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STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2009-2010)

(FIFTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

[Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations contained in the
Thirty-first Report of the Committee (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) on
'Stress Management in Armed Forces']

FOURTH REPORT



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

March, 2010/Phalgun, 1931 (Saka)

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 04.03.2010

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 04.03.2010



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

March, 2010/Phalgun, 1931 (Saka)

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COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2009-10)

Shri Satpal Maharaj	-	Chairman
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3. Shri Kamal Kishor 'Commando'
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5. Shri Varun Gandhi
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31. Shri Sanjay Raut

(iii)

SECRETARIAT

- | | | | |
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| 3. | Shri N.S. Hooda | - | Additional Director |
| 4. | Smt. J.M. Sinha | - | Under Secretary |

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Defence (2009-10), having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, do present this Fourth Report of the Committee on action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Thirty-first Report (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) on 'Stress Management in Armed Forces'.

2. The Thirty- first Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 21 October, 2008. The Report contained 19 recommendations/observations in respect of which replies were received from the Ministry of Defence on 15 December, 2009.

3. The draft Action Taken Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 05 January 2010.

4. An analysis of action taken by the Government on recommendations/observations contained in the Thirty-first Report of the Standing Committee on Defence (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) is given in the Appendix.

5. For facility of reference and convenience, recommendations/observations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in Chapter- I of the Report.

NEW DELHI;
25 February , 2010
06 Phalgun, 1931 (Saka)

Satpal Maharaj,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on Defence.

CHAPTER-I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Defence deals with action taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations contained in their Thirty-first Report (14th Lok Sabha) on 'Stress Management in Armed Forces' which was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 21.10.2008.

2. The Committee's Thirty-first Report (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) contained observations/recommendations on the following aspects: -

Sl.No.	Para No.	Subject
1.	1	Cases of suicides and fratricidal killings
2.	2	Stress Management in the Armed Forces
3.	3	Studies conducted on stress related incidents
4.	4	Study Reports on Stress Management
5.	5	Suicide in Peace Stations
6.	6	Causes of Stress
7.	7	Familial Reasons for Stress
8.	8	Responsiveness of Civil Administration
9.	9	Inter Personnel Relationship
10.	10	Abolition of practice of domestic 'Sahayaks'
11.	11	Basic Amenities
12.	12	Shortage of manpower
13.	13	Leave policy
14.	14	Reluctance in seeking Psychiatrist's help
15.	15	Mental Health Professionals
16.	16	Establishment of Armed Forces Tribunal

3. Action Taken Replies have been received from the Government in respect of all the recommendations/ observations contained in the Report. These replies have been examined and categorized as follows: -

(i) Recommendations/observations, which have been accepted by the Government (Please see Chapter II):

Para Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7(iii), 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17

(12 Recommendations)

(ii) Recommendations/observations, which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government:

Para No. 5

(1 Recommendation)

(iii) Recommendations/observations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration (Please see Chapter IV):

Para Nos. 2, 6, 7(i & ii), 10 and 11

(05 Recommendations)

(iv) Recommendation/observation in respect of which final reply of the Government is still awaited:

-NIL-

4. **The Committee desire that the Ministry's response to their comments made in Chapter-I of this Report be furnished to them at the earliest and in any case not later than six months of the presentation of this Report.**

5. The Committee will now deal with the action taken by the Government on some of their recommendations in the succeeding paragraphs.

A. Stress Management in the Armed Forces

Recommendation (Para No. 2)

6. The Committee in their 31st Report had recommended as under:-

"The Committee understand that the demand on the personnel of Indian Armed Forces have been increasing over the years due to changing operational commitments of diverse nature. At the same time, they are required to meet aspirations of their family members for a good quality life on account of rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in the society. Undoubtedly, the inability of soldiers to solve their family problems due to operational requirements and other constraints within which they have to work and non-fulfillment of some of their expectations in certain cases results in enhanced negative stress leading to a variety of illnesses and behavioral problems including suicide, fratricidal killing, early mortality or desertion from the Armed Forces. The Committee wish to point out that besides adversely affecting the efficiency and performance of the defence personnel due to impaired motivation, negative stress level also put additional burden on the public exchequer in the form of man-days lost due to sickness, cost of medical treatment and loss of trained officers and soldiers. To the utter dismay of the Committee, the Ministry of Defence have made an attempt to downplay the magnitude of the problem by putting forth the plea that, "the overall psychiatric morbidity in the Armed Forces has been less than the national figures". Equally specious is the plea advanced by the Ministry of Defence that these is a rising trend of psychiatric illnesses in our country over the last few decades and Armed Forces personnel being drawn from the same society are not immune to these influences. The Committee consider it lamentable that the Ministry of Defence, rather than making an earnest attempt to identify the precise reasons for untimely loss of such a large number of precious lives of trained soldiers, have taken recourse to drawing satisfaction from the facts that such cases are on the rise in the society and the psychiatric morbidity in Armed Forces is less than the national averages. In the opinion of the Committee, the attitude of the Ministry not only displays insensitivity towards the problem but also highlights their inaction to improve conditions in the Armed Forces where soldiers are trained enough to fight under adverse situations. The Committee trusts that the Ministry of Defence would now make a realistic assessment of the problems plaguing the Armed Forces personnel with a view to identifying the areas needing urgent reforms in the right direction. The Committee also suggest that the organisations from both public and private sector having expertise in the area, should be associated with such studies so that the causes of the increasing stress are identified at its root in an independent manner and appropriate solutions found to remedy the situation. The Committee would like to be apprised of the precise action taken in this regard."

7. The Ministry in the action taken reply has stated as under:-

"There is no denial that even a single case of suicide and fratricide in Armed Forces is a matter of concern for the Ministry despite the fact that the overall psychiatric morbidity in the Armed Forces is less than the national figures. However, the Armed Forces personnel cannot be entirely immune to the influences of the environment at their home and the rising aspirations of the community as a whole. The Ministry/Armed Forces has not taken recourse to drawing satisfaction from the fact that psychiatric morbidity in Armed Forces is less than the national averages. The Armed Forces have addressed the problem of stress/mental disorders from time to time and have recently brought out a very vibrant 'Mental Health Programme for the Armed Forces' highlighting the areas for promotion of mental health, prevention and management of mental morbidity. However, the need for involvement of outside organisations from public and private sector is presently not felt as the forces have eminent specialists in the field to monitor and execute any changes in the policies regarding psychiatric illnesses."

