U.S. Army Research Institute
Special Report 51
August 2002

What We Know About AWOL and Desertion:

A Review of the Professional Literature for Policy Makers and Commanders

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
Approved for Public Release -
Distribution Unlimited

Peter F. Ramsberger
D. Bruce Bell

20021105 071

What We Know About AWOL and Desertion:

A Review of the Professional Literature for Policy Makers and Commanders

ARI Special Report 51, August 2002

Peter F. Ramsberger
Human Resources Research Organization

D. Bruce Bell
U.S. Army Research Institute

U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences
5001 Eisenhower Avenue • Alexandria, VA 22333-5600
Internet site: http://www.ari.army.mil

Foreword

The Army G-1 requested a Fiscal Year 2002 study of Absence Without Leave (AWOL) and prolonged absence (which the Army defines as desertion) as a way of developing more focused efforts to lessen the impact of these chronic problems for the Army. Specifically, the Army wants to learn what is known about prevention, apprehension, and rehabilitation of deserters. This is the first report to provide policy makers and field commanders with the findings from that study: a quick summary of what is known about the topics of Absence Without Leave (AWOL) and desertion, based on research during the last 30 years.

Although the problem of AWOL/desertion is fairly constant, it tends to increase in magnitude during wartime – when the Army tends to increase its demands for troops and to lower its enlistment standards to meet that need. It can also increase during times, such as now, when the Army is attempting to restrict the ways that soldiers can exit service through administrative channels.

The rich information contained in ARI studies of this topic over the years is remarkably consistent in the findings, which gives us confidence that this information will be helpful to the intended audience: military policy makers and field commanders.

Zita M. Simutis

ZITA M. SIMUTIS
Acting Technical Director

Executive Summary

Study Requirements:

The study's purpose was to determine why Army desertion has increased so dramatically over the last eight years (i.e., from 1,284 in FY93 to 4,795 in FY01) and to provide Army managers with tools and policy options for better managing the desertion process. The specific tools include survey instruments the Army can use to better understand why desertion is occurring and which soldiers are most likely to leave. To the extent possible, the study will provide recommendations for prevention and apprehension of deserters. It will also study the characteristics and experiences of deserters who are adjudicated and then returned for duty.

Procedure:

The study involves four phases: (1) review of the professional literature on desertion, (2) field interviews to gather issues, lessons learned and recommendations that arise out of the operation of the current desertion management system, (3) construction of psychometric instruments to measure characteristics and experiences of deserters, and (4) construction of surveys to measure unit views of the desertion process and what can be done to improve it. This report is based on the first two activities.

Findings:

Army research from 1973 to the present shows a fairly consistent story. Prior to entry, deserters are somewhat different from other soldiers (i.e., they tend to be less educated, lower aptitude, to be from broken homes, and to have engaged in delinquent behavior). In the Army, they are more likely to be younger, lower in rank, and in combat-related military occupational specialties. Their reasons for leaving tend to center around family, personal or financial problems and/or an inability to adjust to Army life. The desertion is more likely to occur when there is an opportunity to leave (i.e., when the soldier is in transit, on leave, or convalescing). Attempts to prevent Absence Without Leave (AWOL) (and possibly desertion) led to increases in AWOL rates through some sort of scapegoating or self fulfilling prophecy mechanism that was associated with the "treatment" (i.e., leaders were attempting to reduce AWOL behavior via efforts to counsel soldiers who were identified as being high risk trainees). Initial interviews with unit leaders suggest that among "Dropped from Rolls" soldiers, the best candidates for reintegration into the unit are those who left for a "good" reason (e.g., an unresolved family problem), returned voluntarily, were gone less than a year and wanted to "soldier" even in the face of stiff punishment for their past mistakes. Unfortunately, this type of deserter is in short supply. Furthermore, too little time has passed to tell whether these characteristics are indeed predictive of success.

Utilization of Findings:

The review of the draft version of this report by representatives of the Army G-1, U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command suggests that it meets an Army need among reenlistment non-commissioned officers and company grade leaders to understand the desertion process and to formulate better ways to address it.

