

CMAAO 2016 – Singapore Medical Association
Health care in Danger - Experience from Member countries



A man with an umbrella runs in front of a burning ambulance during a riot, involving almost 400 people, which broke out in Little India along Race Course Road, on Dec 8, 2013. -- ST FILE PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Summary of riot in Little India in 2013

1. A riot that lasted about two hours erupted in Little India on Sunday, 8 December 2013, following a fatal traffic accident that occurred along Race Course Road
2. Some 300 rioters took part in the unrest, which was the worst case of public violence in Singapore in over four decades
3. About 240 officers from the Singapore Police Force (SPF) as well as 56 from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) were deployed to the scene
4. The riot left 54 responding officers and eight civilians injured, while 29 vehicles were damaged, five of which were burnt
5. As a result of the incident, measures such as increased police presence and alcohol restrictions have been implemented in Little India to prevent a repeat of such unrest

Health Care in Danger (HCID) - SMA's approach

- While Singapore does not often experience scenarios highlighted by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's HCID project, nevertheless, SMA has taken some steps in this area
- October 2015 issue of SMA News [SMA's monthly newsletter] featured Military Medicine, including highlighting overseas missions, e.g. Afghanistan, Nepal, etc., and varied topics, e.g. military psychiatry
- The SMA Council subsequently had a discussion on emergency relief and humanitarian work, in light of the heightened awareness of possible terrorist threats
- SMA wrote to the Chief of Medical Corps, to offer SMA's help in the event that an attack should happen
- SMA offered to send out a request for
 - doctors who want to volunteer medical services
 - doctors who can donate needed medical supplies/ medicines



Relevant Laws in Singapore

- Geneva Conventions Act [acceded in 1973]
 - Protection of Wounded and Sick Members of the Armed forces, POWs, Civilians
 - Prohibition of use of emblem [red crescent, red cross, red crystal, etc.] without authority
- Protection from Harassment (Public Service Worker) Order 2014
 - Protects the following [not full list] working in public service
 - Healthcare professionals
 - employees of emergency ambulance service providers

Overseas HADR missions by Singapore Armed Forces

- Mainly Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in nature
- 2001 – War in Afghanistan
- 2005 – Terrorist attack, Indonesia
- 2006 – Indonesia earthquake
- 2008 – China earthquake
- 2009 - Indonesia earthquake
- 2011 – New Zealand earthquake
- 2015 - Nepal earthquake
- upcoming in 2017 - Iraq

Sidenote: Abuse against healthcare workers

- In normal scenarios [i.e. non-conflict zones], healthcare workers are also susceptible to violence by patients or next-of-kin
- Incidents have been reported in local media and medical journals
 - “Physical and verbal abuse against nurses 'on the rise'” – 27 Mar 2016, Straits Times
 - “Violence Against Healthcare Staff – A Multidimensional Problem” – Nov 2015, Annals Academy of Medicine
- Statistics remain incomplete, due to under-reporting
- Classified as a workplace safety & health issue

References

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