8. **The Committee do not appreciate the reasons put forth by the Ministry on the issue of involvement of outside agencies from public and private sector while undertaking studies to identify the reasons for increased stress level leading to suicides and fratricides in the armed forces. Even when as many as 635 cases of suicides and 67 cases of fratricides killings were reported during the years 2003 to 2007, the Ministry seems to be contended with the recently brought out 'Mental Health Programme for the Armed Forces'. Such a high number of suicides clearly indicate the inadequacy of the steps initiated by the Ministry to address the malady. The Committee are of the strong opinion that the involvement of outside agencies would certainly help in understanding the issue objectively. The expertise and wide exposure of outside experts would be of great help while extracting the information from the armed forces personnel as they would feel more comfortable in sharing the information with them with no fear of ostracizing themselves or losing seniority or rank status. As such the Committee would like to reiterate their earlier recommendation that the Ministry would consider it positively so that the root cause of the increasing stress level in the armed forces is known and the corrective action taken to solve the problem.**

B. Causes of Stress

Recommendation (Para No. 6)

9. The Committee in their 31st Report had recommended as under:-

“The studies on stress management in the Armed Forces have identified certain causative factors for stress which are broadly classifiable under the three categories namely, socio-economic including familial reasons, and environmental/ organizational and medical/psychological causes. The Committee are in no doubt that after having identified these specific causative factors for stress among the Armed Forces personnel, the Ministry of Defence have not contemplated multi-pronged strategies to address the problems of negative stress behaviour of different ranks in the Armed Forces. Though certain remedial measures have recently been initiated at the Service Headquarters level and by the Ministry to manage stress among the Defence personnel, the Committee feel convinced that much is still left to be desired to address the organizational issues like better manpower management, provisions for better amenities and conducive climate to counter negative thinking among the Defence service personnel at the lower ranks so as to minimize the undesirable consequences of stress in the Armed Forces in the long run. They trust that the Ministry of Defence would at least now realize the gravity of the problem in all its ramifications and take expeditious steps to bring about perceptible improvement in the prevailing situation.”

10. The Ministry in the action taken reply has stated as under :-

“Ministry of Defence understands the gravity of the problem in all its ramifications and has taken adequate steps to improve the situation. Stress management is a continuous process and the steps taken by the Government will yield more perceptible improvement in the near future.”

11. The main focus of the recommendation of the Committee was to address the organizational issues like better manpower management, provisions for better amenities and conducive climate to counter negative thinking among the Defence service personnel at the lower ranks so as to minimize the consequences of stress in the armed forces in the long run. The Ministry of Defence has not replied to this aspect in the action taken reply. The Committee, therefore, would like to reiterate their earlier recommendation and desire to be apprised of the steps taken in this regard.

C. Familial Reasons for Stress

Recommendation (Para No. 7(I))

12. The Committee in their 31st Report had recommended as under:-

"The Committee have been given to understand that familial reasons are one of the predominating causative factors of stress among the Armed Forces personnel. These reasons include aspects like separation from family, familial discords and disputes, concern regarding children's education and their upbringing and welfare measures for the family. The Committee are of the firm view that while Armed Forces personnel have to strike a balance between their personal and military life within the constraints inherent in the military service, the Government also cannot fully absolve themselves of their responsibilities towards personnel engaged in meeting diverse challenges before the nation. Undoubtedly, there is an imperative necessity to address the legitimate needs of Defence personnel and the Committee would strongly recommend the following:-

The Government should make earnest efforts to provide family accommodation at the station of choice of the Armed Forces personnel deployed on operational duties in counter insurgency and border areas. Married accommodation project should be completed expeditiously and different categories of residential accommodation lying vacant at various military stations should be utilised for the purpose."

13. The Ministry in the action taken reply has stated as under :-

"Families are permitted in peace areas only. Border areas and high altitude areas are classified as field areas where families are not permitted for operational reasons. No family accommodation exists in these areas as it is not authorised. Local commanders at times permit keeping of families in border areas for very short duration in existing accommodation under formation arrangements.

Government is making all efforts to complete the "Married Accommodation Project" (MAP) on priority. In MAP, Phase-1, out of 57875 Dwelling Units (DUs) under execution, 40123 DUs have been completed and 12881 DUs (cumulative 53004 DUs) will be completed by March, 2010. Balance 4871 DUs will be completed in Financial Year 2010-11. In MAP Project Phase -2, work is likely to commence by March, 2010."

14. The Committee in the earlier recommendation had made certain suggestions to address to the familial reasons which is one of the predominating causative factors of stress among the Armed Forces Personnel. These suggestions included providing (i) family accommodation at the station of choice of the Armed Forces personnel deployed on operational duties in counter insurgencies and border areas (ii) completion of married accommodation project expeditiously (iii) using different categories of residential accommodation lying vacant at various military stations. With regard to (i), the Ministry has responded that border areas and high altitude areas are classified as field areas where families are not permitted for operational reasons. The Committee feel that the Ministry has not understood their recommendation in the right perspective. The intention of the Committee was to provide accommodation to the family at the station of the choice of the Armed Forces Personnel when he is deployed on operational duties in counter insurgency and border areas. The Committee never meant to provide family accommodation in counter insurgency border areas that are classified as field areas. In view of this, the Committee would like the Ministry to take the desired action and apprise them accordingly. With regard to the married accommodation project, the Committee note the progress made in this regard as furnished in the action taken reply. The Committee would like the Ministry to take the desired action so that Phase I project is completed on schedule followed by Phase II. In respect of the suggestion made by the Committee to use residential accommodation lying vacant at various military stations as given in (iii) above, the Ministry has not responded to the suggestion. The Committee would like the Ministry to take the concrete action and apprise them accordingly.

D. Familial Reasons for Stress

Recommendation [Para No. 7 (ii)]

15. The Committee in their 31st Report had recommended as under:-

“Efforts should also be directed towards imparting skill development and extending help to the children of Armed Forces personnel in getting admission in schools and institutions of higher professional and technical

studies. Opening of institutions for imparting higher technical education in different parts of the country primarily for the wards of the Armed Forces personnel be considered.”

16. The Ministry in the action taken reply has stated as under :-

“Army Welfare Education Society (AWES) has been established under the aegis of Adjutant General’s Branch, Integrated HQ of MoD (Army) to meet the educational needs of wards of Army personnel. AWES has 126 schools with a population of 1.7 Lac children and 13 professional colleges in majority of the popular disciplines, spread across the country. AWES also runs 13 professional colleges exclusively for the wards of Armed Forces personnel. List of these institutions may be seen at Annexure – I. All these institutions have been established to meet the need for higher professional and technical studies of wards of Armed Forces personnel. “

17. **The Committee note that 126 schools run by AWES for the wards of Armed Forces Personnel all over India are not sufficient to cater to the need of the wards of entire armed forces personnel. Therefore, the Committee, desire the Ministry to increase the number of schools and professional institutions accordingly, keeping in view the demand for them under intimation to them.**

E. Abolition of practice of domestic ‘Sahayaks’

Recommendation (Para No. 10)

18. The Committee in their 31st Report had recommended as under:-

“The Committee understand that the practice of utilizing services of Jawans as Sahayaks is prevalent in the Army in one form or other since British days. It is learnt that numerous Jawans are engaged at the residence of some of the senior officer for domestic work and to serve the family members of officers. A representative of the Army categorically deposed before the Committee that the Jawans are not technically supposed to attend to the household duties at the residence of the officers and the personnel attending to such duties do so due to their reverence. The Committee hardly need to stress that Jawans are recruited for serving the nation and not to serve the family members of officers in household work which is demeaning and humiliating. The Committee take a very serious view of the shameful practice which should have no place in the independent India. The Committee expect the Ministry of Defence to issue instructions to stop the practice forthwith, as this lowers the self-esteem of Jawan. Any officer found to be violating the instruction in this regard should be dealt with severely. Similar action needs to be taken by the Ministry of

Home Affairs in respect of para military organization and other organizations."