Table of Contents

I. Background and purpose 1

II. What is a deserter? 2

III. What is current Army policy in handling cases of desertion? 3

IV. How large a problem is desertion? 4

V. How do deserters differ from other soldiers? 5

VI. Why do soldiers desert? 6

VII. What are the consequences of desertion for the Army and the individual soldier? 8

VIII. What can be done to prevent desertion and/or reclaim the soldier who has taken this step? 9

IX. Summary 11

X. What else do we need to learn? 12

What We Know About AWOL and Desertion

What We Know About AWOL and Desertion

I. Background and Purpose

The problem of soldiers taking unauthorized leave from their units has been recorded throughout history. It has also been experienced by the United States Army from its inception at the time of the Revolutionary War. Obviously, soldiers being absent without leave (AWOL) and deserting is a troubling phenomenon whenever it occurs. But the fact is that the Army has seen substantial increases in this regard over the past several years (see Section IV, below). In response to this, a study has been initiated that will seek to update and expand upon what we already know about desertion in order to inform efforts to prevent it from happening and increase positive outcomes in cases where it does occur (e.g., reclaim individuals as successful soldiers). This paper is intended to provide an overview of what is currently known about desertion. It is organized around the following topics:

- What is a deserter?
- What is current Army policy in handling cases of desertion?
- How large a problem is desertion?
- How do deserters differ from other soldiers?
- Why do soldiers desert?
- What are the consequences of desertion for the Army and the individual soldier?
- What can be done to prevent desertion and/or reclaim the soldier who has taken this step?
- What do we need to learn, and how do we hope to do so through the current study?

II. What is a Deserter?

The criteria by which a soldier is classified as a deserter have varied over time. Currently, any soldier who has taken an unauthorized leave from his/her training or duty station is considered AWOL. On the 31st day of AWOL, this status is officially changed to Dropped From Rolls (DFR), or desertion. This can be called the "administrative" definition of the term. From a legal standpoint, individuals are considered deserters when they have been convicted of the crime through a court martial. In reality, most desertion cases do not come to this. Instead, the overwhelming majority of soldiers who desert are released from the Army with less-than-honorable discharges. (For instance, in Calendar Years 1997 – 2001, 94% of the approximately 12,000 soldiers who deserted were released from the Army.) In this paper and project, the focus is on deserters as defined administratively.

III. What is current Army policy in handling cases of desertion?

The following discussion provides a broad overview of the current procedures for dealing with AWOL/DFR cases. Note that there are some slight variations based on where the absence occurs (e.g., reception station, unit of assignment, in transit), and other particulars of the situation. Refer to AR 630-10 (August 31, 2001) for complete details.

When a soldier is reported missing, an inquiry is undertaken to attempt to ascertain his/her location and the possible reasons for the absence. At the same time, relevant personnel (e.g., the Provost Marshal) are notified of the absence and necessary reports are filed. Next of kin are informed that the soldier is missing within specified time frames. After 30 consecutive days of absence, the soldier is classified as DFR. Necessary forms are completed (e.g., DA Form 4187, DD Form 553, DD Form 458) and assembled in a deserter packet which, is forwarded to the U. S. Army Deserter Information Point at Ft. Knox, KY.

A soldier is considered Returned to Military Control (RMC) when he/she surrenders to military authorities, is delivered to authorities, is detained by civilian law enforcement personnel, is found in a civilian medical facility in such condition that he/she cannot be returned to military authorities, or has entered another branch of the United States military. Absentees under civilian control are returned to military authorities as soon as possible. Soldiers who took absence from a training unit are returned to the Personnel Control Facility (PCF) at Fort Knox, KY or Fort Sill, OK. Those who have left operational units in the continental United States are returned to the unit from which they took absence. Soldiers in transit or DFR from overseas are no longer considered to be assigned to the gaining unit, and will be returned to the PCF at either Fort Knox or Fort Sill.

Upon RMC, the unit commander interviews the soldier to determine the cause for the absence, and what can be done to mitigate those circumstances. This information is also used to classify the leave as authorized/unauthorized and to determine the proper resolution of the case. This can include release or repatriation to the unit.

