

70,000 to 100,000 Young Men Could Face Prosecution

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BOSTON, Dec. 27—Although exact figures on the total number of Americans who are deserters or draft evaders are not available, the following statistics give an idea of the scope of the problem:

The generally accepted view is that the United States now has between 70,000 and 100,000 young men who either evaded or fled military service and could be prosecuted for their acts.

Many of these men—estimates range from 40,000 to 70,000—are in exile, most of them in Canada.

Partial figures compiled by various Government sources support the estimated totals.

In 1971, the Department of Defense listed 98,324 men as deserters from military service. Since 1967, 354,112 men have deserted from service.

A deserter is a person who is absent from duty for 30 days without permission, whose name has been dropped from the rolls of active military person-

nel. The term is an administrative one and may or may not lead to legal prosecution.

Because of the backlog of cases—most deserters eventually return to duty—many military commands are discharging returned deserters rather than go through prosecution procedures.

At present there are 35,259 deserters still at large—2,246 are known to be in some foreign country. Many of the others are black deserters who are, in the words of one deserter, "back home where they ought to be," taking advantage of the invisibility offered by black communities.

Others Are in Prison

In addition, as of July, 1971, 5,870 men were serving time in military prisons and 4,653 were in the pretrial process for offenses against the military. Most of these men were absent without leave or deserters.

Desertion rates for Vietnam far exceed the record of other wars and are nearly double

those of World War II. In 1944, 72.9 men for each 1,000 in uniform deserted. The figure per 1,000 last year was 142.2.

As for draft evaders, the Government in 1971 obtained indictments against 4,539 men for refusing to be drafted, the largest number in any one year since 1944, when 6,718 were indicted. As of August 1971, there were 327 men in Federal prison, convicted of draft evasion.

Draft-evasion figures are the most deceptive. Many young men who evaded the draft were never prosecuted because of administrative problems and overcrowded courts. Thousands of others found legal means to evade.

Liberalized laws on conscientious objection offered an oat to tens of thousands. In 1960, a total of 16,278 men were granted such protection; in 1971 the number had climbed to 61,412. Since 1967, 182,918 men have received conscientious objector status.

Then there are those young men who simply never regis-

tered for the draft. The Selective Service director, Curtis W. Tarr, acknowledges such a problem but says, "There's just no way of knowing how many took this route."

Nonregistration has been popular with draft registers since 1968. Some moved from their home towns, some changed their names and some went into exile. Fugitive warrants are outstanding on 3,924 draft evaders, over 2,000 of whom are known to be in Canada.

39,183 Being Sought

Thus, official Government figures show 39,183 deserters or draft evaders currently being sought by the Government but most sources agree these figures do not represent the total number of men involved.

These men all face the possibility of criminal prosecution. For draft violators the punishment could be as much as five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Deserters face sentences of up to 10 years and discharge under conditions other than honorable.