19. The Ministry in the action taken reply has stated as under :-

"(a) Exhaustive instructions regarding appropriate employment of Sahayaks have been issued from time to time by Army HQ. Comprehensive instructions have been issued to the environment vide letter No. B/32099/AG/PS-2© dated 27 Jul 07 (**Annexure-II**) highlighting the following aspects:-

- (i) Sahayak is a comrade-in-arms to Officer/JCO symbolizing trust, respect, warmth, confidence and interdependence, which are the fundamentals of relations between the leaders and the led.
- (ii) Sahayak is a solider who in addition to his duties provides the essential support to authorized Officers and JCOs, both in peace and war to enable them to fully attend to their assigned duty. He also provides leaders a direct contact with men and thus enables officers and JCOs to gain an insight into the state of morale and well being of men.
- (iii) Sahayak will be attached to regular Army units and provided proper living accommodation and messing facilities. The officers to whom Sahayaks are provided will ensure such facilities are arranged.
- (iv) Sahayaks will not be employed for menial house-hold work.

(b) It has also been stressed that there is an urgent and continuous need to impress upon all concerned that Sahayaks being combatant soldiers under no circumstances are to be employed on a job, which is not in conformity with the dignity and self-respect of a solider. Therefore, it is the duty of all officers/JCOs and Commanders in the chain to ensure that strict checks are instituted to prevent misuse of Sahayaks and that any violation of existing instructions and guidelines should be dealt with immediately.

(c) Any practice that lowers the self-esteem of a solider is to be abhorred. Formation and Unit Commanders uphold the honour and dignity of job content of the individual soldiers. In this context, it is always ensured and shall continue to be ensured that soldiers are not employed on any demeaning or humiliating tasks.

(d) Exhaustive instructions for strict compliance of the guidelines have been reiterated to the environment."

20. While taking a serious view of criticizing the colonial practice of utilizing the services of Jawans as Sahayaks to officers in the Army, the Committee had desired the Ministry to issue instructions to stop it forthwith. The Ministry while defending the use of Sahayaks by Army officers has stated that comprehensive instructions have been issued to regulate the

work of Sahayaks. The Committee are not able to understand the necessity of having the services of Sahayaks by the Army officers particularly when the sister services *viz* Navy and Air Force have abandoned this practice. While reiterating their earlier recommendation, the Committee desire that Army should follow the examples set by their counterparts Air force and Navy and stop the colonial practice with immediate effect.

F. Basic Amenities

Recommendation (Para No. 11)

21. The Committee in their 31st Report had recommended as under:-

“The Committee need hardly emphasize that the basic facilities for the soldiers particularly those deployed at high altitudes or in border areas need to be met in a most efficient manner. Delays in supply of consumable and non-consumable items should be avoided and they should not be deprived of better quality of weather appropriate clothing and good quality of ration. The requirement of such essential items must be reviewed at regular intervals and the supply of items as per entitled scales must be monitored at appropriate level. The Committee would like to be apprised of the specific measures taken in this regard.”

22. The Ministry in the action taken reply has stated as under :-

“Based on the feed back from troops and formations commanders at various levels following measures have been taken to enhance the specification and scale of rations for the troops:-

- (a) Upgradation and enhancement in specification of rice, pulses and tea.
- (b) Introduction of precooked chicken in retort pouches, broilers in place of culled chicken and provision of chicken for all days as against five days in a week earlier.
- (c) Replacement of milk powder/tinned with TPM.
- (d) Authorization of in lieu items like suji, flour, bread, coffee, butter and eggs to PBOR so as to provide greater variety in rations.
- (e) Provisioning of special rations as being presently providing in Op Meghadoot to all troops deployed above 12,000 ft in areas of Northern and Eastern Commands. The strength of personnel authorized special rations has risen from an initial strength of 2,850 to present strength of 28,644 personnel.
- (f) Enhancing the condiment allowance by 84% and LPG scales by 55%.

- (g) Sanction has been given by MoD for procurement of vegetables in retort pouches not exceeding 25% annual requirement of existing varieties of vegetables tinned/dehydrated.
- (h) In order to improve quality and effect economy, procurement of salt has been decentralized to Commands.
- (i) Additional ration in desert areas consisting of Lime fresh, Rooh Afza, TPM, and Fruit fresh for troops taking part in exercise/collective training in desert/semi desert areas of Rajasthan has been authorized.
- (j) Sanction has been accorded for authorization of additional 1,40,300 of Meals Ready to eat per year for troops deployed in Counter Insurgency operations in Eastern and Northern Commands.”

23. In order to avoid delay in supply of consumable and non-consumable items to the soldiers deployed at high-altitude and boarder areas, the Committee had recommended to have review of the supply of these items at regular intervals. The Committee note that the Government has taken measures to enhance the specification and seals of consumable items but the reply is silent in regard to the steps taken to ensure supply of better quality of weather appropriate clothing. Therefore, the Committee wish to reiterate their earlier recommendation and would like to be apprised of the steps taken in this regard.

-12-
CHAPTER-II

**RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN
ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT**

Recommendation (Para No. 1)

There were as many as 635 cases of suicide including attempted suicides and 67 cases of fratricidal killings in the three services of the Armed Forces during the years 2003 to 2007. These statistics also indicate that Army was worst affected by this malady in terms of number of cases of suicides and fratricide in each of the year during the period. While expressing their grave concern over this alarming trend of suicides and fratricidal killings in the Armed Forces during the recent past, the Committee are in no doubt that this phenomenon is attributable to increased stress environment leading to psychological imbalance in the soldiers. The Committee have been informed that seven studies on issues related to stress management have been conducted by Army since 2005 besides an internal study by Air Force on suicides reported during the period 2002-2007 and an in-house study by Navy on 'Occupational stress in Naval personnel'. The Ministry of Defence have informed that the main causes for suicides among troops identified on the basis of these studies are changing socio-economic environment in the country and domestic problems and there is apparently no systemic failure as suicides attributable to work related reasons are few. While certain measures are also stated to have been initiated in the recent past to manage stress in the Armed Forces, the Committee are of the considered view that it is premature to ascertain the efficacy of these measures at this stage. The Committee's examination of the subject and there interaction with the ex-servicemen, experts and organisations having experience in this field has brought out that this issue has not been perceived by the Ministry of Defence in its entirety with a view to devising appropriate and timely strategies to minimize the stress level of serving personnel of Armed Forces. The Committee have dealt with some of the important aspects related to the subject in the succeeding paragraphs of this Report.

Reply of the Government

Ministry of Defence shares the concern expressed by the Committee. Ministry has viewed the situation seriously and has taken necessary steps to reduce the stress among armed forces personnel, and this is a continuous process.

-13-
Recommendation (Para No. 3)

There were as many as nine studies undertaken in the Armed Forces on suicides and matters relating to stress management. Though these studies reportedly identified specific causative factors for stress among various ranks deployed in different areas in the three services, the Committee received an impression that no effective follow up action has been taken on crucial areas such as sensitizing the officers, improving basic facilities in the field, etc. The Committee awaits the outcome of specific action taken in pursuance of each of these studies.

Reply of the Government

The causative factors identified by these studies are being addressed and remedial measures on the following lines have been undertaken. Some of these measures are:-

- (a) **Sensitization of Commanders**: - At every appropriate level, the issue of stress and strain in service, is being addressed by Commanders in a very comprehensive manner. Group discussion, workshops, counseling sessions and stress management courses have been conducted to sensitize the Commanders and junior leaders for the need of sensitively handling human resources under stressful conditions.
- (b) **Preventive measures**: - Some of the preventive measures in place for reducing stress levels and early identification of psychiatry illnesses are being ensured at all times.
 - (i) **Addressing the grievances** of service personnel by more frequent interaction with Junior Leaders.
 - (ii) **Personnel at high risk** of combat stress are **identified and counseled** by Unit Commanders, Regimental Medical Officers and Junior Leaders.

