

Hawaii's men answer the call

The last time the Hawai National Guard was mobilized for active federal service was 28 years ago.

On the morning of Oct. 15, 1940, 1,700 Guard members reported to armories around the Territory. They then made their way by truck, railroad and steamer to Schofield Barracks where a rigorous training program began as fast as the first arrivals checked in.

They were part of a national call-up of 37,500 men, responding to orders from President Franklin D. Roosevelt who saw the mounting likelihood of U.S. involvement in World War II. The war was then more than a year old in Europe.

Their first orders to duty were for only 12 months. Later an additional six months was added to this. Before the extension was up, Pearl Harbor had been attacked and service was for the duration of World War II.

The current mobilization comes at a far different time. The U.S. is already at war—but hoping the conflict may be nearing an end.

The announcement of the call-up came in the same March 31 speech in which President Lyndon B. Johnson called a partial halt to the bombing of North Vietnam and proposed peace talks.

The effective date of the mobilization coincided exactly with the start of those talks in Paris yesterday.

Should the talks go well, the 4,000 men of newly-activated 29th Infantry Brigade may be back in civilian life well before their two-year period of call is complete.

But the gesture of calling up this crack unit underlines that President Johnson is in earnest when he says the U.S. will not settle for a fake peace in Southeast Asia.

Tears and pride mingled yesterday in the bittersweet moments when Oahu units of the 29th appeared in an aloha review at Ft. DeRussy.

Some of those on hand, like retired Maj. Gen. Robert L. Stevenson, had been a part of the 1940 call-up. He was a captain then.

Civilian and military dignitaries joined yesterday in applauding the 29th and the spirit with which the mobilized men have responded to their orders.

Whether the 29th stays at home or moves on to Vietnam or some other area, Hawaii can be confident in its pride in its citizen soldiers.