



SCDF

The Life Saving Force

...for a safer Singapore

BEYOND THE FRONTLINE



SCDF
Three journeys.
One decision.

Meet three outstanding Section Commanders who found a deeper way to serve and expand their impact far beyond the frontline

PAGES

3

A Message to Every Section Commander

Find out how this publication came about

4

Why Crossover?

Discover what the crossover journey entails

5

From Junior Leader to Senior Leader

The story of an Overall Best Trainee who realised leadership isn't about doing more yourself, but enabling countless others to succeed.

10

Leading with Heart

What does the journey from trainee to Senior Officer look like? LTA Ethan Poh shares the experiences, challenges and lessons that shaped his path to becoming an SCDF Rota Commander.

15

The Leap - Why I Chose RCC, and Why You Might Too

An officer's reflection on choosing growth over familiarity and finding purpose in developing future leaders.



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A LEADERSHIP SPECIAL EDITION

A Message to Every Section Commander

Dear Section Commander,

There comes a moment in the journey of an outstanding Section Commander when a quiet but important question surfaces.

Is my purpose limited to incident response? Or can I help shape SCDF, and the generations of firefighters who will respond long after I ORD?

The Rota Commander Course (RCC) is not about stepping away from the frontline. It is about carrying what you have built there. Your experience, your instincts, your leadership and multiplying it across the entire organisation.

Through the stories of three remarkable NSF's, this publication explores what it truly means to lead, to grow, and to leave something behind that matters.

If you've been asking yourself whether RCC is the right move, you might find your answer here.



THE HEART OF IT ALL

“ When you become an Officer. You don't just respond to emergencies. You prepare others to do the same.

You multiply impact. You build legacy ”



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WHY CROSS OVER?

A DIFFERENT WAY TO SERVE. A GREATER IMPACT TO MAKE.

Many outstanding Section Commanders reach a crossroads in their NS journey.

Do I stay on the frontline... or step up to lead, plan, and shape the future of the organisation?

Both paths are meaningful.

Both save lives.

But only one offers the opportunity to multiply your impact.



DID YOU KNOW?

**ONLY
~5-10%**

of SCC graduates are selected for each RCC intake.



Selection is based on more than just performance. We look for leadership potential, character, resilience and a strong desire for growth.



CONTRIBUTE THROUGH



COMMAND AND LEAD
high-stakes firefighting and rescue missions



MENTOR AND SHAPE
the next generation



BUILD RESILIENCE
in the community and strengthen public trust



SHAPE POLICIES
and strengthen operations, training and staff wellbeing.

THE CROSSOVER JOURNEY



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

You master the skills, lead a Section and made a difference on the ground



OFFICER DEVELOPMENT

Through RCC, you build deeper leadership, management and critical thinking skills



COMMISSION AS OFFICER

You take on greater responsibility and are entrusted to lead as an Officer



EXPAND YOUR IMPACT

You mentor the next generation of firefighters and shape the organisation



LEAD BEYOND YOURSELF

Your impact multiplies across the organisation and into the future

FROM JUNIOR LEADER TO SENIOR LEADER

From recruit to Overall Best Trainee. Aryyan now finds himself on the other side - guiding the future batches of trainees.

LTA MUHAMAD HAIL ARYYAN
BIN MUHAMAD ABDULLAH

BY ARYYAN

COURSE OFFICER
CIVIL DEFENCE ACADEMY



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THE JOURNEY

A PATH BUILD ON PURPOSE

When Lieutenant Muhamad Hail Aryyan first donned the SCDF uniform as a recruit in January 2025, he had one simple aspiration: to become the best firefighter he could be.

What he did not expect was that within two years, he would progress through every major leadership milestone in National Service - earn the coveted Overall Best Trainee award in both the Section Commander Course (SCC) and the Rota Commander Course (RCC), and eventually return to train the next generation of SCDF officers.

Today, as a Course Officer at the Command & Staff Training Centre, Aryyan's greatest pride is no longer the awards he has received—but the leaders he helps shape.

When LTA Muhamad Hail Aryyan first enlisted for National Service in January 2025, becoming a commissioned Officer was little more than an ambitious dream.

He started from the very beginning, learning CPR, carrying hoses and mastering rescue equipment.

Through perseverance, humility and a relentless drive to improve, he progressed through every leadership milestones in SCDF – from recruit to private, cadet, sergeant, officer cadet and finally lieutenant, the highest rank attainable by an NSF.

His journey is a testament to what is possible when you choose to grow, serve and lead.



“

Hard work, humility and a willingness to help others will always open doors to greater opportunities.