(iii) **Religious teachers** are utilized to preach and counsel vulnerable troops.

(iv) **Training of doctors and Junior Leaders** by service psychiatrists have been undertaken, to deal with personnel at high risk of stress related diseases.

(v) **Regular and frequent spells of leave**, turnover and rotation of personnel deployed in sensitive and stressful situations is ensured.

(vi) **All personnel returning back to unit after leave are interviewed and medically examined** by the Regimental Medical Officers, who looks for any stress marker or overt sign of psychiatry illness.

(vii) **During routine medical care duties** Authorized Medical Attendants are trained to keep an index of suspicion for symptoms or signs of psychiatry illnesses or stress disorders among the servicemen and promptly attend to them/refer them to appropriate level of specialist care.

(viii) A '**Buddy System**' has been introduced in training establishment in Air Force since 1997, where persons from the same state, ethnic backgrounds, etc are made 'Buddies' during their training stage. They are expected to share their problems with each other and take care of each other. This is also being actively pursued in the Army specially in the combat CI Ops loc.

(ix) The supervisory staff from training establishments specially in Air Force are being trained to work as '**Mentors**' for trainees of the training establishments through the Mentors course run at Institute of

Aerospace Medicine, Bangalore. More than 950 Mentors have been trained so far.

(c) Psychological counselors: - 90 Psychological counselors from paramedical staff have been trained through three courses at various service hospitals, as a drive to combat psychiatry and stress related problems in Armed Forces personnel for early identification of such symptoms in service personnel and to provide timely treatment to avoid loss to manpower. Further training of Army Medical Corps personnel is being regularly carried out.

In house training to selected Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) from non-medical units has also been undertaken, to augment the existing trained counselors. The training in the form of short courses/training capsules are being conducted at psychiatry centres at 7 Military Hospitals of the three services. A total number of 10 to 15 service personnel are imparted training in each batch. 233 personnel have been trained so far.

To reduce the number of cases of suicides and fratricides, a Mental Health Programme for the Armed Forces has been prepared and approved. This programme alongwith action plan for its implementation has been disseminated to all concerned on 2nd January, 2009. Army has been continuously evolving steps to improve the mental health of our troops. Besides, the following courses have been initiated for training of counselors:-

a) Courses for training Psychological Counselors are being conducted at Base Hospital Delhi Cantt, Command Hospital (Eastern Command), Kolkata and Command Hospital (Northern Command) Udhampur for 12 weeks since May 2007. 90 psychological counsellors have already been trained and placed in Base/Field Hospitals to assist the Commanders. The counsellors are trained to identify high risk personnel and to provide timely counselling/referral for treatment.

- (b) 233 Non Medical Unit Counselors have already been trained through courses conducted since 2007. It is planned to have such trained personnel in all major and minor units to assist the Commanding Officers.
- (c) Religious Teachers (RT) Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) are also being trained to augment the availability of psychological counsellors in units. It has been decided by the Adjutant General that all existing RT JCOs will be imparted training to function as psychological counsellors. There are 1900 RT JCOs in the Army who will require to be trained. 166 trained RT JCOs have moved into the environment with effect from 17 April 2008 to bolster the already existing efforts in the direction of stress management.
- (d) A batch of 25 officers from Army Education Corps are being training as Psychological counsellors by DIPR, Delhi.

All these actions will help in the identification of the stressed troops and will show their impact gradually.

Recommendation (Para No. 4)

The Committee regret to point out that one copy each of the only two Reports relating to suicide and fratricide and on stress management was made available marked as 'secret'. The Committee wonder why reports of these studies should not be made public which do not appear to contain anything sensitive or strategic. Such studies can yield desired results only if the reports are made public and there is concerted action by all concerned. The Committee, therefore, suggest that the veil of secrecy should be removed from such studies and the reports placed in public domain.

Reply of the Government

These studies are marked 'Secret' or 'Confidential' as sensationalisation or selective publicity of results of these studies could have an adverse impact on the morale of personnel of Armed Forces.

-17-
Recommendation (Para No. 7 (iii))

The welfare organizations for Defence services personnel and their family members should be financially strengthened to enable them to extend necessary help to the distressed families of different ranks and also to act as psychological Counsellors for soldiers and their family members.

Reply of the Government

There are numerous agencies in the Armed Forces which take care of the legitimate needs of Armed Forces personnel, Ex Servicemen and their families.

Distressed families of serving personnel are provided requisite help by the C&W Dte of AG's Branch in the following manner:-

- (i) Financial assistance based on requirement projected and merits of the case.
- (ii) Assistance in solving family problems due to criminal and civil disputes of serving personnel by approaching concerned authority of civil administration.
- (iii) Grant of education scholarships to deserving children of serving personnel.
- (iv) To look after war widows, war disabled soldiers and their dependents, Rehabilitation Welfare Section has been established after OP VIJAY(Kargil).

In addition to the above, following measures are also taken by units/formation HQ:-

- (i) Psychological counselling is provided to serving personnel by commanders at all levels and to families by organization like Army Wives Welfare Association(AWWA).
- (ii) Financial assistances to distressed families are also provided by the unit/formation HQ where the individual is serving.'

Similar facilities are available under Navy and Air Force also. The Department of Ex-Servicemen's Welfare (ESW) takes care of the welfare activities of ESM under various schemes through the various organisations under it like

Kendriya Sainik Board, Directorate General of Resettlement and Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS).

Recommendation (Para No. 8)

With a view to mitigating the hardships on account of family problems due to criminal or civil disputes of serving Armed Forces personnel deployed on hard duties at far flung places, the Defence Minister sent a communication in December, 2006 to Chief Ministers of all the States requesting them to instruct the district authorities and the State Government officials to be more pro-active in giving prompt response to the grievances and problems of the Defence personnel and their families. The Committee are however, distressed to find that this communication has not yielded desired results and such matters are still treated in routine manner with no special priority being given to such cases. The Committee are of view that such an apathetic attitude to the part of the district authorities adversely affects the morale of the entire force to the detriment of national interests. They, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Defence should once again take up this matter with all the State/Union Territory Governments at appropriate level emphasizing the need for according priority and considerate approach in all such cases. Specific steps should be taken to pay greater attention at Tehsil/Block level in those areas from where greater number of personnel traditionally join and serve the Armed Forces. There should be statutory provisions mandating the district authorities to address the problems and grievances of serving Defence personnel within a stipulated time frame. The Committee also desires the Ministry of Defence to make institutionalized arrangements in close coordination with the State Governments/officials and put in place a computerized and centralized mechanism to monitor the progress of each complaint received from Defence service personnel or their family members.

Reply of the Government

State Governments were requested in December, 2006 through letters addressed to Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries to be more proactive in responding to the grievances and problems of Defence Personnel and their families. Most of the State Governments had responded positively and initiated action to tone up the grievance redressal mechanism of the State to make them more responsive to the problems of Defence personnel and their families. The matter is again being taken up with the State Governments requesting them to sensitise the officials at State and District levels and to set up and strengthen institutional mechanisms to monitor and review the pending cases relating to armed forces personnel and their families. The matter relating to possibility of

making statutory provisions in the Services Acts has been examined in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs. However, this has not been found advisable by MHA, as public, police, local government, land and revenue etc. happen to be state subjects.