IV. How large a problem is desertion?

As seen in Figure 1, the number of desertions has been steadily increasing over the past six years.[1] It should be noted that as a percentage of the overall enlisted Army force, these figures are still quite small, ranging from about 3/10 to 8/10 of a percent. (By contrast, over the years 1968-1971, during the Vietnam War, the number of deserters as a percentage of the enlisted Army force averaged around 5%.[2]) However, with the number of desertions reaching nearly 5,000 in FY 2001 and apparently continuing to increase, this is a problem that cannot be ignored.

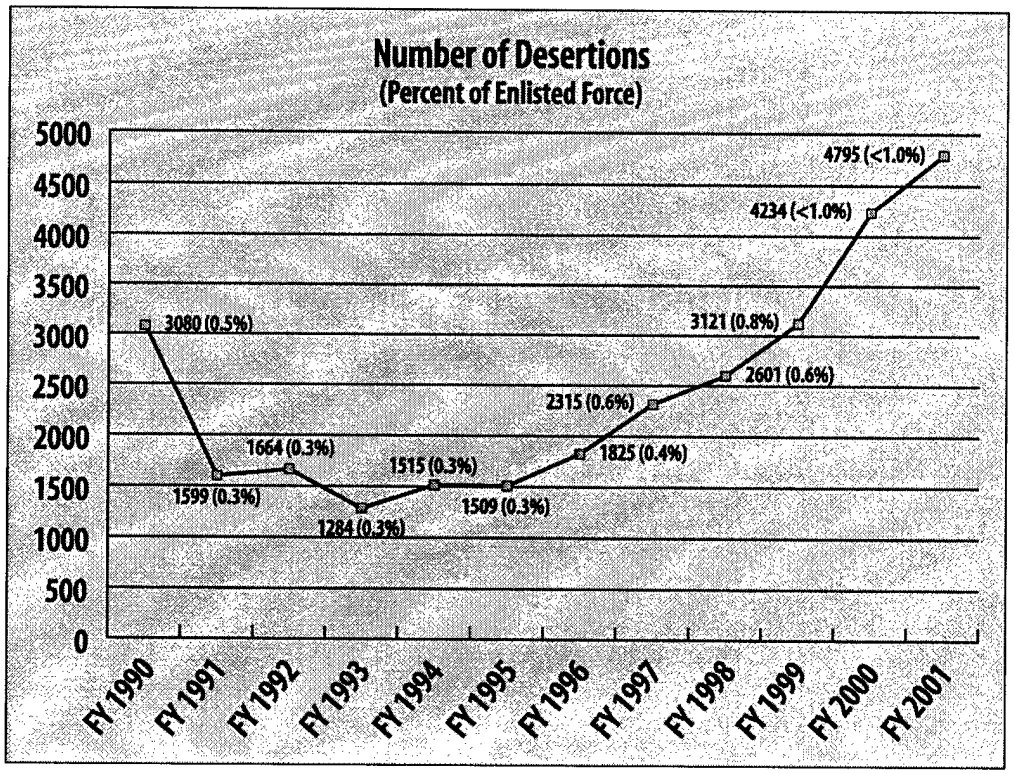


Figure 1
Number of Army Enlisted Desertions by Fiscal Year, 1990-2001

V. How do deserters differ from other soldiers?

One of the primary motives behind studying soldiers who desert is to determine if there are differences between them and non-deserters in terms of background characteristics and/or experiences in the Army and prior to enlisting. Such information can be valuable in two ways. For one, it can be used to identify youth whose admission into the Army may be less than desirable based on the fact that their pre-service experiences or background information suggest that they are a higher risk for unauthorized absences. Information on differences between deserters and non-deserters can also be useful to Army leadership by suggesting which soldiers may require more attention, either in general or in response to specific circumstances that have been found to be related to AWOL/desertion (e.g., family problems). Such information can allow leaders to be proactive in helping to resolve situations/problems that might otherwise lead to an unauthorized absence.

It should be noted that the outcomes of research aimed at identifying differences between deserters and non-deserters are stated in relative terms. In no instance do the results show with absolute certainty that someone who enters the Army with a given characteristic or experience will take unauthorized leave or desert. Rather, the data indicate that soldiers with certain background characteristics and experiences are relatively more likely to experience this outcome. Moreover, the vast majority of soldiers who fit this profile are not going to desert.

