

Peace Corps Aid Volunteers Seeking Draft Deferments

WASHINGTON — The Peace Corps announced today it will intervene on behalf of Volunteers seeking draft deferments for two years of overseas service.

Agency Director Jack Vaughn, concerned by mounting induction calls to Volunteers serving overseas, said he will take an "active role" in seeking future deferment causes before the Presidential Appeal Board -- the court of last resort for draft reclassifications.

In the past the agency performed a largely informational function -- advising Volunteers and trainees of Selective Service laws and procedures and confirming to local boards the fact of Volunteer's service.

In future appeals, Vaughn will write letters to the board describing the circumstances in each case and urging board members to grant a deferment until completion of the Volunteer's overseas tour.

"We have a serious situation," he said. "The problem of induction notices to overseas Volunteers is becoming a major concern for us. Pulling a Volunteer off a productive job at mid-tour is unfair to the nation, the host country, the Peace Corps and the individual."

Vaughn said Peace Corps Volunteers have lost about 60 deferment appeals before the three-man board in the last six and one-half years. While adverse rulings by the national board have involved less than one-half of one per cent of the estimated 15,000 draft-eligible men to have served in the Peace Corps, "virtually all of these have occurred in the past year," he said.

Of the approximately 25 Vol-

unteers who have already returned to the United States for draft induction, two were disqualified for physical reasons and returned to their overseas assignment.

The vast majority of Peace Corps Volunteers are granted deferments for two years of overseas duty because their service is deemed by their local boards to be "in the national interest," as recommended by Lt. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, the draft director.

However, some local Selective Service boards refuse deferments even though Peace Corps service does not relieve Volunteers of their draft obligations. If the local board is upheld by the State Appeal Board, the case may reach the Presidential Appeal Board which makes the final decision.

The appeal process often takes months to be resolved and the Peace Corps frequently sends Volunteers to their overseas sites while their appeals for deferment are pending.

Vaughn said the Peace Corps having provided upwards of 400 hours of intensive language training during the 12 to 14 weeks of preparation, often sends Volunteers overseas to begin service "rather than risk the loss of their newly-earned language fluency during the long waits for final approval of disapproval of deferments requests.

Vaughn said, "So long as the chances for deferment are good this system makes sense, but as more and more Volunteers lost their appeals we may have to reconsider the process and keep them, a wasting asset, in the United States until their cases are resolved."