Recommendation (Para No. 9)

Another major reason for stress in the Armed Forces relates to conflict in interpersonal relationships. The Committee have been informed that the Armed Forces Community has a culture of its own, where sense of belonging and responsibility are cultivated in an individual to display camaraderie. Admittedly, the existing mechanism in this regard needs to be strengthened because of fresh environment of stress and strain. Needless to say that the JCOs and the officers posted at the unit/platoon level have to be sensitised towards the needs of the soldiers both as an individual and group. This assumes greater importance as the soldiers now being inducted in the Armed Forces possess a higher educational level. Steps should also be taken to impart necessary training to all these ranks with a view to making them a source of guidance and assistance for the soldiers. The Committee also feels that appropriate training is also needed to change the mindset of senior officers in the Armed Forces. They trust that appropriate improvements in the existing system will be made without any further loss of time to ensure better interaction between Armed Forces personnel of different ranks. The soldiers should be encouraged to share their problems with their seniors and emphasis must be laid on redressal of their genuine grievances.

Reply of the Government

Man management and inter personnel relationship have always been an important part of training in the Army.

In the recent past, the subjects of '**Stress Management and Interpersonal Relationship**' have been discussed at the highest levels and number of innovative training capsules have been introduced to further train commanders at all levels so that they can view affected cases in their correct perspective. Some of the measures that have been adopted towards this end are highlighted in succeeding paragraphs.

Institutionalized Training

To ensure effective man management and efficient inter personal relationships, the Army is conducting well evolved and comprehensives man management courses for the officers which include courses like Senior Defence

Management Course (SDMC) and Higher Defence Management Course (HDMC). Further, Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) attend Junior Leaders Courses, at Junior Leaders Academies at Bareilly, Platoon Commanders Wing at Belgaum, NCOs Academy at Binnaguri and many other institutions where the syllabus includes subjects pertaining to war man management and interpersonal relation.

In addition to the above mentioned dedicated courses, adequate emphasis is also given to man management, stress management, leadership and interpersonal relationship in all other courses of instructions. The process commences at pre-commissioning/recruit training stage itself, where prospective officers/JCOs/NCOs are exposed to these important facets of military life. There also exists Institute of National Integration, which trains officers/JCOs/NCOs in psychological strengthening through a specialized 'Behavioural and Social Science' course. Army Institute of Physical Training at Pune also provides nucleus of instructors in physical and recreational training, Pranayam and Yoga which is undertaken in units through out India.

Conduct of Seminars/Workshops Special workshops/seminars on man management are being organised in each formation of the Army to 'train and trainers', who have been further conducting such workshops in their respective units. Specially selected teams including psychologists are incorporated for training of trainers.

Case Studies. Relevant case studies are analysed to draw lessons and take remedial measures in cases where aspects pertaining to leadership, interpersonal relations and man management need attention.

Focus on Training of JCOs/NCOs on the importance of JCOs and NCOs in leadership and interpersonal relations is well recognized and training of junior leaders has been focused towards empowerment of JCOs and NCOs especially to partially obviate the deficiency of middle level officers.

Pre Induction Training to Units – For units moving from peace to field, leadership, man management, stress management and interpersonal relationships training has been included as part of Pre Induction Training.

Enhancement of Group Activities - Traditional group activities such as organised physical training, games, roll calls, Sainik sammelans, sub unit level training, field firing and recreational activities such as barakhanas, religious and social functions act as stress reliever and foster esprit-de-corps. An added emphasis has, therefore, been given to organise such activities to foster camaraderie, esprit-de-corps and improve inter-personal relationships.

Other measures undertaken are given below:-

- (a) Extra emphasis on training of Religious Teachers, Subedar Majors, Junior Leaders, Regimental Medical Offices, Nursing Assistance and Education Personnel; who can advise during routine unit activities.
- (b) Training of Medical Corps JCOs in psychiatry and their posting as councilors in various formations and units.
- (c) Open house discussions at junior leaders level.
- (d) Introduction of capsules in important courses on 'leadership, improvement in interpersonal relationship, man management and stress management.'
- (e) Highlighting importance and effectiveness of Yoga and Pranayam in addition to physical training.

Recommendation (Para No. 12)

Presently there is a shortage of approximately 12,000 officers in the Army and this shortage is adversely affecting the functioning at the unit level. The Committee have been informed during evidence that this shortage of officers is leading to greater stress among junior and middle level officers owing to the need to perform multiple functions and inadequate time and opportunity for intimate administration of personnel under Command. Considering the fact that such shortages of officers coupled with stressful conditions in the most inhospitable conditions particularly in counter insurgency operational areas impinge upon performance of both officers and the soldiers, the Committee are of strong view that it is high time that concrete and result oriented steps are taken to reduce the stress at the battalion/unit level. While the issue of shortage of officers continues to remain an area of concern and the same is being dealt with by the Committee in a separate Report, they would like that in the meantime, the Ministry of Defence should take up this matter with the Army Headquarters impressing upon them the need for keeping the shortages of personnel at unit level to the barest minimum particularly in the counter insurgency and border areas so that the situation does not go worse.

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Reply of the Government

Various measures have been taken to reduce the shortage of officers by making service in Armed forces an attractive career option. Some of the measures in this regard are; all officers including those in Short Service Commission (SSC) are now eligible to hold substantive rank of Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel after 2, 6 and 13 years of reckonable service respectively. The tenure of SSC officers have been increased from 10 years to 14 years. A total number of 750 posts of Lt Colonel have been upgraded to Colonel towards implementation of AV Singh Committee (Phase –I). Further, 1896 additional posts in the ranks of Colonel, Brigadier, Major General and Lieutenant General and their equivalent in the other two services have been upgraded. The implementation of the recommendations of the VI Central Pay Commission with substantial improvement in the pay structure of officers of Armed Forces will also go a long way in making the Services more attractive. Meanwhile, Army HQs will ensure that shortages of personnel at unit level are kept at the barest minimum particularly in the Counter Insurgency and Border Areas.

Recommendation (Para No. 13)

The Committee also suggests that the duration of deployment of Defence service personnel in the counter-insurgency or high altitude operational areas should be reviewed and rationalized so as to contain their stress levels. The Committee would like to be apprised of the precise steps taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Tenures in Counter Insurgency and high altitude areas in respect of officers have been validated with respect to operational and medical requirements by the concerned authorities. Efforts are being made to ensure that all officers are turned over promptly on completion of their prescribed tenure.

Officers in the Indian Army are posted for tenure of approx two years in each assignment. In the junior ranks (upto five years service) tenure of officers depends upon the tenure of unit they are posted to, which is guided by GS Branch requirements as decided by SD Dte in consultation with MO Dte. The current tenures of officers in difficult areas has been validated by medical authorities and all efforts are being made to turn over officers by due date. It is intimated that an

increase in high altitudes tenure of Infantry Battalions in certain areas in Eastern, Western and Central Commands was examined and approved by Army HQs. vide their letter No. 40202/POLICY/SD 4(A) dated 25 Oct 2006 (copy enclosed at **Annexure-III**).