With this caveat in mind, research on the characteristics of deserters has yielded clearly consistent results. This is true across services and over time. These outcomes are summarized in Table 1.[3] The question marks indicate that the data are simply not available or have not been analyzed to determine whether a particular variable is characteristic of deserters from that era.

Table 1
A Comparison of Deserters and Non-Deserters on Key Variables

Compared to their peers, deserters are...	*WW II*	*Korea*	*Vietnam*	*Current*
Less educated	✓	✓	✓	?
Lower aptitude	✓	?	✓	?
From broken homes	✓	✓	✓	?
Likely to have pre-service delinquencies	✓	✓	✓	?
Younger at entry	?	?	✓	?
Prior in-service offenses	?	?	✓	?
In combat MOS	?	?	✓	?
Less time in service	?	?	?	✓
Lower rank	?	?	✓	✓

One finding that is not relevant to today's environment, but which is interesting nonetheless, is that during the era of the draft, there was a higher incidence of desertion among volunteers than among soldiers who were drafted.[4] The reason for this seemingly counter intuitive finding is that those who volunteered for service were more likely to evidence the characteristics seen in Table 1 (e.g., less educated and lower aptitude).

VI. Why do soldiers desert?

The subject of why soldiers desert has also been the subject of some research in the past. Understanding the reasons behind the action is critical to learning what steps can be taken to ameliorate the problem. As with the characteristics of deserters just discussed, there is a good deal of consistency in the reasons given by soldiers for their absence. For instance, in 1974, President Ford instituted a clemency program though which Vietnam draft evaders and deserters could return to American society under certain conditions (e.g., reaffirm allegiance to the United States, perform periods of alternate service). Data on why these soldiers deserted were collected through the Joint Alternate Service Board, the DoD body created to deal with

unconvicted military deserters, and through interviews of applicants conducted by mental health professionals.[5] By far the most frequent answer given for deserting was personal, family, or financial problems (40-50% of program participants). This was followed by problems adjusting to Army life (approximately one quarter) and reasons related to Vietnam (12%). Other reasons mentioned included Army leadership and administration, and drug/legal issues.

The Special Discharge Review Program (SDRP) was initiated in 1977 to allow Vietnam-era deserters to turn themselves in and receive an undesirable discharge. It also permitted individuals who received undesirable or general discharges during this period to apply to have them upgraded. Analysis of the reasons given for desertion by these soldiers showed that they varied greatly by whether the individual stayed in the U.S. or resided as a fugitive in a foreign country.[6] The former group was quite similar to those who were interviewed under President Ford's clemency program: 33% cited family/marital/financial reasons for deserting, 19% said they had problems adjusting to the Army, and 17% gave reasons related to Army leadership and administration. On the other hand, Vietnam was the factor cited by the majority of those who chose to live in a foreign country (62%). This latter group was also demographically quite different from their counterparts (e.g., more educated and higher aptitude).

More recently, the Personnel Control Facility (PCF) at Fort Knox, KY collected information from 12,277 deserters over calendar years 1997-2001.[7] Although the categories created to summarize the reasons for leaving were somewhat different, the results are remarkably consistent with the earlier findings:

- Family problems (33%)
- Failure to adapt (31%)
- Issues with chain of command (19%)
- Financial problems (12%)
- Other (5%)

Putting these results together forms a consistent picture of the major stressors that lead soldiers to desert. These include personal problems (family, marital, financial), an inability to adapt to the Army way of life, and leadership and administrative issues.

Another factor that may come into play in a soldier's decision to desert is that of opportunity. As an example, data from the SDRP indicated that 39% of participants departed when they were on leave or convalescent status, while another 15% went AWOL while in transit from one unit to another.[8] Similar results have been found in other studies, suggesting that many deserters are inspired at least in part by the fact that they are separated from their units, thus making it easier to simply remain absent. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that desertions may coincide with soldiers receiving their paychecks, given that they then have the resources to expend on travel and other necessities.

