

National service through the years

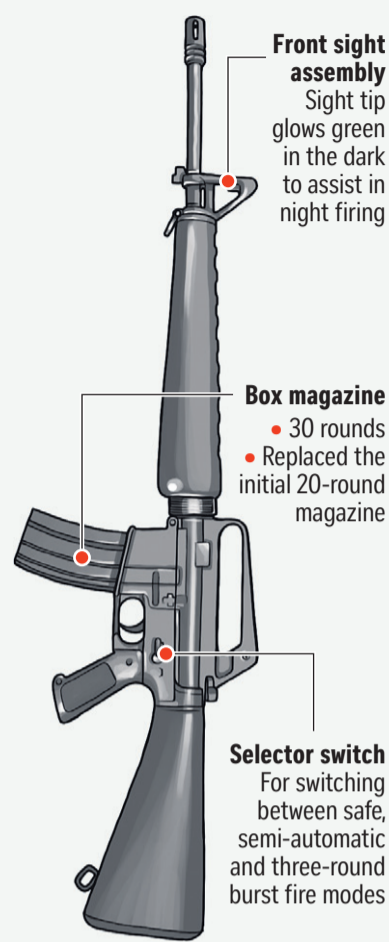
National service has been a key component of Singapore's nation-building journey since its inception. This national duty ensures that Singapore has a strong and ready military force to defend itself should the need arise.

This year marks the 50th year of national service in Singapore. To commemorate it, we look briefly at the history of national service and how individual soldier equipment has evolved.

Weapon

M16S1

- By the 1980s, the M16S1 took over from the American-made AR-15
- The M16S1 was domestically manufactured under licence