Recommendation (Para No. 14)

Yet another area causing stress to the personnel of Armed Forces relates to the denial of leave even in times of extreme need ostensibly on the grounds of exigencies of service, operational requirements and shortage of manpower in the field units. Although liberalized leave policy has been put in place permitting the officers to split their annual leave in three parts with no restrictions on splitting of annual leave by PBORs, the Committee are convinced that the ground realities present a different picture. This is corroborated by the deposition of the representative of the Army that there are certain issues involved in the matters connected with grant of leave to a person deployed in a battalion or a unit in the sense that certain tasks have to be performed and other personnel may also at the same time go out on training courses. The committee are also constrained to observe that while no restrictions exist for PBORs to split their annual leave, no commensurate facility of free warrants for the travel has been provided for in the liberalised rules except grant of an additional rail warrant to all ranks serving in field or counter insurgency operational areas. The committee, therefore, recommend that the entire issue of extending benefits to the service personnel under liberalized leave policy should be examined by the Ministry of Defence with an open mind so that the benefits of this policy may percolate down at least to the lower ranks in the Armed Forces.

Reply of the Government

(a) The management of leave of both officers and PBOR is an important facet and the existing policy on Annual Leave has been revised. Fresh guidelines have been issued emphasizing on various aspects as mentioned below :-

- (i) Leave, as such should not be denied to troops except under exigencies of service or on operational grounds.

- (ii) No local restrictions on grant of leave shall be imposed, whatsoever, except with the explicit permission of the competent authority at this HQ.

- (iii) Officers may avail annual leave in three parts instead of earlier two, subject to exigencies of service. There are no restrictions on splitting of annual leave by PBOR.

- (iv) Offices are entitled to 20 days casual leave in a calendar year. At present officers can avail casual leave upto 20 days at a time of the discretion of the leave sanctioning authority instead of the earlier provision of 10 days normally and 14 days in exceptional cases.
- (v) PBOR are entitled to 30 days casual leave in a calendar year. At present PBOR can avail leave upto 30 days at a time at the discretion of leave sanctioning authority instead of the earlier provision of 10 days normally and extension upto 20 days in exceptional cases.
- (vi) The operational and functional requirements of the Armed Forces demand that the quantum of leave available cannot be stretched to an extent where it acts against the operation preparedness and detrimental to its functioning, especially in field areas wherein operational commitment have to be met besides turnover of personnel earmarked for various courses, TD and AL. The above arrangements are however an excellent mix between the requirements of giving all ranks a break from strenuous life as well as meet the operational demands.
- (b) The existing leave policy is being constantly monitored to ensure that everyone gets his due leave without compromising the operational requirement. Leave under normal circumstances is generally not denied. However, as already mentioned that the operational and functional requirement has to be kept in view while granting leave. This aspect cannot be compromised.
- (c) Under the existing rules, one passage in entitled mode and class is authorized to all service personnel while proceeding on Annual Leave. They can now be sent on Annual Leave in a maximum of 3 spells under the Liberalised Leave Policy recently issued by the Govt. For subsequent journeys during leave, the officers travel on Form 'D' (40% concession) and PBOR travel on Concessional Vouchers (50% concession).

Recommendation (Para No. 15)

The Committee's examination has also revealed that personnel in the Armed Forces are prompted to hide their mental problems as the referral to a psychiatrist for treatment is considered a 'stigma' which may adversely affect the

career of a service personnel. Since such cases have been identified as a causative facto for stress, the Committee feel that the system of referring a person specifically for psychiatrist's evaluation by the commanding officer should be suitably modified by ensuring that Defence personnel of all ranks undergo such evaluation during medical examination in batches at fixed intervals of time. While the modified system would take care of distressed person for appropriate and timely treatment, he would at the same time remain saved from being branded as an out case in the eyes of the colleagues.

Reply of the Government

The feeling of being 'stigmatized' while seeking treatment/consultation from the psychiatrist is a mind set of Indians in the present times and is also seen among civil population. However, to overcome this issue, medical authorities have dispensed with the requirement of routinely filling up AFMSF-10, a form which was mandatory to be filled whenever seeking medical attendance for psychiatry disorders and could have led to a stigma. The form is only required to be generated if the treating physician/psychiatrist feels that it may provide additional information for better management of an individual. Recommendations of Commanding Officer regarding the 'retention' of such individuals in service has also been dispensed with so as to avoid any bias while managing such cases. Besides this, routine medical check up of all personnel reporting back from leave/temp duty by MO/RMO/AMA is already in place besides Annual Medical check up so as to facilitate early identification of symptoms pertaining to stress disorders.

Recommendation (Para No. 16)

The Committee are concerned to note that the authorized strength of mental health professionals is much lower than the felt need particularly in view of the increasing instances of stress in the Armed Forces. The Committee needs hardly point out that this difficulty is not such which cannot be surmounted. The Committee hopes that the Ministry will pay serious attention to this aspect and initiate appropriate administrative action to remove bottlenecks being experienced in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Armed Forces Medical Services have a robust system in place for handling stress disorders among the serving personnel. There are 29 psychiatric centres in

the three services which have sufficient psychiatrists and paramedical staff for effective management of such cases.

16. To augment the existing resources, following measures have been initiated:-

(a) 90 counselors from medical units have been trained in counseling and posted to Northern & Eastern Sectors.

(b) 217 Religious Teachers have also been imparted training in counseling.

(c) 12 weeks training courses for counselors have been started in selected Armed Forces hospitals under supervision of psychiatrists.

The training is provided to PBOR from non-medical units. These PBOR are selected by Commanding Officers of the concerned units based on their counseling skills/abilities and utility in the units following the training.

These courses have started since Aug-Sep 2007 and 152 personnel from Army, 20 from Navy and 22 from Air Force have been trained so far.

These PBOR will act as first level counselors and are a link between those requiring psychological supports to cope with stress related disorders and health professionals.

Recommendation (Para No. 17)

The committee understands that one of the reasons for increasing stress in Armed Forces relates to non-availability of quicker appellate mechanism to deal with the service related problems and disputes, etc. They are, however, distressed to note that despite notification of Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007 on 28th December 2007, the Ministry of Defence have not been able to establish the Tribunal even after lapse of a period of over nine months. Keeping in view the fact that a large number of cases relating to service matters of the personnel from Armed Forces are pending for a long time in various courts of law, the Committee are of firm belief that the Armed Forces Tribunal is required to be set up expeditiously to provide quicker relief to the aggrieved Defence service personnel. They, therefore, desire that the Ministry of Defence should make earnest efforts for establishing the Tribunal at the earliest.

Reply of the Government

The Armed Forces Tribunal Act 2007 (55 of 2007) has come into force w.e.f. 15.06.2008 in terms of Section 1(2) H of the Act. Tribunal was inaugurated by the President of India on 8th August, 2009.

Apart from the Principal Bench at Delhi, regional Benches at Chennai, Jaipur, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Kochi have already been made functional. Two remaining Benches at Guwahati and Mumbai will also be made function in due course.

CHAPTER-III

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT REPLIES

Recommendation (Para No. 5)

Though a majority of suicide cases in Army are stated to be taking place at peace stations, the Committee find it rather surprising that no specific study on this aspect has been undertaken to identify the exact causes for such a phenomenon. The Committee feel that it is an important area requiring urgent attention of the Ministry of Defence. They, therefore, desire that immediate steps should be taken to make objective studies on the case of suicide reported from peace stations with a view to identifying the main reasons for prevalence of psychological problems in peace stations and appropriate follow-up action taken to minimize such incidents.

