

5/21/68

Unit may merge with Isle troops

By Lyle Nelson
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A regular Army brigade formed recently at Schofield Barracks may be merged with Hawaii's citizen-soldier brigade, the 29th.

The Army Times reported this week that the 4th Brigade, along with its parent 6th Division, may soon disband.

The idea of a merger of the 4th and 29th brigades makes sense.

The 4th Brigade has only about 1,000 troops and is badly in need of more men.

"Hawaii's recently activated 29th is about 1,000 men short and is supposed to reach authorized strength by getting men from Mainland Army centers.

The 29th needs to modernize its weapons and obtain those used in Vietnam. The 4th has them.

The 4th is at only about one-third authorized strength.

Army officials here will not discuss the possible merging of the 29th and 4th.

At crossroads

The future of the 4th is at a crossroads because its parent outfit, the new 6th Division that was taking shape at Ft. Campbell, Ky., may be disbanded.

The Army Times, a service publication headlines this possibility in its May 22 issue.

Army Times said that Pentagon economists want to chop the 6th Division of

which the 4th is one of three brigades.

The Department of the Army is resisting the move and has sent stiff objections to top Pentagon officials, the paper says.

But Army Times points out there could be great political repercussions if the 6th Division is deactivated.

It would raise this question:

Why call up two brigades of civilian-soldiers, the 29th in Hawaii, the 69th in Kansas, while junking a division of regulars, draftees and volunteers?

The 4th Brigade began to shape up at Schofield early this year after the 11th Brigade was shipped to Vietnam.

Brig. Gen. George S. Beatty Jr. took command Feb. 17 and the 4th had its color presentation ceremony April 25.

This hasn't happened at Ft. Campbell.

Army's statement

Army officials in Hawaii issued this statement yesterday:

"The status of the 6th Division, of which the 4th Brigade is a part, is currently under review. For this reason the 6th Division's color presentation ceremony has been postponed."

It was to have been held May 11.

The 4th Brigade is now under the operational control of U.S. Army, Pacific, the Ft. Shafter headquarters, rather than under the 6th Division.