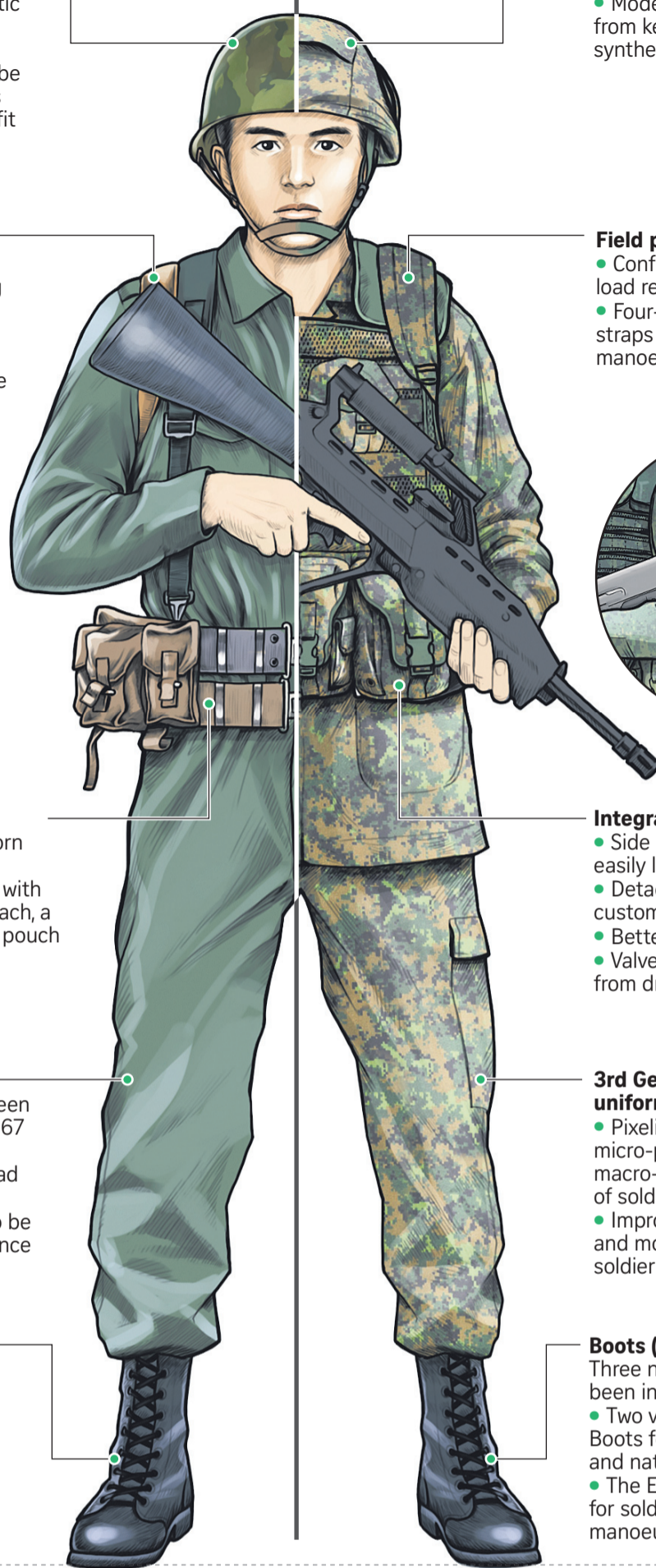


Calibre	5.56 x 45mm
Rate of fire	800rpm

Helmet (pre-1990s)

- The inner liner was made of plastic and the outer layer of solid steel, thus its name Steelport
- One size fits all, sponges had to be slipped in between the inner liners for maximum comfort and a snug fit

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Helmet (post-1987)

- Modern helmets are made from kevlar, a light but strong synthetic material

Field pack (1970s)

- Made of a denim-like fabric with two unpadding metal bars crossing the back of the pack for support, and two side pockets
- The pack was secured by two straps and could be uncomfortable when carried for long distances



Field pack

- Configurable for different load requirements
- Four-way compacting straps offer stability and manoeuvrability



Skeleton Battle Order webbing

- A belt-and-suspender system worn over the body to hold equipment
- This comprised a thick waistbelt with two pouches, with three pockets each, a water bottle pouch and a grenade pouch

Temasek Green uniform

- The first-generation Temasek Green SAF combat uniform debuted in 1967 for the Army, Navy and Air Force
- Made of thick cotton, the shirt had to be tucked in
- For foot drills, the uniform had to be starched to give it a crisp appearance

Boots (pre-1993)

- Made of leather with toecaps
- Soldiers often maintained two pairs, one for daily use and the other for parade or ceremonial use

Integrated Load Bearing Vest

- Side buckles allow vest to be easily loosened
- Detachable waterbag pouch for customised positioning
- Better fit and greater protection
- Valve prevents water leakage from drinking tube

3rd Generation pixelised uniform

- Pixelisation generates micro-pattern within macro-pattern to improve stealth of soldier at short distance
- Improved fabric is also lighter and more comfortable, enhancing soldier's sustainability

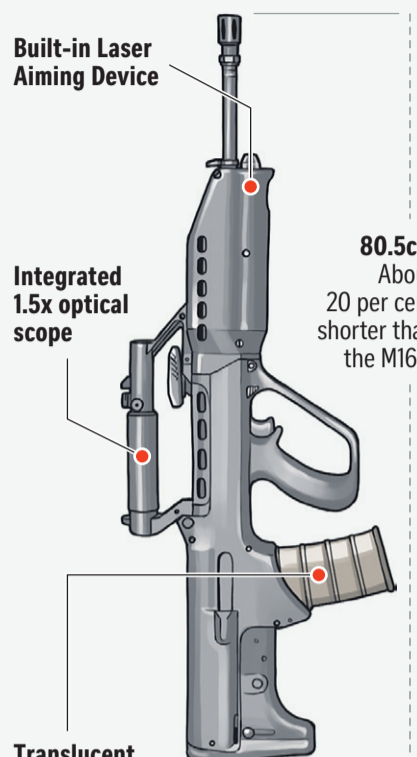
Boots (2017)

- Three new combat boots have been introduced:
- Two variants of Army Combat Boots for the majority of regulars and national servicemen
- The Enhanced Combat Boots for soldiers in selected manoeuvre units

Weapon

SAR 21

- The Singapore-made SAR 21 replaces the M16S1
- The SAR 21 is more compact for manoeuvrability and has less recoil



Calibre	5.56 x 45mm
Rate of fire	450-650rpm

Ration (post-1995)

- Heat-resistant retort pouches allow the ration to withstand rough handling and prevent food spoilage in a hot and humid environment
- More commercially off-the-shelf accessory snacks as a morale booster, and a new single-meal field ration to better meet the unit's training needs



Ration (pre-1995)

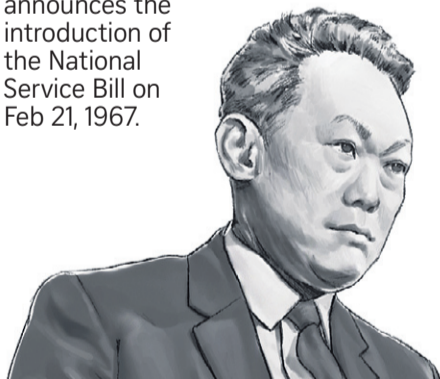
- 24-hour pack shared by two soldiers
- It consisted of canned food and hardtack biscuits. The bulky and heavy rations were difficult to consume
- Provided 2,400cals per soldier



MILESTONES

1967

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew announces the introduction of the National Service Bill on Feb 21, 1967.



