

## **RESTRICTED**

### **ABSTRACT**

Sri Lanka Army is one of the victorious Armies in the world, set example for many modern, sophisticated armies in the world especially in terms of defeating an insurgency. However, its glory was challenged by various factors especially the desertion of soldiers. Sri Lanka Army inaugurated in 1949 by passing extraordinary gazette in Sri Lanka parliament with a strength of 2500 officers and men. Until the Army commenced its first ever operation "Operation Monty" in 1952 to counter the influx of illegal South Indian Immigration, Army did not have a chance to a practice its classic role and task. The gradual development of the Army strength was visible after 1952, by early 1980s Sri Lanka Army developed to a formidable army because Sri Lanka gained combat experience through 1956 riots, and 1971 JVP insurrection. With the assignation of first ever Army personnel by radicalized Tamil group, its role and task were completely changed. Sri Lankan government took evasive actions to enhance the Army in terms of manpower, weaponry and equipment in order to suppress the radicalized approach of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam. Thousands of young men and women worn the green uniform voluntarily and another thousands were in uniform went home with the intention not to return to the service due to the various popular and unpopular motives. Any soldier who has taken an unauthorized leave from his /her training or duty station considered as Absent without Leave (AWOL), on the 31 days of AWOL status is officially changed and considered them as "Deserters". The soldiers can be deserted from any Army in the world and it was really high during Vietnam War, thousands of US soldiers deserted and even today all most half of Syrian Army deserted and join with anti-government parties by forming an unofficial Army. Desertion was not the big concern in Sri Lankan Army till mid of the 1980s, however with the expansion of war desertion started to worries the military and the government, Especially due to the intense of the war and issues related to the socioeconomic spectrum of own life compel thousands of men to go home without intention to return, as of today 66,000 of Army personals categorised as "Deserters". The highest number of desertion was reported in 2009 and 2010, however, in 2014 it reported 5 per cent of desertion and it indicates war is not the only reason for the desertion. Moreover, the Sri Lankan Government has continuously allocated the highest percentage the from the budget allocation for defence and all soldiers are subjected for basic training which cost

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thousands of money of taxpayers. According to the organized crime prevention of Sri Lanka Police, Army deserters are responsible for less than one percent of total Organized crimes reported in Sri Lanka but whenever an incident occurred with the presence of deserters, it is a demanding news for media and social media. The fact behind is, the social impression on deserters is not at the satisfactory level and subsequently, it paved the way for them to do more negative impact to the society. However, the situation is such there are incidents desertion create positive impacts as well, if some soldiers deserted from the Army having the intention to start his own employment, ultimately they create extra job opportunities to the society and they themselves have a better life than in the Army. Military desertion and Job turnover of the commercial field are very much similar, therefore, some theories and models discussing under employee turnover can be applied in understanding military desertion. The desertion is considered a preventable issue and option is find some means of identifying soldiers who are at a risk of becoming deserter prior to the desertion. Even though it is not easy periodic monitoring and evaluation of individual character may help to control this issue. However, it is very much essential to have proper reintegration because deserters landed to the civil society with the skills and knowledge they develop while in the Army which may cause to disturb the normalcy of socioeconomic spectrum of the country. Almost all the Armies in the world have this issue in different levels and they have introduced several actions to mitigate this issue and the impact. Sri Lanka Army and Government awarding "General Amnesty" for deserters to encourage them to have a proper discharge from the Army but no any integration system. If Sri Lanka Army and Government able to introduced proper integration system for more 66000 thousand deserters of Sri Lanka Army today it may help Army to be clear from deserters and it may help to create more opportunities for the country as well. However, finding of determines for desertion and viable solution the desertion is very much vital for Sri Lanka Army and Government to protect the victories status in future.