VII. What are the consequences of desertion for the Army and the individual soldier?

The most immediate and concrete costs of desertion for the Army are in replacing the individual who left. These costs are obviously dependent on when the desertion occurs. As a soldier goes through the recruiting, outfitting, and training process, the associated fiscal outlays grow. The "payback" to the Army is represented by performance on the job. So one can conceive of these costs as being defrayed the longer the soldier remains in service. The United States General Accounting Office estimates that it costs the Services $38,000 to replace a fully-trained member.[9] According to the PCF, Fort Knox, KY, 71% of deserters leave before completing their first year of service.[10] In order to provide a general idea of the magnitude of the financial costs of this phenomenon to the Army, if we assign the full replacement costs to the 71% of deserters who left in their first year in calendar year 2000, this amounts to some $85,256,800 (.71 x 3,160 deserters x $38,000).

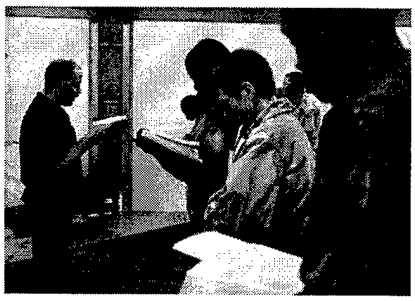
But there are also less tangible costs to the Army. Chief among these is the impact on morale and cohesion when soldiers desert. Although there are few if any formal studies on the effect of desertion in this regard, it is not unreasonable to assume that unauthorized absences represent a concrete sign of disaffection within the units, and likely lead to an increased workload for those left behind until a replacement is found.

The consequences for soldiers who choose to desert can also be classified as more or less tangible. Concrete results include the possibility of punishment, such as prison time, depending on the circumstances surrounding the desertion (e.g., war or peacetime). In truth, at present most soldiers (approximately 94%) who desert are simply released from the Army with less-than-honorable discharges.[11] But this, too, has its effects. Typically it means forfeiting federal education benefits, federal home loans, and any opportunity to obtain a job with the federal government. It can also make the process of finding a job with non-government employers difficult. For instance, a Department of Defense report on Vietnam-era veterans[12] cites several studies that were conducted on the impact of less-than-honorable discharges on those who received them.[13] The results of this body of research indicated that employers of all sorts preferred honorably discharged veterans; and preferred other applicants to veterans with less-than-honorable discharges. However, only about one quarter of the employers questioned said they asked to see discharge papers. The report also cites some evidence that veterans with less-than-honorable discharges may have problems entering professions (e.g., unions) or obtaining loans from financial institutions. These negative effects were not universal, however, and it is difficult to translate these outcomes to today's very different environment (e.g., all volunteer force, military held in higher esteem).

But individual soldiers are also likely to experience intangible effects from desertion. These include the loss of self esteem and confidence that results from knowing one has chosen a certain path and failed to meet the necessary requirements and/or sustain the fortitude to meet those requirements. This may also be accompanied by the embarrassment and even shame when admitting to friends and family that one was

unable to "make the grade" in the Army. Feelings such as these are particularly difficult for young people to overcome as they are forced to find new goals to pursue and new paths to travel.

VIII. What can be done to prevent desertion and/ or reclaim the soldier who has taken this step?



Can steps be taken to prevent soldiers from deserting, or at least lessen the frequency with which this happens? Perhaps the most direct evidence addressing this question comes from the study mentioned earlier conducted as part of the SDRP.[14] Deserters who applied to have their status changed from DFR to undesirable discharge and individuals who sought to upgrade general/undesirable discharges were asked (a) if they had sought help with their problem(s) prior to deserting and (b) what they thought might have been done that would have prevented them from deserting. About one-third of the program participants stated that they did not seek help. Over half (57%) sought relief through administrative channels (e.g., hardship discharge), while just under half (49%) looked to the chain-of-command for assistance. Finally, 43% said they sought help from avenues outside the chain-of-command, such as a chaplain. So, to the extent that these results are indicative, they suggest that most soldiers do take steps to address their problems before leaving their units.