”



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THE HARDEST DECISION

After graduating from SCC, Aryyan was posted to Central Fire Station, where he responded to fires, rescues and emergencies alongside seasoned firefighters. The adrenaline, the camaraderie and the real impact of saving lives was where he belonged.

Leaving the frontline for RCC was one of the toughest decision of his National Service. The Fire Station was like his second home.

But his Commanders reminded him: leaders don't just save lives today, they prepare others to save countless more tomorrow.



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“

THE GREATEST IMPACT WE CAN MAKE IS NOT ALWAYS THROUGH THE INCIDENTS WE RESPOND TO, BUT THROUGH THE PEOPLE WE HELP DEVELOP.

”

Aryyan chose to step onto a different kind of frontline, one that shapes leaders.

It was not an easy decision, but it was the right one.

He realised that by developing future officers, he could multiply his impact far beyond what he could achieve on his own.

This was when he committed himself fully to the RCC.

RCC challenged Aryyan to expand on his foundation as a Section Commander and understand the bigger operational picture. It transformed the way he leads.



WHAT ARYYAN LEARNT

THINK BIGGER. LEAD BETTER



THINK BIGGER

From leading a Section to leading an entire Rota.



STAY HUMBLE

Every experience is a lesson. Every person has something to teach.



LIFT OTHERS

Leadership is not about being the best. It's about making others better.



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SUCCESS ISN'T ABOUT AWARDS

IT'S ABOUT PURPOSE.

When Aryyan was announced as the Overall Best Trainee of RCC, he was genuinely surprised. The award was never his goal.

He focused on consistency, supporting his course mates and giving his best every day.

To him, the award represents the trust of his Commanders, the guidance of his instructors and the strength of the brotherhood he built along the way.



THE MENTOR

SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION

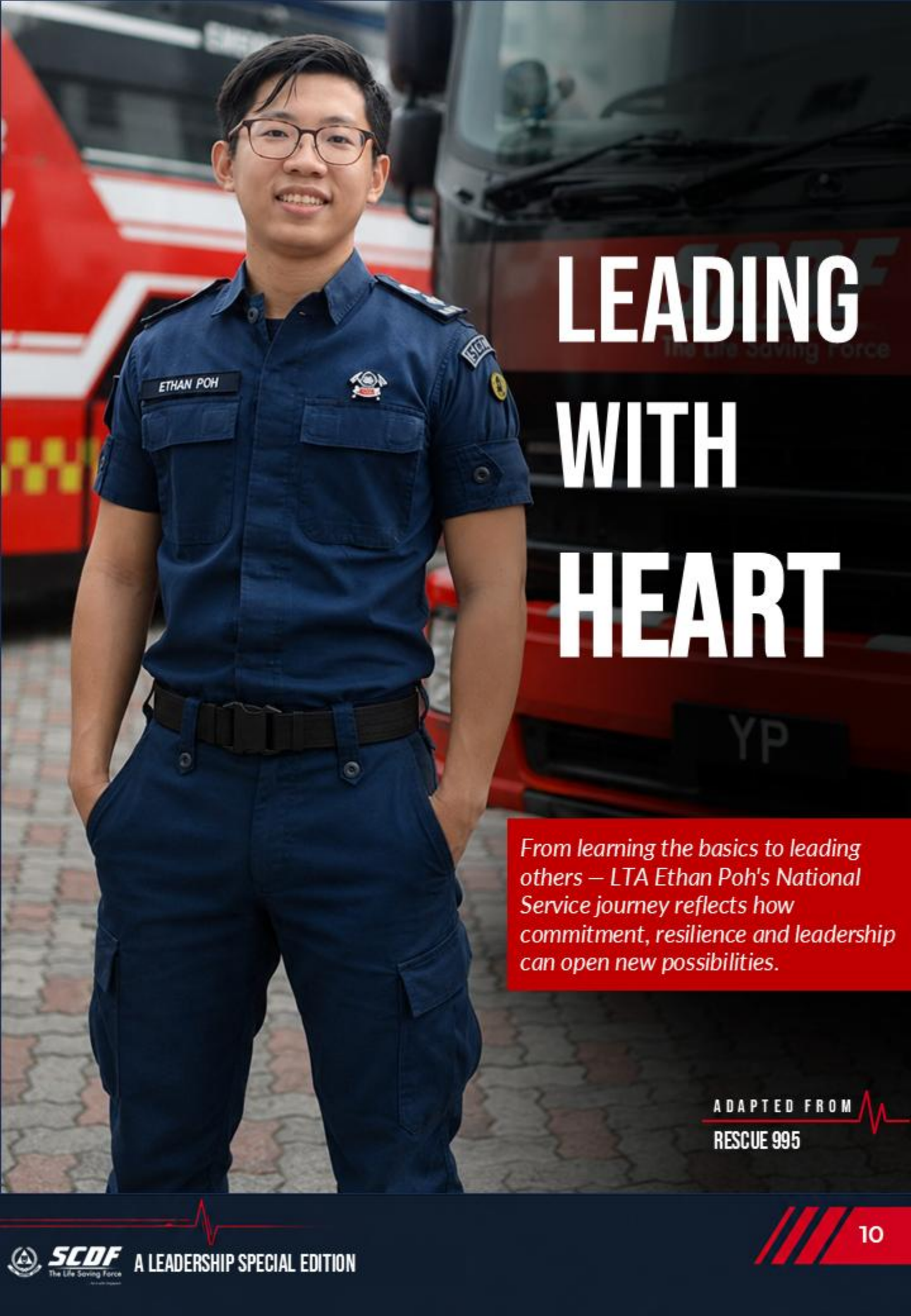
As a Course Officer, Aryyan now mentors RCC officer cadets, sharing real-world lessons, guiding them through challenges and helping them grow into confident leaders.

