



THE PEACE CORPS: INDEPENDENT AND AUTONOMOUS AS EVER

Executive Order 13254, January 29, 2002

Section 3(f) provides, “Members of the [USA Freedom Corps] Council shall remain responsible for overseeing the programs administered by their respective departments, agencies, and offices. **Each such department, agency, and office will retain its authority and responsibility to administer those programs according to law.**”

Section 5(b) provides, “This order **does not alter the existing authorities or role of executive branch departments, agencies, or offices.** Nothing in this order shall supercede any requirement made by or under law.”

President Announces Plan to Strengthen Peace Corps, February 15, 2002

After the swearing-in of Director Gaddi Vasquez, the President made a statement, which included in pertinent part, “I look forward to working with members of Congress to strengthen the Peace Corps, **to reassert its independence**, and to create new opportunities in other nations. . . .”

White House, USA Freedom Corps, and Peace Corps Websites

Most important, the USA Freedom Corps website essentially only provides a link to the Peace Corps website, where interested applicants must still go independently to sign up. Consequently, Peace Corps is maintaining and enhancing the capabilities of its eleven regional recruiting offices and its headquarters Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection. The USA Freedom Corps is a highly publicized “branding” of volunteer service that actually benefits Peace Corps by attracting public attention and interest.

Further evidence of Peace Corps’ continued independence is found in the following statements found through the White House website. “**The heads of each of the participating agencies are accountable** for their specific programs and responsibilities within this integrated citizens service initiative [the council].”

Under “Establishing the USA Freedom Corps,” the Corps is described as supporting the work of three services, including Peace Corps. It is explicitly stated there that, “**...the Peace Corps will be run by its Director.**”

Congressional Research Service Report

Supports the conclusion that Peace Corps remains independent and unconstrained by USA Freedom Corps. “**The executive order that establishes the USA Freedom Corps, does not appear to impinge on the independence of Peace Corps. It assures the directors ‘shall remain responsible to overseeing the programs administered by their respective departments, agencies and office. Each such department, agency and office will retain its authority and responsibility to administer those programs according to law.’**”

It also notes that **“This order does not alter the existing authorities or roles of the executive branch departments, agencies or offices.”** After all, the Peace Corps Act itself provides program and policy authority to the President, and the Peace Corps still remains under the President today. The USA Freedom Corps office and coordinating council work for the President.

April 16, 2002