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She makes her mark in careers dominated by men



K.C. Vijayan
 Senior Law Correspondent

Then weapons specialist Doris Ng was the first woman selected to join the aircrew of the E-2C Hawkeye, an airborne early warning aircraft, in 1994.

She had signed on with the Republic of Singapore Air Force three years earlier at age 20 and held the rank of captain by the time she left after eight years.

In 1999, at age 28, she opted to move on from the “machine-human interface to the people business”, and look at how to make a positive impact on lives.

She chose the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) in 2001, and took a pay cut to become a senior prison officer, serving in various staff and operational posts in the past 19 years to move up the ranks to become Superintendent of Prisons 1A today.

It never once daunted her that both her chosen fields were dominated by men.

“Based on my experience, I do not see gender as affecting my career progression in SPS. We are in this era where it is really your competence and capability that will bring you ahead, rather than whether you are male or female,” she said.



Ms Doris Ng in her earlier days (above) in the Republic of Singapore Air Force, where she was the first woman selected to join the aircrew of the E-2C Hawkeye aircraft. Ms Ng (left), who later joined the Singapore Prison Service, is now executive director of the Industrial and Services Cooperative Society, which provides support to former offenders and their families. PHOTO: DORIS NG

Reflecting on International Women’s Day, the mother of two young children, who stresses work-life balance, points to the growing number of women in higher command positions in prisons compared with two decades ago.

Today, about one in four uniformed prison officers is a woman, and Ms Ng cites examples of more women attaining higher positions.

For instance, Cluster A in the Changi Prison Complex which, among others, accommodates the maximum security inmates of the old Changi Prison, including those on death row, had its first woman commander, Madam Phang Seok Sieng, in 2005.

Today, the No. 2 post in the overall Singapore Prison Service hierarchy is held by Deputy Commissioner of Prisons Shie Yong Lee, the first woman to do so.

Ms Ng, a uniformed service officer, now serves in a civilian capacity as executive director of the Industrial and Services Cooperative Soci-

ety (Iscos) that was forged in 1989.

Iscos, which has more than 5,000 active members, is a cooperative that supports former offenders, their children and families through programmes such as skills development and job placement.

Before her Iscos posting in 2018, her prisons tour of duty had her walk the corridors of maximum security prisons for men and women, do administration and research work at prison headquarters and counsel people as a correctional rehabilitation specialist.

Ms Ng, whose husband is a senior prison officer, added: “I do not view the world in terms of black or white, men or women.

“Whether I am talking to a male or female inmate, it is important to me that I am able to reach out to this person who is under my charge and see how best I can support the person. I prefer to see challenges as opportunities to make things better.”

vijayan@sph.com.sg

Text:

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