He believes every lesson, every feedback session and every exercise is an opportunity to make a difference.

“

If even one thing I taught contributes to saving a life down the road, that's enough for me to know that I have made a meaningful difference.

”

A young man with glasses, wearing a dark blue short-sleeved button-down uniform shirt and cargo pants, stands with his hands in his pockets. His name tag reads 'ETHAN POH'. He is positioned in front of a red fire truck. The truck has 'SCDF' and 'The Life Saving Force' written on its side, along with a license plate that partially shows 'YP'.

LEADING WITH HEART

From learning the basics to leading others – LTA Ethan Poh's National Service journey reflects how commitment, resilience and leadership can open new possibilities.

ADAPTED FROM
RESCUE 995



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A JOURNEY THAT BEGAN WITH AN OPEN MIND

When LTA Ethan Poh Xuan Rui enlisted for National Service with the Singapore Civil Force (SCDF), he admitted that he knew very little about the organisation. What he did know was that the training would be demanding, and he was determined to give his best regardless of the challenges ahead.

Over the course of a year, that mindset carried him through Basic Firefighting Training, the Section Commander Course (SCC), his posting as a Section Commander in Alexandra Fire Station, and eventually the Rota Commander Course (RCC). Looking back, Ethan credits each stage of the journey with shaping both his character and his approach to leadership.

“

I TOLD MYSELF TO DO
MY BEST, NO MATTER
WHAT CHALLENGES
COME MY WAY

”



SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

Ethan's performance during the SCC earned him a place in the Rota Commander Course.

Beyond developing his operational and decision-making abilities, the course exposed him to a broader leadership environment. He trained alongside SCDF Regular Officers, fellow National Servicemen and international cadets from the Abu Dhabi Civil Defence Authority.

Training together, learning from different cultures and supporting one another throughout the course became one of the defining experiences of RCC.

As cadets rotated through command appointments during scenario exercises, Ethan developed a deeper appreciation of leadership responsibilities.

Rather than focusing solely on physical performance, he began to understand the importance of being accountable for the safety and morale of the team.

“

Being physically fit is essential, but a good leader must also be accountable for the safety and morale of his team.

”





SERVING WITH PURPOSE

The experiences gained during RCC continue to shape Ethan's approach today.

He believes every action and every decision affects operational proficiency, teamwork and the wellbeing of colleagues. Maintaining discipline in revising the basics and continuously honing operational skills are responsibilities that extend well beyond training.

His performance throughout the course was recognised when he was named the Overall Best Cadet of the 31st RCC, receiving the Golden Axe during the Commissioning Parade.

After commissioning, LTA Ethan serves as a Rota Commander with the Special Response Unit (SRU). Together with his team, he supports a wide range of frontline operations including industrial fires, vegetation fires, hazardous materials decontamination and national-level contingency standbys.

Reflecting on his National Service, Ethan shared that his understanding of SCDF has changed significantly. He has come to appreciate the Force's lifesaving mission and believes that both Regular officers and National Servicemen contribute meaningfully as frontliners.

**“BE OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES,
AND DON'T SHY AWAY FROM
CHALLENGES. YOU WILL GROW IN
WAYS THAT YOU NEVER EXPECTED.”**

A PARENT'S PROUD HEART

SEEING OUR SON GROW IN NS

Ethan's parents shared their heartfelt Facebook post to encourage other parents whose sons are serving, reminding them that every challenge is an opportunity to grow, lead and become a better person.