When asked to cite one thing that could have been done to prevent them from deserting, SDRP participants gave a variety of answers:

- Discharge (31%)
- No overseas assignments (19%)
- Treat individuals better (12%)
- Correct an administrative problem (10%)
- Provide help in adjusting (8%)
- Grant/extend leave (4%)
- Assign to another unit (3%)
- Allow a change of MOS (3%)
- Other (9%)

Most of these responses would have resulted in the individual staying in the Army if the desired action was feasible. There is some indication of feasibility from the officials who conducted the SDRP interviews. They were asked to make a judgment in each case as to whether, based on what they heard, the AWOL was preventable. In the opinion

of these experts, 42% of the individuals could not have been prevented from leaving either because they were unable to make their situation clear enough to be dealt with or because they simply wanted out of the Army. In 24% of the cases, the officials could not make a decision based on the information provided. This means that they felt one-third of these desertions could have been prevented if the proper steps had been taken.

Several studies have addressed the desertion-prevention issue by examining a more proactive approach, generally involving a two-step process.[15] The first was to find some means of identifying soldiers who are at risk for becoming deserters prior to the event. This involved the use of questionnaires that seek to identify personality and/or background characteristics that have been shown to be more common among soldiers who desert (e.g., lower aptitude, less educated). Such attempts have met with varying degrees of success, but all have one major problem in common. Even when researchers can demonstrate that they are able to identify a significant number of soldiers who do eventually experience problems in their Army service, it is also true that many other soldiers are singled out who experience no delinquencies. This might not seem terribly problematic, except for one additional finding.

In these pilot programs, soldiers who were identified as being "at risk" for desertion were referred for interviews with their company commanders. After doing follow-ups, researchers discovered that this process had the unintended effect of actually increasing instances of failure among this group (e.g., desertion, AWOL, other recorded punishment). For instance, in one experiment researchers found that the proportion of those who received negative ratings from their superiors and/or who were the targets of disciplinary actions was 10% higher among soldiers who were interviewed as compared to non-interviewed soldiers who scored similarly on the screening instrument. Researchers explained this outcome in terms of scapegoating and/or self-fulfilling prophesy. In the former case, it was suggested that leaders who were aware which soldiers had been singled out as possible failures treated those men more harshly based on this expectation. It was also possible that the confidence of the men was undermined when they realized that they had been identified for special treatment (e.g., interview with commanding officer). Whatever the explanation, the fact remained that attempts at early intervention to prevent delinquency had, in many cases, just the opposite result.

Finally there is the question of whether soldiers who have deserted can be rehabilitated and restored to duty. During World War II, the Army established rehabilitation centers for deserters and soldiers who committed other transgressions in the hopes of restoring as many as possible to duty in a time when manpower was at a premium. The programs were aimed at instilling a sense of discipline in the men, as well as providing them with training to facilitate their return to duty. From 1942 to 1946, a total of 29,944 soldiers were the subject of such rehabilitation efforts, of which 17,450 (58%) were actually sent back to their units.[16] Unfortunately, there are no readily available data to indicate the success rates of these soldiers, although anecdotal evidence suggests that many went on to serve their country well.

In more recent times, less emphasis has been placed on rehabilitation efforts. According to data provided by the PCF, Ft. Knox, KY, of the 12,277 cases of desertion that were documented in calendar years 1997-2001, only 783 (6%) were returned to their units or reassigned.[17] As mentioned previously, by far the most common outcome in desertion cases is the release of the soldier from the Army with a less-than-honorable discharge (94% in calendar years 1997-2001). However, the World War II experience, in combination with the previously mentioned expert judgment that one-third of the SDRP desertions could have been avoided, suggests that it is possible to take steps to head off absences or return soldiers to duty after they have left.

As a preliminary step in the current project, researchers interviewed company commanders at Fort Hood, TX and Fort Lewis, WA on the subject of desertion. A primary focus of these discussions was the potential for returning AWOL soldiers to productive service in the Army. Because this was not a representative sample, the feedback received can only be considered suggestive. However, there were a variety of individual and situational characteristics that these leaders indicated might be associated with soldiers who can be successfully reintegrated. These include:

- having a good pre-desertion record
- left for a "good" reason (e.g. an unresolved family problem)
- returning voluntarily (as opposed to being apprehended)
- wanting to remain in the Army
- accepting punishment for unauthorized absence
- no (other) military or civilian infractions
- relatively short absence
- sufficient time remaining in term to be properly reintegrated

One goal of this study is to determine if there is widespread consensus that soldiers fitting this pattern are, in fact, more likely to be successfully returned to Army service, and if the available data support this view. This knowledge may then be used to focus repatriation efforts on those soldiers whose circumstances suggest a greater chance of success.