- Reply of the Government

The approximate average ratio of suicides in peace versus field areas is 70:30. Also, measures for prevention of such illnesses are taken both in field and peace areas. The studies conducted have clearly brought out factors both in field and peace areas/home.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 11 of Chapter I of the Report)

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CHAPTER-IV

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Recommendation (Para No. 2)

The Committee understand that the demand on the personnel of Indian Armed Forces have been increasing over the years due to changing operational commitments of diverse nature. At the same time, they are required to meet aspirations of their family members for a good quality life on account of rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in the society. Undoubtedly, the inability of soldiers to solve their family problems due to operational requirements and other constraints within which they have to work and non-fulfillment of some of their expectations in certain cases results in enhanced negative stress leading to a variety of illnesses and behavioral problems including suicide, fratricidal killing, early mortality or desertion from the Armed Forces. The Committee wish to point out that besides adversely affecting the efficiency and performance of the defence personnel due to impaired motivation, negative stress level also put additional burden on the public exchequer in the form of man-days lost due to sickness, cost of medical treatment and loss of trained officers and soldiers. To the utter dismay of the Committee, the Ministry of Defence have made an attempt to downplay the magnitude of the problem by putting forth the plea that, "the overall psychiatric morbidity in the Armed Forces has been less than the national figures". Equally specious is the plea advanced by the Ministry of Defence that these is a rising trend of psychiatric illnesses in our country over the last few decades and Armed Forces personnel being drawn from the same society are not immune to these influences. The Committee consider it lamentable that the Ministry of Defence, rather than making an earnest attempt to identify the precise reasons for untimely loss of such a large number of precious lives of trained soldiers, have taken recourse to drawing satisfaction from the facts that such cases are on the rise in the society and the psychiatric morbidity in Armed Forces is less than the national averages. In the opinion of the Committee, the attitude of the Ministry not only displays insensitivity towards the problem but also highlights their inaction to improve conditions in the Armed Forces where soldiers are trained enough to fight under adverse situations. The Committee trusts that the Ministry of Defence would now make a realistic assessment of the problems plaguing the Armed Forces personnel with a view to identifying the areas needing urgent reforms in the right direction. The Committee also suggest that the organisations from both public and private sector having expertise in the area, should be associated with such studies so that the causes of the increasing stress are identified at its root in an independent manner and appropriate solutions found to remedy the situation. The Committee would like to be apprised of the precise action taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

There is no denial that even a single case of suicide and fratricide in Armed Forces is a matter of concern for the Ministry despite the fact that the overall psychiatric morbidity in the Armed Forces is less than the national figures. However, the Armed Forces personnel cannot be entirely immune to the influences of the environment at their home and the rising aspirations of the community as a whole. The Ministry/Armed Forces has not taken recourse to drawing satisfaction from the fact that psychiatric morbidity in Armed Forces is less than the national averages. The Armed Forces have addressed the problem of stress/mental disorders from time to time and have recently brought out a very vibrant "Mental Health Programme for the Armed Forces" highlighting the areas for promotion of mental health, prevention and management of mental morbidity. However, the need for involvement of outside organisations from public and private sector is presently not felt as the forces have eminent specialists in the field to monitor and execute any changes in the policies regarding psychiatric illnesses.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 8 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para No. 6)

The studies on stress management in the Armed Forces have identified certain causative factors for stress which are broadly classifiable under the three categories namely, socio-economic including familial reasons, and environmental/ organizational and medical/psychological causes. The Committee are in no doubt that after having identified these specific causative factors for stress among the Armed Forces personnel, the Ministry of Defence have not contemplated multi-pronged strategies to address the problems of negative stress behaviour of different ranks in the Armed Forces. Though certain remedial measures have recently been initiated at the Service Headquarters level and by the Ministry to manage stress among the Defence personnel, the committee feel convinced that much is still left to be desired to address the organizational issues like better manpower management, provisions for better amenities and conducive climate to counter negative thinking among the Defence service personnel at the lower ranks so as to minimize the undesirable consequences of stress in the Armed Forces in the long run. They trust that the Ministry of Defence would at least now realize the gravity of the problem in all its ramifications and take expeditious steps to bring about perceptible improvement in the prevailing situation.

Reply of the government

Ministry of Defence understands the gravity of the problem in all its ramifications and has taken adequate steps to improve the situation.

Stress management is a continuous process and the steps taken by the Government will yield more perceptible improvement in the near future.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 14 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para No. 7(i))

The Committee have been given to understand that familial reasons are one of the predominating causative factors of stress among the Armed Forces personnel. These reasons include aspects like separation from family, familial discords and disputes, concern regarding children's education and their upbringing and welfare measures for the family. The Committee are of the firm view that while Armed Forces personnel have to strike a balance between their personal and military life within the constraints inherent in the military service, the Government also cannot fully absolve themselves of their responsibilities towards personnel engaged in meeting diverse challenges before the nation. Undoubtedly, there is an imperative necessity to address the legitimate needs of Defence personnel and the Committee would strongly recommend the following:-

The Government should make earnest efforts to provide family accommodation at the station of choice of the Armed Forces personnel deployed on operational duties in counter insurgency and border areas. Married accommodation project should be completed expeditiously and different categories of residential accommodation lying vacant at various military stations should be utilised for the purpose.

Reply of the Government

Families are permitted in peace areas only. Border areas and high altitude areas are classified as field areas where families are not permitted for operational reasons. No family accommodation exists in these areas as it is not authorised. Local commanders at times permit keeping of families in border areas for very short duration in existing accommodation under formation arrangements.

Government is making all efforts to complete the "Married Accommodation Project" (MAP) on priority. In MAP, Phase-1, out of 57875 Dwelling Units (DUs) under execution, 40123 DUs have been completed and 12881 DUs (cumulative 53004 DUs) will be completed by March, 2010. Balance 4871 DUs will be completed in Financial Year 2010-11. In MAP Project Phase -2, work is likely to commence by March, 2010.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 17 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para No. 7 (ii))

Efforts should also be directed towards imparting skill development and extending help to the children of Armed Forces personnel in getting admission in schools and institutions of higher professional and technical studies. Opening of institutions for imparting higher technical education in different parts of the country primarily for the wards of the Armed Forces personnel be considered.

Reply of the Government

Army Welfare Education Society (AWES) has been established under the aegis of Adjutant General's Branch, Integrated HQ of MoD (Army) to meet the educational needs of wards of Army personnel. AWES has 126 schools with a population of 1.7 Lac children and 13 professional colleges in majority of the popular disciplines, spread across the country. AWES also runs 13 professional colleges exclusively for the wards of Armed Forces personnel. List of these institutions may be seen at *Annexure – I*. All these institutions have been established to meet the need for higher professional and technical studies of wards of Armed Forces personnel.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 20 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para No. 10)

The Committee understand that the practice of utilizing services of Jawans as Sahayaks is prevalent in the Army in one form or other since British days. It is learnt that numerous Jawans are engaged at the residence of some of the senior officer for domestic work and to serve the family members of officers. A representative of the Army categorically deposed before the Committee that the Jawans are not technically supposed to attend to the household duties at the residence of the officers and the personnel attending to such duties do so due to their reverence. The Committee hardly need to stress that Jawans are recruited for serving the nation and not to serve the family members of officers in household work which is demeaning and humiliating. The Committee take a very serious view of the shameful practice which should have no place in the independent India. The Committee expect the Ministry of Defence to issue instructions to stop the practice forthwith, as this lowers the self-esteem of Jawan. Any officer found to be violating the instruction in this regard should be dealt with severely. Similar action needs to be taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs in respect of para military organization and other organizations.