Thank you, Ethan's parents, for your kind words

1

Secondary and Post-Secondary Parents Support Group (Singapore) ...

Alvin Poh · 11 Jul · Admin

To Every Parent Who Worry About National Service...

Like many parents, we felt a mixture of pride and worry when our son Ethan enlisted for National Service in 2024.

I believe every parent can understand that feeling.

You wonder if your child will be safe. You wonder whether he can cope with the physical and mental challenges. You wonder what kind of people he will meet and whether the experience will change him.

Looking back today, I can honestly say it did change him.

For the better.

👉 Ethan was posted to Fire Fighting and Rescue, a vocation that demands courage, discipline, teamwork and the willingness to put others before yourself.

It is certainly not an easy role.

Over the past two years, we watched him grow in ways that made us incredibly grateful.

He began his National Service as a recruit, just like every other young man, learning to adapt to a completely new environment and taking on challenges that were unfamiliar to him.

👉 After proving himself, he was selected to attend the Section Commander Course. It required additional training, commitment and responsibility. Upon completing the course, he became a Section

2

Secondary and Post-Secondary Parents Support Group (Singapore) ...

Alvin Poh · 11 Jul · Admin

Commander, leading and caring for the firefighters under his charge.

👉 Later, he was given another opportunity to undergo further training and was appointed as a Rota Commander, taking on even greater leadership responsibilities and overseeing a larger team.

As parents, we knew these were more than just appointments. They reflected the trust his commanders had in him and the confidence they had in his character, attitude and ability to lead others.

👉 Throughout these two years, we saw Ethan become more responsible, more disciplined, more confident and more resilient. He learned to stay calm under pressure, communicate clearly, make sound decisions and put the needs of the team before his own.

👉 He also learned that leadership is about serving others, setting the right example and being someone others can depend on, especially during difficult situations.

These are qualities that cannot always be taught in a classroom.

👉 They are developed through real responsibilities, demanding situations and working alongside teammates who rely on one another.

One lesson that stood out to us is this.

👉 No matter where our children are posted, they should give their very best.

3

Secondary and Post-Secondary Parents Support Group (Singapore) ...

Alvin Poh · 11 Jul · Admin

Sometimes young people may feel disappointed if they are not assigned to the role they had hoped for. But every vocation matters. Every role contributes to something much bigger than ourselves.

Success is not determined by where they are posted.

👉 It is determined by the attitude they bring every day.

👉 I hope every young man will choose to serve with excellence, take ownership of every responsibility and, when opportunities to grow or lead come along, embrace them wholeheartedly.

👉 The leadership skills, discipline, resilience, teamwork, communication skills, decision making and sense of responsibility they develop during National Service will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

👉 Whether they continue their studies, begin their careers, build a business or one day become husbands and fathers, these qualities will continue to shape the people they become.

As parents, we naturally hope life will be easy for our children.

👉 But often, it is the challenges that shape them into stronger, wiser and more compassionate adults.

Today, Ethan has completed his two years of National Service.

We are proud not because of the appointments he held, but because of the young man he has become. The courses he attended and the leadership roles he

4

Secondary and Post-Secondary Parents Support Group (Singapore) ...

Alvin Poh · 11 Jul · Admin

took on were opportunities to grow, to serve and to become a better person.

👉 To all the parents whose sons are serving or will soon be serving National Service, encourage them to embrace every challenge, give their best wherever they are posted, accept responsibility willingly and never stop learning. They may discover strengths they never knew they had.

Finally, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to SCDF, Ethan's commanders and every one of his teammates. Thank you for your guidance, encouragement, trust and friendship throughout these two years.

You did much more than train a serviceman.

You helped shape a young man's character, leadership and values.

For that, our family will always be grateful.

“ You did much more than train a serviceman. You helped shaped a young man's character, leadership and values! **”**



SCAN ME!



LTA THOR JACK ALVE RUTGERSSON

THE LEAP

WHY I CHOSE RCC -
AND WHY YOU MIGHT TOO

Leaving the frontline wasn't an easy decision.
For former Section Commander Thor, crossing
over to RCC meant giving up the role he loved,
BUT GAINING A NEW PURPOSE.

BY THOR
COURSE OFFICER
CIVIL DEFENCE ACADEMY

FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE FRONTLINE



If you're a Section Commander wondering whether to cross over to the Rota Commander Course (RCC), I get it. I was in your boots not long ago – comfortable in frontline operations, proud of my role, and unsure if crossing over was the right move.

