

The '29th' question

By Lyle Nelson
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Soldiers, and their wives, mothers and children, of Hawaii's own 29th Brigade are getting more edgy by the day.

For the day fast approaches when the infantry outfit at Schofield Barracks will be more prepared to wage war than it is today.

But where is the 29th headed? This is a popular topic when soldiers stop for a smoke break during the training routine.

It is a popular topic when wives gather to gab. Most talk, most rumors, most assumptions have it that the 29th is Vietnam-bound. It has been that way ever since the former National Guard force was activated May 13.

But Maj. Gen. Roy Lasserter Jr., commander of U.S. Army, Hawaii, says the status of the 29th today is the same as it was three months ago — a strategic reserve force for the Army in the Pacific.

That is what Army officials said the status of the 25th Division was almost

right up to the moment those troops were boarding planes and ships for Vietnam.

Brig. Gen. Frederick A. Schaefer III, commander of the 29th, told National Guard Association members last week to look for individual levies against troop manpower levels in the next six weeks.

That is, small numbers of men with critical job talents may be rounded up and shipped off to Vietnam.

But Hawaii's politicians in Washington were up in arms quickly at the first hint that the 29th might be fractured into parts and shipped off to war piecemeal to fill holes the Army needs plugging.

The 29th has been stepping up its training cycle from small unit scale to the battalion level.

Those who have to shoot artillery pieces and Shillelagh missiles and drive tanks

have gone to Pohakuloa on the Big Island to do so.

By the middle of September all units are to have completed Army training tests.

Apparently they are moving rapidly toward all "A's" on their report cards because Sen. Daniel K. Inouye told Guardsmen last week he was impressed with the improvement he saw in the way the ranks were shaping up.

Inouye has made two visits to the field to see the men in a combat environment. And so has just about everyone else.

Gen. William C. Westmoreland, new Army Chief of Staff, looked over the troops. He probably knows where the troops are going but wouldn't tell anyone here. Maybe even he doesn't know.

A quiet, unpublicized look was taken last week by Stanley Resor, Secretary of the

Where are they going?

Two high-ranking generals in the National Guard Bureau and the Army Reserve components command will look over the ranks tomorrow.

They may be accompanied by Lt. Gen. Fred C. Weyand, new head of the Army Reserve components command. Weyand is here en route to this command in Washington, D.C., from Vietnam.

He knows all about whipping troops into combat condition because he did it with the 25th Division at Schofield three years ago.

All this visiting of the troops underscores an unusual interest in what the 29th looks like.

And it hardly seems to prelude to the outfit sitting at Schofield for another year and a half, more or less, waiting for something to happen.



29th VISITOR—Gen. William C. Westmoreland looked over the brigade recently. He talked in the Koolau Mountains with S. Sgt. Melvin Camat of Honolulu, driver of the vehicle they are looking at. Standing beside Westmoreland is Brig. Gen. Frederick A. Schaefer III. The man up the hill behind Camat is Lt. Gen. Edgar C. Doleman.