partners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good afternoon.

## INTRODUCTION

1. The attainment of Full Operational Capability (FOC) by 112 Squadron for this Airbus A330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (or “MRTT” in short) obviously marks a significant milestone in the capabilities of the RSAF. You have seen the video and you have talked to the commanders, and as the video accurately depicted, it was not one without travails or obstacles or curveballs. I think that they have stood up and surmounted the challenges well to be able to deliver on the FOC itself. Congratulations are due and well deserved for the RSAF men and women who have worked very hard for this achievement. Congratulations.

2. The MRTT marks another step up in extending the range of RSAF’s fleet of planes. This journey of mid-air refuelling started more than 30 years ago. It was given a boost 20 years ago with the KC-135 Stratotankers, the MRTT’s immediate predecessor, now retired. The KC-135 served us well. I am sure that many of you who operated it have very fond memories, it proved versatile, and was deployed in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. You remember that we repatriated Singaporeans from the SQ006 crash in year 2000. We helped in Christchurch, after the earthquake in 2011. During these episodes, the medical and planning teams could also be deployed because the KC135 had a large carrying capacity. But each time, the squadron had to improvise and because of their innovativeness and determination to succeed to achieve mission success, they performed the missions safely and successfully.

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3. This MRTT that you see behind me, continues these roles of the KC-135. But as the video showed with an even larger capacity for fuel, cargo and passengers – the MRTT can hold 20% more fuel than the KC-135, twice the cargo capacity, and more than five times the number of passengers. Learning from our experiences in operating the KC-135, the MRTT by design can also be configured for aeromedical evacuation missions. So, instead of attaching stretchers to the floorboard of the aircraft in the KC-135 as we had to do, they are now mounted in the cabin, much sturdier and more secure therefore against air turbulence. Instead of portable batteries, medical equipment is now powered by the aircraft’s power supply. The MRTT’s better endurance and its ability to do tanker-to-tanker refuelling which the KC135 could not, extends its operating footprint – and we are now able to reach all our overseas detachments without layovers.

4. For our fighter aircraft, the MRTT provides the capacity to reach faraway parts of the globe and correspondingly, assurance that we would be to recover our assets from anywhere in the world, where the situation warrants. That is a real source of assurance.

### **SUPPORTED BY A STRONG ENGINEERING CORE**

5. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the collaboration of defence engineers from DSTA, without which the MRTT programme would not have come into fruition. Their expertise and persistence enabled operational and technical problems to be addressed, such as the air-to-air refuelling boom not performing up to the manufacturer’s standards during flight trials. DSTA engineers worked with the original equipment manufacturer to resolve the problem and their proposed modifications are now being assessed and promulgated across the global fleet of MRTTs. This is quite an achievement and is the fruit of consistent and effective tech integration by our engineers working alongside our servicemen.

### **COMMITTED TO MORE SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS**

6. Let me also commend the team from DSTA who conceptualised, designed and delivered the hangar that we are in today. This is the first net-positive energy hangar in the SAF, consuming less electricity than it generates. At the recent Committee Of Supply Debate, MINDEF and the SAF unveiled our “Go Greener” plans to reduce carbon emissions and waste. This hangar is one of the many new facilities that will be built under this “Go Greener” initiative in the years ahead - this building is a forerunner - even as we build towards SAF 2040.

### **CONCLUSION**

7. The motto of 112 Squadron aptly describes today’s commemoration of the MRTT, whose servicemen and women have certainly delivered on their promises and duty. Congratulations again to all for attaining the FOC for the MRTT. Congratulations.

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