

Apparent Policy Violation

Peace Corps Man's Intelligence Tie

By Michael Taylor

A former high-ranking Army intelligence officer in Vietnam is now the director of Peace Corps operations in Zaire, an apparent violation of Peace Corps policy, The Chronicle learned yesterday.

Army records show that William H. Crosson served as a top intelligence colonel in the American military command's headquarters in Vietnam from February, 1965, until April, 1966.

Crosson retired from the Army in 1967 and, after a stint as a public relations director for a Midwestern manufacturer of agricultural equipment, joined the Peace Corps in March, 1972.

He now directs the activities of about 200 Peace Corps volunteers in Zaire, the former Belgian Congo.

The code of federal regulations says potential Peace Corps volunteers must "not have worked for or served in any intelligence agency, civilian or military, or have been associated with any intelligence operations."

In addition, the Peace Corps' policy statement says, "Any person whose application reveals intelligence activity (other than CIA) within the past ten years shall be barred

in the past ten years shall be barred from consideration for positions in Peace Corps operations overseas and in ACTION's office of international operations."

(ACTION is a government agency that was created in 1971 by the merger of the Peace Corps and VISTA — Volunteers in Service to America, a domestic version of the Peace Corps).

Peace Corps rules prohibit anybody with past or present ties to the Central Intelligence Agency from joining the Peace Corps.

Reached at his Washington headquarters, Peace Corps Director John Dellenback, a former Oregon congressman, said, "Crosson was in the Peace Corps long before I was involved." Dellenback was appointed to his current post by President Ford in April, 1975, more than three years after Crosson joined the agency.

"Basically," Dellenback said, "one rigid rule we have is that there be no ties (by employees and volunteers) to the CIA. If there's ever been any tie to the CIA, one is barred from being in the Peace Corps as a staff member or volunteer."

"Any other kind of intelligence tie is one that is assessed at the time of the individual case," Dellenback

said he knew of no tie between Crosson, the CIA or any other intelligence agency or operation.

When the Peace Corps was created by President Kennedy more than 15 years ago, one of its major tenets was the strict avoidance of any taint of intelligence activities.

In the volatile politics of Africa, Zaire has frequently been in the middle of sensitive political issues involving the United States.

In June, 1975, for example, the main state-controlled newspaper accused the United States of "financing and directing" a coup attempt against President Mobutu Sese Seko, a charge the State Department denied as "complete nonsense."

Yet there is no evidence that Crosson or any other Peace Corps official or volunteer has been linked to this, or similar activities.

Indeed, conversations with several persons who know Crosson or are acquainted with him indicate that the 59-year-old man who spent 30 years in the Army enjoys a good personal reputation.

Crosson served in Vietnam from Feb. 1, 1965, until April 26, 1966, as chief of two different branches of counter-intelligence in

the American military's joint intelligence staff of operation, according to a Pentagon spokesman.

He was known in Vietnam for being "very articulate" and was "frequently used to brief the press," one source said.

But knowledge of Crosson's job in intelligence caused a certain dismay among some former Peace Corps officials.

Sargent Shriver, the Peace Corps' first director and a brother-in-law of President Kennedy, said yesterday in a telephone interview from New York City:

"One of the allegations always made by (various) countries is that the Peace Corps is nothing but an intelligence arm of the United States. So one has to be super-scrupulous in hiring (for the Peace Corps)."

Peace Corps officials in Washington said they would make a thorough check of their records today to determine Crosson's intelligence background and his Peace Corp career.

Crosson, according to the Peace Corps, is due to leave Zaire in March, 1977, when his five-year term is finished.