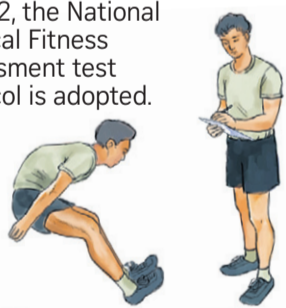
1969

Pioneer magazine is born as the National Pioneer, a newsletter. Minister for Defence Lim Kim San said in his foreword: "There is... a need for a medium through which our men and women in the Armed Forces can be enlightened and entertained."



1980

The Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT) is introduced. Those who fail are required to do remedial training. In 1982, the National Physical Fitness Assessment test protocol is adopted.



1982

Mindef takes over Tekong for training activities. Camp 3 is constructed and Camps 1 and 2 are improved.



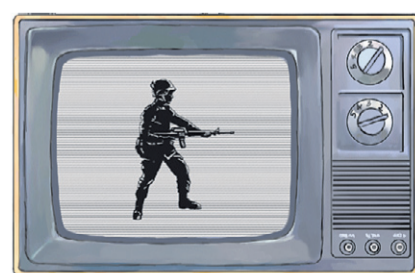
1983

Temasek Green is replaced by a fabric influenced by the American-developed camouflage cloth.



1985

The Open Mobilisation system is introduced to test and validate the operational readiness of NS units.



1992

The first Army Half Marathon is held, with the aim of promoting fitness and bonding among full-time national servicemen (NSFs), NSmen as well as members of the public.



1997

Commercialisation of cookhouses begins. Before that, cook vocations were undertaken by NSFs.



1999

Singapore-made SAR 21 rifle is introduced to replace the M16S1.



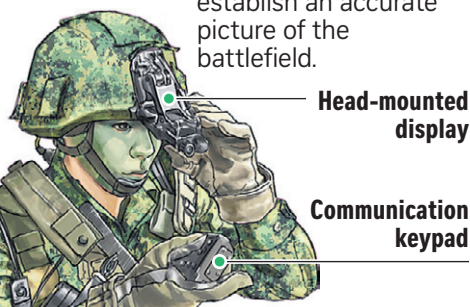
2008

The pixelised pattern uniform worn today is introduced. The uniform is designed to improve the survivability and sustainability of the soldiers.



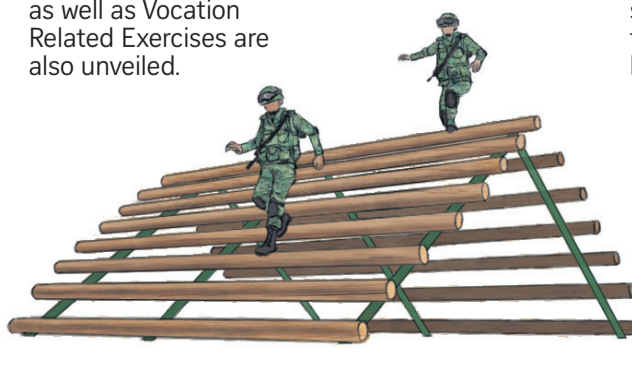
2008

Advanced Combat Man System is introduced. The system consists of an array of sensors and communication devices. It enables the extension of information reach to establish an accurate picture of the battlefield.



2010

The Standard Obstacle Course is redesigned to better emulate an actual combat environment. A new team-based Vocation Obstacle Course as well as Vocation Related Exercises are also unveiled.



2014

Murai Urban Live Firing Facility is launched. This facility helps to hone instinctive shooting skills and allows soldiers to apply rules of engagement that require real-time target analysis before a soldier shoots.



2015

The revised IPPT system is introduced with three stations: sit-up, push-up and 2.4km run.



2016

The use of 3D body scanners is introduced to obtain accurate measurements of a pre-enlistee's body and feet so that the best-fitting gear can be issued.

