



We Are Witnessing a Disturbing Tendency of Fratricide-Suicide Among Some Members Of The Defence Forces. What Are The Plausible Reasons ? What Measures Have The Defence Forces Initiated to Stem Such Tendencies in Future ? (250 Words / 15 M) (GS-3 Security Forces & Mandate)

Approach:

1. Introduction – the recent cases & trends of fratricide-suicide in armed forces.
2. Mention the reasons.
3. Discuss the steps taken.
4. Conclusion

A total of **787** armed forces personnel died of suicide (2014-2021), with the Army reporting a maximum of **591** such cases. During the same period, suicides in the Navy stood at **36** and for the Indian Air Force, it was **160**. During the same period, 18 incidents of fratricide have happened in the Army and two in the Indian Air Force.

As many as 18 deaths due to incidents of fratricide occurred in CRPF alone in the last four years. One of the most recent being at **Khagrachari post** of Tripura, which resulted in killing of two personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF). Further, in **2019**, **43** personnel committed suicide, with the figure touching **60** in **2020**.

Reasons:

- **A large number of vacancies & associated issues.** This not only is affecting the smooth functioning of the organisations, rather it also makes it **difficult** to grant leave **even twice a year**. So, defence personnel **cannot utilise their own leave**.
- **Challenges are faced by Lower Rank Officials** like, issues such as excessive workload, domestic problems, non-availability of recreational facilities, lack of dignity in work, and conflict with seniors as well as subordinates, etc.
- The personnel are **transferred frequently** to a new environment: These days, a third of the personnel of a battalion are transferred. This **adversely impacts their cohesiveness**.
- **High stress** is also leading to an increased number of incidents of indiscipline, unsatisfactory state of training, inadequate maintenance of equipment and low morale. These in turn affects the efficiency of the armed forces.

Steps taken:

The **Indian Air Force** is organising a **quarterly 'Mission Zindagi'** campaign to improve the personnel's mental health and stress management through workshops and lectures. The **Indian Navy** has established **Mental Health Centres** in Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, Kochi, Port



Blair, Goa and Karwar, where family counsellors provide **psychological counselling**. Besides, the **Defence Institute of Psychological Research** (DIPR) is also conducting studies to help the government to work on **stress amelioration** amongst troops. The CRPF has introduced the concept of holding “**chaupals**” where the personnel will be free to air their **grievances** in informal settings with senior officers.

According to the United Service Institution of India (USI) report, **Stress prevention and management** should be treated “as a **leadership role** at Unit and Formation level”.

Fratricide & Suicides in armed forces have highlighted the need to **overhaul the grievance redressal mechanism** in the armed forces. Along with that, the armed services have to be strengthened with **enough personnel** to relieve them from stress and serve the nation with pride.

Legacy IAS Academy