

Vietnam duty for all 29th troops forecast

By Lyle Nelson
Star-Bulletin Writer

Practically every soldier in Hawaii's 29th Brigade will be serving in Vietnam a year from today.

The Army cannot say so officially because the exact monthly manpower levies are either not known or have not been made public. But Vietnam duty is anticipated by everyone at Schofield Barracks.

Indications are mounting that the former National Guardsmen and Army reservists will be sent individually to Vietnam.

The Army's assurance last June that the 29th's unit in-

tegrity would be maintained is no longer true.

Secretary of Army Stanley Resor told Sen. Daniel K. Inouye in June that the integrity of the Island outfit would be inviolate through October.

THAT PROMISE no longer holds and the 29th now faces a steady stream of calls for specific soldier talents.

Brig. Gen. Frederick Schaefer III, 29th commander, said recently that he expected the entire officer corps to get Vietnam orders between January and June of next year.

And after talking to Army officials in Washington he said yesterday it looks like all enlisted men will draw

Vietnam duty before their two-year hitch is up in May, 1970.

ARMY REGULATIONS allow a dip into 29th manpower as high as 15 per cent a month.

But even if it is closer to 10 per cent, that is 400 a month for the 4,600-man infantry organization.

If that is the rate of monthly troop levies starting next January then current brigade personnel will have left Schofield before the end of 1969.

The Army has a constant need for fresh skills in Vietnam to replace those serving there now.

BY NEXT November the 29th Brigade as a unit will still be at Schofield, but it will consist largely of non-Island men.

It would be a combination of officers and high-ranking noncommissioned officers with Vietnam war experience plus young soldiers fresh from Mainland basic training camps and advance service schools.

The brigade also would draw enlisted men from the lower ranks who have spent a year in combat and have only a short hitch remaining of their Army obligation.

As men get their marching orders for Vietnam, they will get checked out on the M-16 rifle at the firing range at Schofield, the Army says.

When the 29th was activated last May it received the M-14 rifle. The M-16 is used in Vietnam by both the American and South Vietnamese Army.

The brigade's heavy equipment and Shillelagh-firing M-551 weapons vehicle will remain here, however, for use in training incoming new men.

THE FEW MEN getting
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discharged from the 29th in the next few months probably will return to their old civilian jobs.

It will be difficult for some to be reassigned to the National Guard since not many full time or drill status slots are open and the Guard no longer has the infantry brigade. Men called to active duty are entitled by law to re-employment, however.

The future of the 29th remains in a highly fluid status.

PARIS PEACE talk results could have a great bearing upon manpower levies and by next fall Island soldiers may draw nothing more than occupation force duty if the shooting war is over.

On the other hand, peace in Vietnam would increase the pressure on the Army from Hawaii's congressional leaders to have the 29th deactivated.

Such a move has been demanded repeatedly by Sen. Hiram L. Fong and he has received some support in this from Rep. Spark M. Matsunaga and Rep. Patsy T. Mink.

AS RECENTLY AS Oct. 10 a high official in the Army, Ernest J. Massad, said there was little chance of deactivation.

Meanwhile the 29th continues to step up its jungle training to prepare men for the Vietnam environment.