



Singapore Government Statement in Response to Transparency International's (TI) Government Defence Integrity Index 2020

Excellent Anti-Corruption Reputation

The Government of Singapore, Singapore Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) have a policy of zero tolerance towards corruption for many years. Established international organisations have consistently acknowledged Singapore's high levels of integrity and incorruptibility. Since 2002, the Political & Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) has ranked Singapore as the least corrupt country out of 16 countries (in Asia, the US and Australia), and again awarded Singapore the best score in 2021. The World Bank, in its Worldwide Governance Indicators, has consistently ranked Singapore among the top out of over 200 countries for corruption control. In fact, TI's most recent Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2020 has also placed Singapore as one of the least corrupt countries in the world.

Strong Governance and Compliance System

Much of these achievements can be attributed to Singapore's strong governance and compliance system, as well as our anti-corruption framework, which continue to be underpinned by the rule of law. Budgeting and procurement regimes of public sector agencies, including MINDEF and the SAF, are subject to robust policies and practices to prevent, detect and punish corruption. To ensure strong institutional controls and disciplined checks and balances, MINDEF/SAF has in place a comprehensive system of internal and external audits, including those conducted by the Auditor-General's Office as an independent organ of state. There are also provisions at the national level and within MINDEF/SAF to protect whistle-blowers and encourage them to report any wrongful practices. Any person engaged in wrongdoing will be dealt with under the full extent of the law.

Specific to military operations, MINDEF/SAF personnel undergo training on professional ethics and anti-corruption. It is compulsory for personnel to conform to anti-corruption policies, whether in the course of their regular work or during military deployments. Our commanders and servicemen also receive pre-



deployment briefings that state the behaviour expected of them. We also have in place a system of audits and checks to uncover any indication of potential corruption, including during military deployments.

Parliamentary Oversight

The Parliament of Singapore exercises direct control on the scrutiny of defence policies and approval of the defence budget, subjecting MINDEF/SAF to formal legislative oversight. Parliament's mechanisms and processes cater time for Members to effectively debate and scrutinise each Ministry's policies, initiatives and proposed areas of spending. MINDEF has been called upon to account for defence policies by Members of Parliament, regardless of their political party.

Public Debate and Engagement

MINDEF/SAF ensures that information on defence policies is made available to the public in a timely manner. In addition, MINDEF/SAF regularly engages key stakeholders and the public to seek views and discuss challenges on the security and defence of Singapore. Many of these dialogues and debates are open to media reporting. There are also channels for the community to provide MINDEF/SAF feedback or concerns.

National Security Imperative

It should be acknowledged that some aspects of defence expenditure and acquisitions have to be kept confidential on occasion to safeguard national security. This imperative is recognised in the 2012 World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Government Procurement. For the same reason, Singapore does not publicise all details of our defence expenditure. Such national security considerations also guide our decision not to reveal all details of our military orbat or manpower figures. This in no way compromises the existence, effectiveness, and enforcement of our institutional controls. Our defence expenditures are subject to robust governance and controls, rigorous internal and external audits, and comprehensive checks and balances. Our defence budget is subject to Parliamentary approval. Manpower decisions, such as appointments of



personnel, are also subject to similarly rigorous governance and control processes.

Changes in TI's Methodology

We note the change in TI's methodology which precludes direct comparisons between the 2015 GDI scores and the 2020 GDI scores. Nevertheless, it is unclear why we have fallen in the scoring band in TI's assessment as we have upheld the same robustness in our system compared to 2015, when the assessment was last done. Regardless, our score should not be interpreted in isolation. For a more complete picture of anti-corruption and governance standards in a country, it would be useful to examine cases of actual corruption, and also consider other established and reputable international assessments.