

Ong Jia Hui

<http://citizen-stile.blogspot.com/2006/01/ong-jia-hui.html>

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From the MINDEF web site:

2SG Ong Jia Hui, a 24 year old regular Army specialist, was discovered missing at about 1740hrs on 15 Jun 05 while undergoing special operations training in the waters of Changi Naval Base. A safety diver, who was on standby as part of the safety precautions put in place for such training, was immediately activated. The diver found 2SG Ong at around 1745hrs. He was given immediate medical treatment at the Changi Naval Base medical centre before being evacuated to Changi General Hospital at about 1810hrs. He was pronounced dead at 1859hrs.

Accidents and controversies

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore_Armed_Forces_Commando_Formation

The commandos have won the SAF's annual Best Combat Unit competition many times since 1969. However, in 2003, the 1 CDO was barred from the competition after it was found guilty of doctoring store-keeping records and fitness test results.^[1]

Serious accidents during training are rare and were hardly, or probably never, publicised in the media until 2003, when the SAF's standards of safety in training came under increased scrutiny following the deaths of some servicemen during training.

On 15 June 2005, 2SG Ong Jia Hui, a regular serviceman who was training as a member of the Maritime Counter-Terrorism Group (under the Special Operations Force), drowned during training at [Changi Naval Base](#).^{[4][5]} On 13 July, First Sergeant (1SG) Shiva s/o Mohan, a regular commando, fell from 20 metres above the ground while rappelling from a helicopter and was pronounced dead in hospital about two hours later.^[6]



SAF regular drowns during special operations training

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/153084/1/.html>

June 12, 2005 By Joanne Leow, Channel NewsAsia

SINGAPORE : A 24-year-old Army specialist drowned while undergoing special operations training for maritime counter terrorism in the waters of Changi Naval Base.

Second Sergeant Ong Jia Hui was discovered missing around 5.40pm on Wednesday.

A safety diver, on standby as part of safety precautions, was immediately activated.

The diver found Ong in about five minutes. Ong was given medical treatment at the medical centre before being taken to Changi General Hospital within half an hour of the incident.

He was pronounced dead at around 7pm.

"I would like to extend our condolences to the family of Sergeant Ong. The army is doing what it can to assist the family. They have done the initial investigation and safety procedures and training regulations all seem to have been followed. We will have to look into the reason of the cause of death; the investigation is proceeding," said Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean.

ST: Mindef comes under fire by Government Parliamentary Committee

Defence GPC head plans to raise issue with Mindef

<http://forums.vr-zone.com/chit-chatting/50950-st-mindef-comes-under-fire-government-parliamentary-committee.html>

By David Boey and Ben Nadarajan

A YOUNG soldier's death has once again cast the spotlight on training safety in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

Members of Parliament interviewed yesterday were puzzled and dismayed at how 24-year-old Second Sergeant Ong Jia Hui - a trained lifeguard and strong swimmer - died on June 15 after he sank 9m to the seabed off Changi Naval Base while on a military exercise.

The chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee (GPC) for Defence and Foreign Affairs, Mr R. Ravindran, plans to raise the issue with Ministry of Defence officials when they meet his committee early next month.

2nd Sgt Ong was the first SAF serviceman to die during training since Mindef and the SAF tightened safety procedures in late 2003 in a sweeping safety review triggered by the death of a full-time national serviceman who died after his head was repeatedly dunked in water.

This week's coroner's report into 2nd Sgt Ong's death unearthed shortcomings in the way the Changi exercise was conducted.

Among other things, the report said:

The four SAF instructors who were supervising five trainees 'about 5m to 10m away' did not see 2nd Sgt Ong slip beneath the waves.

The soldier's recently serviced life vest was damaged. The coroner said the leaky vest had not been activated and 'did not contribute to his drowning'.

There was no medical officer on standby at the medical centre at Changi Naval Base when an ambulance rushed an unconscious 2nd Sgt Ong there for treatment. He had to be taken to Changi General Hospital, about 15 minutes away, where he died less than an hour later.

These were the type of glitches Mindef had hoped SAF servicemen could avoid after the extensive audit of SAF training in late 2003.

The review resulted in tightened regulations, the introduction of surprise safety audits and a 24-hour safety hotline for servicemen to report safety hazards.

Officers were also appointed to look at ways to improve safety.

This week, State Coroner Tan Boon Heng strongly criticised the four SAF instructors, saying it was incredible that all four had failed to notice 2nd Sgt Ong drowning even though they were so close.

The four face the possibility of criminal charges.

Dr Teo Ho Pin, an MP for Holland-Bukit Panjang GRC, was also puzzled by the incident.

'I'm a bit surprised. There could be other factors we do not know of,' he said, noting that further investigations might reveal why the soldier drowned.

MPs stressed that no amount of safety audits or training manuals can compensate for a lack of safety-consciousness among SAF personnel.

They encouraged SAF servicemen to be self-driven in enforcing safety

practices, and said they must be alert to spot and remedy hazards to life and limb.

Mr Sin Boon Ann, an MP for Tampines GRC, said: 'Incidents like this have happened in the best of armies.'

'I think what we need is to drill into people to be aware all the time of training safety. It should be second nature to them.'

Mr Sin, who is a member of the GPC for Defence and Foreign Affairs, added: 'You can write volumes about training safety but if you don't observe it, then what's the point?'

Official Releases

Remarks by Minister Teo Chee Hean on the Death of 2SG Ong Jia Hui

https://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/sp/2006/02_jan06_speech.html

02 Jan 2006

First of all, I'd like to once again extend my condolences to the family and relatives of 2SG Ong Jia Hui. We should be grateful that there are people like 2SG Ong who are willing to come forward to take on the most demanding missions in the SAF. Especially during these times when we have extreme forms of terrorism and we need people like that to come forward to protect us and to take care of hostage situations that may arise.



The training for the people of the Special Operations Forces is very demanding, but it is also progressive. The selection is very rigorous and only the toughest people, mentally and physically, are accepted for training. We expect them to do things which ordinary civilians or even well-trained soldiers cannot do. That is because we expect them to operate in the most extreme and demanding circumstances.

Among the Special Operations Force, the Maritime Counter-Terrorism Group is the most demanding. What we expect them to do on land, we expect the Maritime Counter-Terrorism Group to do at sea. They may, for example, have to retake a ship in the open seas, be able to board it in a variety of ways. If it is a case of a passenger liner, you can understand that there may be thousands of lives at stake. If it is a tanker or LPG ship, the consequences will be terrible if they are unable to carry out their mission successfully. So they train very hard and they have to train very realistically for it. Training is very demanding. The equipment they carry is, again, well beyond what we can expect a normal soldier to carry. It is something that is necessary and

which they have trained for in order to ensure mission success.

I am very grateful that there are people like 2SG Ong, men like that in the unit, who come forward to take on this demanding task. They know that at any moment, they may be called, and their lives are on the line. So they take training very seriously and they look after each other very seriously. If there are any shortcomings, if there are any persons who have failed to perform their duty properly, then of course, we will rectify this shortcoming. And the persons who have not performed their duties properly, they will have to be called to task.

The Coroner has made his findings. It is now up to the Attorney General, whether they have any basis to charge any of them. This is something we will have to leave to the Attorney General to decide.