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Honolulu Star-Bulletin

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Big Island Welcomes Troops Home

HILO — Ceremonies at Hilo airport this morning were to welcome about 500 National Guardsmen and Army reservists home after 19 months of active duty.

The men, members of the 2nd Battalion, 299th Infantry, and Co. B, 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry, were to return on four flights.

Mayor Shunichi Kimura and Lt. Col. Fred Koehnen, commander of the National Guard unit, were on the program for the airport ceremonies.

Nearly 1,000 Big Islanders were called up for active duty on May 13, 1968.

More than a third of them saw duty in Vietnam and eight lost their lives there.

About 400 of the guardsmen and reservists qualified for early release, beginning early this year, and a number of ~~them~~ ~~have~~ elected to stay for longer hitches.