My name is Thor, and this is my story – honestly told, in the hope it helps you decide your own.

I first heard about the NSF cross over scheme back in Basic Rescue Training (174th BRT). From then on, I pushed hard to excel at every step. Getting selected for the Section Commander Course (84th SCC) during my Basic Firefighting Training Course (38th BFFT) felt like a green light – I was on track.

I graduated SCC with the Best in Practical Award and was selected to attend the cross over interview. At that time, I was serving as a Section Commander at Bishan Fire Station, and I loved it. The adrenaline of calls, the purpose of lifesaving, the camaraderie in the Rota – frontline operations felt like home.

Crossing over meant leaving the station and possibly not returning to a frontline post even after commissioning.

That's exactly why I hesitated. The choice in front of me felt stark: stay in a familiar role where I was thriving, or step into the unknown and test myself again.

THE TURNING POINT

Days before my RCC interview, I was still on the fence. Then I asked myself a simple question: which path would grow me more as a leader?

Commissioning as a Senior Officer promised a broader scope, bigger leadership responsibilities, administrative depth, and the chance to shape people, not just outcomes.

**That realization tipped the scales.
I took the leap.**

**“
DON'T LET
COMFORT BE
YOUR COMPASS.
LET GROWTH BE.**

”



RCC: WHAT CHALLENGED ME MOST?

I came into RCC conditioned by SCC and frontline work, so the physical demands weren't the shock. The real stretch was the project work and administrative preparation. Learning to plan, manage time, and juggle competing priorities. Balancing training and assignments was tough at first, but it taught me to think like a Rota Commander: systems, people, operations, and standards all moving together.

WHEN DOUBT CREEP IN

The first week of RCC was the hardest — leaving home comforts, adjusting back to residential training, and asking myself, “Did I make the right call?” What made the difference were the five SCC batchmates who crossed over with me. We shared station insights, swapped lessons, and held each other to a higher standard. **That peer support turned doubt into momentum.**

THE SKILL NOBODY TALKS ABOUT

After commissioning, I was posted to the Command & Staff Training Centre as a Course Officer, planning and delivering training in fire, rescue, HazMat, and medical response for RCC cadets, teaching leadership crucibles, and commanding high-key exercises.

The skill that mattered most in all of this? Empathy. RCC taught me to read team dynamics, understanding people's emotions, strengths and weaknesses, and position them for success. It's not about going easy. It's about helping others reach their potential.

THE MOMENT THAT MAKES IT WORTH IT

Not every NSF dreams of RCC. Some arrive reluctant, unsure, or even outright resistant — and that's precisely where the real work begins. One of my toughest and most meaningful challenges is shifting that mindset from “I don't belong here” to “I can lead.” Watching those same cadets complete the full seven months, standing tall and proud, is a feeling that stays with you. It's why I never give up on others—even if they have given up on themselves.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF IMPACT

Looking back, crossing over changed me in ways I didn't expect. RCC didn't just sharpen my skills. It deepened my empathy, patience, and sense of responsibility. Working alongside people from different walks of life and nations taught me to adapt to varied cultures, mindsets, and languages. It's humbling and empowering all at once.

I still miss the thrill of the frontlines and the pride of hands-on lifesaving, but I've found equal meaning in equipping the next generation of officers with lifesaving competencies and leadership mindsets. It's a different kind of impact — less visible at the scene, but powerful and lasting.



A MISSION WORTH STAYING FOR

By the time I commissioned, I had experienced nearly everything an NSF could — BRT, BFFT, SCC, RCC, frontline operations, and operations support, and I genuinely loved every chapter of it. Whether on the frontlines or behind the scenes, SCDF gave me a mission I truly believe in — Building a safer, more secure Singapore. That conviction made the decision clear: I wanted to continue serving, this time as a Regular officer.

National Service in SCDF has helped me discover a genuine passion for lifesaving. Choosing to stay led me down a path I never could have imagined. I was awarded the Ministry of Home Affairs Uniformed Scholarship – Singapore Government Scholarship. It's an honour I would never have dreamed of, had I not taken that leap.

“

IT'S OKAY
TO BE
UNCERTAIN.
I WAS TOO.

”



A WORD TO THOSE SITTING ON THE FENCE

- 1 Don't let comfort be your compass. Let growth be.
- 2 Leadership that multiplies others is one of the most meaningful missions out there.
- 3 You may not fully appreciate RCC until you've walked through it.
- 4 If you're drawn to broader perspective, and the chance to shape how others save lives—RCC is worth it.



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