IX. Summary

Before considering what it is we need to learn about the phenomenon of desertion in order to effectively curtail it, let us summarize what the research cited here tells us. Much of this information is displayed in Table 2 along with a brief statement of its implications.

- Deserters tend to be less educated and have a lower aptitude than their counterparts.
- Deserters are more likely to have come from broken homes and taken part in delinquent behavior prior to entering the Army.

- Deserters tend to be younger when they enlist and to experience other delinquencies prior to deserting.
- Deserters are somewhat more likely to be in combat-related MOS, and to have relatively less time in service and lower ranks.
- Family and personal problems are the primary reasons given for deserting, followed by failure to adapt to the Army, and administrative/leadership problems.
- Desertion most often occurs when there is an opportunity to leave (e.g., when a soldier is in-transit, on leave, or convalescing).
- Desertion is a costly problem for the Army and can be problematic for the individual soldier on both a practical (e.g., obtaining employment) and personal (e.g., loss of self esteem) basis.
- Prior to deserting, most soldiers attempt to work out their issues in the system. Evidence also suggests that taking the proper action to deal with a soldier's problems may prevent desertion.
- Although attempts to identify potential deserters prior to the event have met with some success, there is a problem in that many "non-deserters" are typically also identified through this process.
- To date, research has indicated that counseling soldiers who are deemed at risk for desertion can actually increase the incidence of delinquent behavior.

X. What else do we need to learn?

With this background in mind, what more can we learn about the phenomenon of desertion that will help to alleviate the problem? Here are a few of the questions we hope to be able to shed light on through the current project.

- Are there new or emerging reasons for desertion that can help explain recent increases in the phenomenon?
- Are leaders still getting advance warning that a soldier is likely to desert and, if so, what are the quality and quantity of the signals sent?
- In cases where leaders are aware that desertion is a possibility, what steps do they take to alleviate the problem(s) and to what degree are they successful?
- Are there existing or possible programs/policies that could be (better) implemented to address the issues that cause soldiers to desert, and how can such ideas be disseminated Army-wide?
- What impediments are there to soldiers obtaining the help they need to perform successfully in the Army?
- What do soldiers/leaders think it would take to transform a deserter who is RMC into a successful soldier?

What we know	*What it means*
Deserters tend to be less well educated.	Limit enlistment of non high school graduates.
Deserters tend to score lower on military entrance exams.	Focus recruitment efforts on individuals with good learning potential.
Deserters often come from troubled backgrounds (e.g., pre-service delinquencies).	Continue/strengthen moral screening.
Deserters often have in-service delinquencies prior to going AWOL.	Provide remediation and other help to soldiers experiencing problems.
Deserters tend to have less time in/lower rank.	Monitor newer soldiers carefully.
The most frequently cited reason for desertion is personal problems (family, financial).	Watch for signs of problems (e.g., depression, decreased performance, verbal statements about leaving) and provide assistance; be aware of resources available to help soldiers and their families.
Adaptation problems frequently lead to unauthorized absence.	Monitor for problems (e.g., inability to perform job, inability to meet physical standards) and provide/ arrange remediation where possible.
Many desertions occur when the soldier is separated from his unit (e.g., on leave, in transit).	Take action to ensure soldier welfare prior to their reaching this status.
Soldiers often have concrete reasons for leaving and can identify the problem(s) that lead to this outcome.	Communicate with soldiers, and provide assistance with problems to try to eliminate the perceived need to leave.

Table 2
What We Know About Desertions and What It Means for Army Leaders

[1] Briefing prepared by DAPE-MPE, 4 February 2002. Original source SIDPERS December 2001.

