

THE 'UNOFFICIAL' POLICE HANDBOOK

A Practical Guide To Urban Policing



PREVIEW

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Preface

Having worked in the Singapore Police Force (SPF) for over 10 years, I have grown as an individual and learnt so much from my career. I have also seen so much change that the SPF that I walked into and the one that I left were almost 2 different organisations.

The SPF's history should not be forgotten and perhaps through this short 'manual' of sorts, a small part of this history could be preserved. Another aspect of the change in the SPF comes from the type of individuals that become officers these days. Many of them have yet to face hardship and encounter fierce discipline. This inadvertently creates a situation where officers take a long time to adjust to the life as an officer and sometimes, lack the ability to grasp and master the skills necessary to perform their job at optimum levels.

As the needs of the society are ever-changing, not to mention, ever-increasing, the focus of an officer's job tends to stray away from the core duties and it is quite easy to lose sight of the primary objectives. Sometimes, officers have been known to focus their energies solely on secondary objectives rather than on their primary roles.

Having seen and observed all these happen during my career, I hope to do my part to ensure that, amidst all these changes and volatility, the true spirit of policing is not lost completely. This guide is meant to serve as a tool for current officers to be able to, at the very least, think about and conceptualise scenarios so that they are not caught off-guard if they were involved in such incidents. It also serves to educate would-be officers and those interested to know more about policing in Singapore about the life of an officer and what characteristics and attributes are necessary to perform this noble job at peak standards.

During my ten-year career with the SPF, I was a patrol officer, detective, investigation officer, NPP (Neighbourhood Police Post) officer, courts officer and NPC (Neighbourhood Police Centre) officer. The areas that I had plied my trade include Little India and Chinatown. I have been involved in smashing robbery syndicates, arrested drug traffickers, handled murderers and, during the last one year of my career, went on a focused personal enforcement action against illegal immigrants that netted about 200 to 300 illegals. As the success in my career accomplishments would be credited to the careful observation, understanding and focus on the subject matter, it is possible for any officer to emulate my achievements.

I hope that I can inspire the current generation of officers and prepare the next through this guide. For the

independent observer, this guide will offer a peek at the mechanisms involved in an officer's performance of his duties.

Ganga (ex-Sgt 95425)

Chapter 1 – What It Takes

To get a job, one needs qualifications. To keep a job, one needs determination and focus. To excel in a job, one needs interest. But to have a successful career, one needs to have the interest, drive and the ability to improve his skills.

During my career, I have seen many individuals come and go in the SPF. Usually, the more experienced ones can tell if an individual can make it as an officer. I have seen individuals who have no capacity to perform their primary roles and also those who have been born to be policemen (and women). I have realised that there are so many reasons to join the SPF – and not all of them are noble. However, for the purposes of this guide, I will not focus on the negatives.

Looking at the character of any individual, one changes over time through his experiences – good and bad.

Joining the SPF at an early time in your life allows you the flexibility to learn and grow. Those who join at a later time in their lives are less flexible and if the character has been forged contrary to the needs of that of an officer, that person will suffer. Growing into the role of an officer is a very beneficial process for any individual. What you learn as an officer can always be used in your own personal life.

Having considered that a 'fresh face' is most suitable, let's take a look at the type of character that is best suited for the cause. A calm but calculated demeanour is most necessary to deal with varying situations – from the mundane to the exciting. An officer can never get carried away with the moment and should never take anything for granted. An analytical mind is also critical as policing is a thinking profession. A firm wit is necessary so that one is analytical whilst on the feet. An eye for detail and being meticulous when the situation calls for it are crucial supporting attributes as

well. An ability to communicate with others accurately and precisely is a common attribute that is lacking in many officers and this shortcoming sometimes has detrimental effects.

The issue of communication is often confused with charisma. With charisma, you can influence others to act in your favour and maybe even control them. But as an officer, you would need to get things done and you would need others to do exactly what you needed them to do. This can only be done by effective communication. Of course the best would be this ability to communicate coupled with a charming charisma.

Physically, an officer should ideally be flexible and have good stamina and agility. More often than not, situations would require climbing, jumping and sprinting rather than simply brute strength. Singapore is an urban environment and we have more gates and windows than open areas. Criminals too, have a habit of trying to run away rather

than struggle free. More often than not, a criminal, once detained, does not try to struggle and escape.

In the following chapters, I will recount the events and circumstances that I have been in and explain the process by which I had overcome and tackled them. Some small tricks of the trade would be evident. However, I would express the need for a firm understanding of the process before executing any of these 'tricks'. No 2 situations are alike, especially in the work of a Police Officer and no particular sequence of actions can be repeated exactly to address a new problem. There will be a definite need for the practitioner of the process to exercise his or her own initiative and common sense.

With these words of caution, let me begin....

Chapter 9 – An Extraordinary Career

Whilst I experienced many exciting moments in my career and persevered through some truly depressing periods as well, I have come out feeling that it was the best 10 years of my life. I have made lasting friendships with more than a handful of officers and am remembered by many, many others for the example (good or bad) that I had set. It was truly a blessed part of my life where I not only met great leaders, colleagues and ‘disciples’, but learnt how not to be the ugliest of ‘Smiling Tigers’ and ‘Double-Headed Snakes’ – mythical creatures of the Police Force.

