

270 to war area ahead of others

By Lyle Nelson
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Island soldiers of the 29th Brigade ordered to duty in Vietnam may reach the war zone sooner than Mainlanders in the outfit involved in the same troop levy.

An Army statement from Schofield Barracks yesterday said 270 Island soldiers in the 400-man levy will leave for the combat zone during February.

A spokesman today could not say exactly when during the month they will leave.

The 130 Mainland troops in the transfer will not head for Vietnam until March, the Army said. They will go first to Ft. Lewis, Wash., on Jan. 26.

Both Island and Mainland soldiers will get home leave before going to war.

There was no immediate indication as to whether the Islanders who get to Vietnam first will also be the first to come home again.

All the 29th Brigade troops are scheduled to be released from active duty no later than Dec. 15.

Of the Island men levied, 14 were volunteers, the Army said.

THE 400 MEN will be replaced, the Army said, by surplus manpower in the Hawaii area, returnees from Vietnam and men from Mainland bases.

If the 400 selected for Vietnam duty last Friday is the January quota, then it would appear the Army will dip into the 29th at a 10-per-cent-a-month clip.

In that case, not all the men called to active duty last May 13 will see service in Vietnam.

As Brig. Gen. Frederick A. Schaefer III, brigade commander, told the Star-Bulletin last week, at 10 per cent a month the maximum possible for Vietnam duty would be 2,000 between now and June. The brigade has 4,500 men.

"I don't anticipate anything like that, although I

have no wa. of knowing," Schaefer said.

THIS REASONING is based on the belief the Army will not send troops to Vietnam after June since they would have less than six months service time remaining.

Army officials also say it is impossible to determine now how many men will have completed their National Guard obligation between now and June and will get discharged.

Many troops in this category are re-enlisting, a spokesman said.

Between the May 13 call up and Dec. 15, six months later, soldiers were not permitted to seek "early out" separation from the brigade.

Many whose enlistments were to expire soon after the call up were not sent to Schofield in the first place.

AN ARMY spokesman was uncertain on the status of enlisted personnel who decided to attend Vietnamese language school at Schofield.

In the course of training, they normally draw only two months temporary duty in the country. Exceptions to this policy are possible, he indicated.

Officers of the 29th who attend language school at Monterey, Calif., get regular duty in Vietnam after graduation.

Some observers at Schofield believe the brigade may be deactivated within two months.

This speculation is based, in part, on Sen. Hiram L. Fong's close alliance with the incoming Nixon administration.