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As I read this, I could not help but feel emotional as it very clearly captures the vital but largely unknown role of the military in protecting the sanctity of the nation. As you are reading this, there are thousands of men and women who are now 'on duty' in the defence of the country. They are there in the deepest of jungles, on the high seas, on the highest of mountains and in isolated military bases, working under very difficult conditions so that others may be able to live in peace. These 'unknown' men and women make these sacrifices every day as a matter of routine in complete disregard for their own safety and comfort. And they do this 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the process, they make enormous sacrifices in terms of their personal lives i.e. long separations from their families, deployment in hostile areas, tough living conditions, danger to their lives and, sadly, the loss of many of their comrades.

To get an idea of the hardship these servicemen have to undergo, visualise the following scenario. Imagine sleeping in a make-shift, wet and damp 'hammock' in the jungle, where you are not allowed to have open fires or lights for security reasons. Even conversations have to be in whispers. All you can do is to lie down and try to have an 'uneasy' sleep, not to

mention the two hours of sentry duty that you have to do every night! And during the day, you do not have the liberty to live a normal life as you are operating in a security area. And this tenure of duty is for a period of one month or more before you get a break to return to normal life!

These servicemen however do not complain. The day they put on the military uniform is the day they become aware that their lives would not be the same anymore. Their duty is to serve and sacrifice so that others may live in freedom. In the process, if a serviceman dies, his death will sadly be deemed as just duty!

Recently, in the floods in Penang and Kedah, the military was deployed to assist civil authorities to provide humanitarian relief. The primary responsibility for disaster response lies with civilian agencies, but only the military has the manpower, equipment and training to undertake this task effectively. Now that the flood disaster is over, the servicemen have gone back to their barracks. There is no fanfare, there is no pomp and everyone has forgotten the vital role they played in bringing the disaster situation to normal. And if you went to the soldiers and thanked them for their efforts, I am sure most of them would respond by saying, "I was just doing my duty in serving the country".

Hence, it is imperative that the general public in Malaysia recognises and appreciates the fact that the military is a very professional organisation which is not given enough credit for the work that they do. The military has repeatedly defended and protected our freedom and this noble obligation and responsibility deserves our utmost gratitude. We must also recognise and respect veterans and the military - not just on Hari Pahlawan (Warriors Day), but every day! They have earned this reverence as they put their lives on the line every day for the peace that we enjoy, something that most Malaysians take for granted. Most importantly, they deserve our respect and admiration as they perform the noblest duty and sacrifice any person can make - being prepared to give up their lives for the defence and security of this country.



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The other day, as I was browsing the Internet when I came upon the following poem by Charles M. Province, a veteran of the US Army. Here's extract of the poem:

It is the Soldier, not the reporter
 Who has given us freedom of the press
 It is the Soldier, not the poet
 Who has given us freedom of speech
 It is the Soldier, not the politician
 Who has given us the right to vote
 It is the Soldier who salutes the flag
 And whose coffin will be draped by the flag...



MUST BE RESPECTED

WHY THE MILITARY

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