I questioned myself when I left the SPF whether it was the right thing to do and whether I would regret it one day. I also wondered if I would one day in the future regret signing on in the first place. Since the years that have passed from my (amicable?) ‘divorce’ from the Police Force, I am

indeed happy to note that I look back at my decision as one of the best that I have made in my life. I have gone on to achieve much more than I could have, most definitely. But even if I could do all of it again, I realise that I would not want to have gone through life not being a Policeman at some point. For that matter, the age that I joined was probably the best – being fit, able and receptive to new experiences.

The testament of my ‘love affair’ with the SPF is the book that you hold in your hands. It was certainly not easy to separate the good from the bad but I have managed to, for the benefit of the uninitiated. Perhaps one day I will include a sequel to this title to relate my less-than-stellar experiences, and until then, I hope that you will take the valuable positives from this book.

For the casual observer, I hope that you can have a better appreciation of our men-in-blue, who are just

ordinary people given extra responsibilities. Do try to understand that if you were in their shoes, it is highly unlikely that you would act any differently. For those who are looking at joining the SPF as a stop-gap measure ('escape NS', 'join for fun', due to the economic downturn etc), I would ask you to choose other options as the result of your inception as an Officer is the difficulty of an already-strained organisation to pick up the slack for you.

And, for the potential officer who has always dreamed of 'fighting crime', remember that life is not a bed of roses and the Police Force is less so. There will be so many occasions where you will question whether it was worth it to have joined at all and many tasks you do will hardly be called 'fighting crime'. But take it all in your stride and keep on going because, at the end of the day, you will have the opportunity to live that Policeman's Dream – even if it just for a few minutes, and trust me when I say, years down the road, that is what you

will remember vividly about your career – bringing a smile to your face.

Thank you my friends, my enemies and the countless experiences that make me who I am.

About The Author

Gangasudhan, known as Ganga to his friends and colleagues, served in the Singapore Police Force from 18th January 1995 to 2nd February 2005. He was enlisted into the SPF after completing his 'A' Levels and decided to sign on as a regular during his training at the Police Academy.

Initially scheduled to be with Tanglin Police Division as an NSman, he was posted to Central Police Division as a 'direct entry' Corporal and served under the various units of this division until his resignation as a Sergeant. The following chronological history details his attachments and accomplishments as a Police Officer.

July 1995 to December 1997 - Team Policing Officer with Watch Team 'D' involved with street patrolling and frontline crime fighting

Dec 1997 to Dec 1998 - Detective in a special task force (Little India Team) and Investigation Officer with the

Robbery Squad dealing with offences involving robbery, extortion and other similarly serious crimes

- Awarded the Commander Award for excellent performance in the Little India Team
- Awarded 2 Speedy Gonzales Awards for being the most efficient investigating officer for the month of September 1997 and for the period of July to September 1997

December 1998 to November 2000 - attached to Jalan Besar Neighbourhood Police Post (NPP) as a Community Policing Officer tackling issues and addressing concerns of the community

- Awarded the Commander Award for the arrest of 2 drug traffickers
- Awarded the Commander Award for the arrest of a serial housebreaker
- Awarded the Commander Award and Achievement Award for the arrest of the International Spider-man

November 2000 to February 2004 – Courts Officer with the Subordinate Courts of Singapore assuming several responsibilities including the safety and security of the judges and the effective coordination of court proceedings

- Awarded the Commander Award for an arrest for drug possession inside the courtroom
- Awarded top WITs (Work Improvement Teams) project at the Alpha Service Excellence Day
- Awarded Commander Award for handling a violent person against a district judge
- Awarded Commander Achievement Award for an arrest of a drug trafficker inside the court
- Awarded the Gold award for the SPF WITs competition and the Bronze Award at the MHA ExCEL Convention

February 2004 to February 2005 – Frontline policing officer with the Rochor Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC) involved with crime-fighting duties including uniformed and non-uniformed patrol and community policing

- Awarded the Commander Achievement Award for being the best NPCO for the month of February 2004
- Awarded the Commander Achievement Award for the arrest of a molester
- Awarded the Commander Award for the recovery of a stolen motorcycle and the ambush and arrest of the culprit
- Awarded the Commander Achievement Award for being the best NPCO for the month of July 2004
- Attained marksmanship grading for the annual combat shoot with a score of 99/100

Today, Ganga is a published author who has lent his unique style of expression to various publications such as Career Central, The Executive, AlumNUS and Bikers Inc, among others.

He also consults on document preparation techniques and his expertise has helped many individuals in the course of their daily lives and careers. His current forays include

magazine publishing and conducting creative writing courses for teenagers and adults.

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A former Police Officer with the SPF, Ganga shares the experience and wisdom of his 10-year career in this practical 'survival guide'. Understand the specific techniques & skills that a Police officer requires to do his job well and learn about what it would take to be truly good at this noble profession.

Now an established author, trainer and consultant, he brings the world of Policing alive with his unique style that is loved by many. This 'handbook' is certain to have officers nodding their heads in agreement and the rest finding a new-found appreciation for the dedicated work that the Police do.



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