[2] Bell, D. B. (1979). *Characteristics of Army deserters in the DoD Special Discharge Review Program* (Research Report 1229). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute; Office of the Secretary of Defense (n.d.) Active Duty Enlisted Personnel, 1789 Through Present. Retrieved March 13, 2002, from http://web1.whs.osd.mil/MMID/M01/sms213r.htm

[3] Bell, D. B. (1979). *Characteristics of Army deserters in the DoD Special Discharge Review Program* (Research Report 1229). Alexandria, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute.

[4] Bell, D. B. (1976). The Vietnam era deserter: Who is he? Paper presented at the convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

[5] Bell, D. B., & Houston, T. J. (1976). *The Vietnam era deserter: Characteristics of unconvicted Army deserters participating in the Presidential clemency program* (Research Problem Review 76-6). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute.

[6] Bell, D. B. (1979). *Characteristics of Army deserters in the DoD Special Discharge Review Program* (Research Report 1229). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute.

[7] Briefing (n.d.) prepared by the U.S. Army Personnel Control Facility, Ft. Knox, KY.

[8] Bell, D. B. (1979). *Characteristics of Army deserters in the DoD Special Discharge Review Program* (Research Report 1229). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute.

[9] United States General Accounting Office (2001). *Major management challenges and program risks: Department of Defense* (GAO-010244). Washington, DC.

[10] Briefing (n.d.) prepared by the U.S. Army Personnel Control Facility, Ft. Knox, KY.

[11] Briefing (n.d.) prepared by the U.S. Army Personnel Control Facility, Ft. Knox, KY.

[12] Department of Defense (1978). *Status of Vietnam era veterans: Report on military status.* Washington, DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics.

[13] See, for instance, Jones, N. T. (1973). The gravity of administrative discharges: A legal and empirical evaluation. *Military Law Review, 59,* 1-25.

[14] Bell, D. B. (1979). *Characteristics of Army deserters in the DoD Special Discharge Review Program* (Research Report 1229). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute.

[15] Bell, D. B., & Holz, R. F. (1975). *Summary of Army Research Institute research on military delinquency* (Research Report 1185). Alexandria, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute.

[16] Santos, R. L. (n.d.). *The Army needs men: An account of the U.S. Army rehabilitation center at Turlock, California.* Retrieved March 12, 2002, from http://www.library.csustan.edu/bsantos/army.html.

[17] Briefing (n.d.) prepared by the U.S. Army Personnel Control Facility, Ft. Knox, KY.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. REPORT DATE (dd-mm-yy) 21 March 2002	2. REPORT TYPE Interim Report	3. DATES COVERED (from. . . to) 1/16/02 – 10/15/02
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE What We Know About AWOL and Desertion: A Review of the Professional Literature for Policy Makers and Commanders		5a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER DASW01-98-D-0047
		5b. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER 665803
6. AUTHOR(S) Peter F. Ramsberger (Human Resources Research Organization) and D. Bruce Bell (U.S. Army Research Institute)		5c. PROJECT NUMBER D730
		5d. TASK NUMBER 280
		5e. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Human Resources Research Organization 66 Canal Center Plaza, Ste 400 Alexandria, VA 22314		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER IR-02-12
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600		10. MONITOR ACRONYM ARI
		11. MONITOR REPORT NUMBER

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
D. Bruce Bell, Contracting Officer's Representative

14. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*:
Enlisted desertion rates in the U. S. Army have been increasing in recent years. A study has been undertaken to examine this issue to shed light on why soldiers desert and what can be done to intervene and lessen its occurrence. As a first step, the literature on desertion was reviewed and summarized. The topics covered in this report include how desertion is defined and handled currently, how deserters differ from other soldiers, the reasons for desertion found in previous research, the consequences of desertion, steps that can be taken to prevent this outcome, and what needs to be learned to assist Army decision makers and commanders as they seek to deal with this problem.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Desertion, Absent Without Leave (AWOL)

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF			19. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	20. NUMBER OF PAGES	21. RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Name and Telephone Number)
16. REPORT Unclassified	17. ABSTRACT Unclassified	18. THIS PAGE Unclassified	Unlimited		D. Bruce Bell (703) 617-8867

Standard Form 298