Reply of the Government

(a) Exhaustive instructions regarding appropriate employment of Sahayaks have been issued from time to time by Army HQ. Comprehensive instructions have been issued to the environment vide letter No. B/32099/AG/PS-2© dated 27 Jul 07 (**Annexure-II**) highlighting the following aspects:-

- (v) Sahayak is a comrade-in-arms to Officer/JCO symbolizing trust, respect, warmth, confidence and interdependence, which are the fundamentals of relations between the leaders and the led.
- (vi) Sahayak is a soldier who in addition to his duties provides the essential support to authorized Officers and JCOs, both in peace and war to enable them to fully attend to their assigned duty. He also provides leaders a direct contact with men and thus enables officers and JCOs to gain an insight into the state of morale and well being of men.
- (vii) Sahayak will be attached to regular Army units and provided proper living accommodation and messing facilities. The officers to whom Sahayaks are provided will ensure such facilities are arranged.
- (viii) Sahayaks will not be employed for menial house-hold work.

(b) It has also been stressed that there is an urgent and continuous need to impress upon all concerned that Sahayaks being combatant soldiers under no circumstances are to be employed on a job, which is not in conformity with the dignity and self-respect of a soldier. Therefore, it is the duty of all officers/JCOs and Commanders in the chain to ensure that strict checks are instituted to prevent misuse of Sahayaks and that any violation of existing instructions and guidelines should be dealt with immediately.

(c) Any practice that lowers the self-esteem of a soldier is to be abhorred. Formation and Unit Commanders uphold the honour and dignity of job content of the individual soldiers. In this context, it is always ensured and shall continue to be ensured that soldiers are not employed on any demeaning or humiliating tasks.

(d) Exhaustive instructions for strict compliance of the guidelines have been reiterated to the environment.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 23 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para No. 11)

The Committee need hardly emphasize that the basic facilities for the soldiers particularly those deployed at high altitudes or in border areas need to be met in a most efficient manner. Delays in supply of consumable and

non-consumable items should be avoided and they should not be deprived of better quality of weather appropriate clothing and good quality of ration. The requirement of such essential items must be reviewed at regular intervals and the supply of items as per entitled scales must be monitored at appropriate level. The Committee would like to be apprised of the specific measures taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Based on the feed back from troops and formations commanders at various levels following measures have been taken to enhance the specification and scale of rations for the troops:-

- (a) Upgradation and enhancement in specification of rice, pulses and tea.
- (d) Introduction of precooked chicken in retort pouches, broilers in place of culled chicken and provision of chicken for all days as against five days in a week earlier.
- (e) Replacement of milk powder/tinned with TPM.
- (d) Authorization of in lieu items like suji, flour, bread, coffee, butter and eggs to PBOR so as to provide greater variety in rations.
- (i) Provisioning of special rations as being presently providing in Op Meghadoot to all troops deployed above 12,000 ft in areas of Northern and Eastern Commands. The strength of personnel authorized special rations has risen from an initial strength of 2,850 to present strength of 28,644 personnel.
- (j) Enhancing the condiment allowance by 84% and LPG scales by 55%.
- (k) Sanction has been given by MoD for procurement of vegetables in retort pouches not exceeding 25% annual requirement of existing varieties of vegetables tinned/dehydrated.
- (l) In order to improve quality and effect economy, procurement of salt has been decentralized to Commands.
- (i) Additional ration in desert areas consisting of Lime fresh, Rooh Afza, TPM, and Fruit fresh for troops taking part in exercise/collective training in desert/semi desert areas of Rajasthan has been authorized.
- (j) Sanction has been accorded for authorization of additional 1,40,300 of Meals Ready to eat per year for troops deployed in Counter Insurgency operations in Eastern and Northern Commands.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para 26 of Chapter I of the Report)

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CHAPTER-V

**RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE
GOVERNMENT ARE STILL AWAITED**

- Nil -

NEW DELHI;
05 January, 2010
Pausa, 1931 (Saka)

Satpal Maharaj,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on Defence

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
DEFENCE (2009- 10)**

The Committee sat on Tuesday, the 5th January, 2010 from 1500 to 1530 hrs. in Committee Room 'C', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Satpal Maharaj - **Chairman**

**MEMBERS
LOK SABHA**

2. Shri Harish Choudhary
3. Shri Kamal Kishor 'Commando'
4. Shri H.D. Devegowda
5. Dr. Sucharu Ranjan Haldar
6. Shri Ramesh Jigajinagi
7. Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal
8. Dr. Prasanna Kumar Patasani
9. Shri Amarnath Pradhan
10. Shri Baju Ban Riyan
11. Shri Mahabali Singh

RAJYA SABHA

12. Shri R.K. Dhawan
13. Prof.P.J. Kurien
14. Shri Prakash Javadekar
15. Shri K.B. Shanappa
16. Shri M.V. Mysura Reddy
17. Smt. Shobhana Bhartia

SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. Shri T. K. Mukherjee | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. Shri N. S. Hooda | - | Additional Director |

2. At the outset, the Hon'ble Chairman welcomed the members to the sitting of the Committee and wished them for a very happy and prosperous New Year 2010. The Committee then took up for consideration and adoption the draft action taken report on the observations/recommendations contained in the 31st report (14th Lok Sabha) on the subject 'Stress Management in Armed Forces'.

3. After deliberations the Committee adopted the report with slight modifications at Para Nos. 8, 14 and 23.

4. The Committee, then, authorised the Chairman to finalise the above draft report and present the same to the House on a date convenient to him during the Budget Session, 2010.

The Committee then adjourned.

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Annexure-I

DETAILS OF PROFESSIONAL COLLEGES

Name of Institute	Location	Course Duration (Yrs)	Degree Awarded	Annual Intake	Total Capacity	Availability of Hostel
Army Institute of Technology (AIT)	Pune	4	BE/Four Streams	240	960	Yes
Army CT)	Bangalore	4	BHM	60	240	Yes
Army Institute Management Kolkata (AIMK)	Kolkata	2	MBA	120	240	Yes
Army Institute Law (AIL)	Mohali	5	BA, LLB (Integrated)	80	400	Yes
Army Centre of Education (ACE)	Panchmarhi	1	B.Ed	60	60 (Girls)	Yes
Army College of Dental Sciences (ACDS)	Secunderabad	5 3	BDS MDS	40 02	200 6	Yes
Army Institute of Education (AIE)	Delhi Cantt.	1	B.Ed	100	100	Yes
Army Institute Management and Technology (AIMT)	Greater Noida	2	MBA	120	240	Yes
Army Institute of Fashion Design (AIFD)	Bangalore	2 / 3	PG Dip/BSc Fashion Tech	30 60	270	Yes
Army College of Nursing (ACN)	Jalandhar	4	BSc Nursing	50	200 (Girls)	Yes
Army Institute Higher Education (AIHE)	Pathankot	1	B.Ed	100	100	Yes
Army Institute of Nursing (AIN)	Guwahati	4	BSc Nursing	40	160 (Girls)	Yes
Army College of Medical Sciences (ACMS)	Delhi Cantt	4 ½	MBBS	100	500	Yes
Total				1202	3676	

APPENDIX
ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE
RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS CONTAINED IN THE THIRTY- FIRST
REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE

		Percentage of Total
1.	Total number of recommendations	19
2.	Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by Government Para No. 1, 3, 4, 7(iii), 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17	12 63
3.	Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's replies Para No. 5	1 5
4.	Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee Para No. 2, 6, 7(i & ii), 10 and 11	6 32
5.	Recommendations/Observations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited	Nil -