

The Volunteer Special Constabulary (VSC)

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was formed in October 1946 to complement the Singapore Police Force.

The VSC.

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Gurkhas

~ Recommendations ~

- [Volunteer Special Constabulary](#)
The Volunteer Special Constabulary (VSC) was formed in October 1946 to complement the Singapore Police Force. The VSC ...
- [Tomoyuki Yamashita](#)
Tomoyuki Yamashita (b. 8 November 1885, Osugi Mura, Shikoku, Japan–d. 23 February 1946, Manila, Philippines), was the ...
- [Arthur E. Percival](#)
Arthur Ernest Percival (Lieutenant-General) (b. 26 December 1887, Aspenden, Hertfordshire, England–d. 31 January 1966, ...
- [Sepoys](#)
Sepoys were Indian soldiers employed within European military garrisons to provide the much-needed manpower for the ...
- [Chap ji kee](#)
Chap ji kee (which means “12 cards” in Hokkien) is an illegal lottery that was widespread in Singapore until the late ...
- [Force 136 \(Operation Gustavus in Malaya\)](#)
Force 136 in Malaya was part of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), a secret service organisation active ...
- [Singapore Armed Forces \(SAF\) Day](#)
The first Armed Forces Day was celebrated on 1 July 1969 with a grand parade and march-past at the Jalan Besar Stadium ...
- [Maria Hertogh \(Nadra\)](#)
Maria Huberdina Hertogh (b. 24 March 1937, Tjimahi, Java, Indonesia–d. 8 July 2009, Huijbergen, Netherlands), also known ...
- [Maria Hertogh riots](#)
The Maria Hertogh riots were a severe outbreak of violence that took place in Singapore between 11 and 13 December 1950 ...
- [Hock Lee bus strike and riot](#)

Dismissed workers of the Hock Lee Amalgamated Bus Company went on strike from 25 April 1955. Joined by supporters and ...

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Gurkhas have their roots in Nepal. Reputed for their fearless military process and loyalty to their masters, the Gurkhas in Southeast Asia were initially brought here as special soldiers on the payroll of the British Army. Today, the Gurkha Contingent is a unit in the Singapore Police Force and serves as a neutral safekeeping and counter-terrorism force.

Background

The Nepalese Gurkhas in Singapore are mostly of either Mongolian or Aryan descent, with the majority belonging to the former.¹ They are mainly from the Nepali hill tribes of Magar, Gurung, Rai, Limbu and Sunwar.² Gorkhas, or Gurkhas, were warriors who fought for Prithvi Narayan Shah, King of Gorkha, in the 18th century. The term *Gurkha* is an Anglicised version of King Prithvi's birthplace, Gorkha, which is a district in Nepal.³

When at battle, the Gurkha soldier uses a traditional weapon known as the *kukri* – an 18-inch-long, curved, fighting knife. Although they were armed with rifles in the later years, the Gurkhas still prefer to use their *kukri*. *Ayo Gorkhali!*, which translates to “The Gurkhas are upon you”, is a much-feared war cry of the Gurkhas.⁴ They are predominantly Hindus, with some embracing Buddhism and animism.⁵

Enlistment of the Gurkhas

The British had their first encounter with the Gurkhas during the Anglo-Nepal War (1814–16). Although the latter were outnumbered, their fighting prowess impressed the British.⁶ In a subsequent strange turn of events, the Gurkhas who held Lieutenant Frederick Young captive soon developed a deep respect for his patriotism and chivalry. Young then enlisted the first batch of Gurkha soldiers into the British forces. In April 1815, Gurkhas were recruited into four battalions. The association of the Gurkhas with the British led to the Gurkha diaspora in Southeast Asia. As British presence became prevalent in this part of the world in the 19th century, the Gurkhas followed them.⁷

Service in Singapore

In Singapore, the Gurkhas represent a small community living in Mount Vernon.⁸ The Gurkha Contingent was formed as a part of the Singapore Police Force on 9 April 1949.⁹ The contingent, made up of former Gurkhas from the British Army, replaced the [Sikh](#) unit within the police force that had disbanded.¹⁰ Major Scott Leathart was the contingent's first commanding officer.¹¹

Having fought in the defence of Malaya during World War II, the Gurkhas had proven themselves ready to defend while remaining impartial, but loyal.¹² This was evident during the [Maria Hertogh riots](#) in 1950, the [Hock Lee Bus strike and riot](#) in 1955, and the 1950s riots by the [Chinese High](#)

[School](#).¹³ To this day, the Gurkhas are recruited as a unit of the Singapore Police Force, unaligned with any of the local races.¹⁴

The Gurkhas who come to Singapore are as young as 18 years of age, and they return to Nepal after 15 to 20 years of service. During their stay here, they reside at the Mount Vernon Cantonment, a self-contained community which has its own temple, schools and a mini-mart. Built in the 1950s, the cantonment is located at Mount Vernon, off Upper Aljunied Road, and is closed to the public.¹⁵

Author

Renuka M.

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