

Gen. Schaefer's reply ^{11/23}

Here is the text of a letter to the men of the 29th Brigade by their commanding general, Brig. Gen. Frederick A. Schaefer III.

Schaefer's letter was read to units at Schofield Barracks this morning, commenting on the petition now in circulation for deactivation of the unit:

SUBJECT: Command Letter

1. It has been called to my attention that a petition is being circulated within the Brigade to "—demand the deactivation of the Brigade and be returned to civilian life—", and the petition goes on to make various allegations and assumptions most of which are taken out of context and are not factual.

2. It is most disappointing to me to think there is a group within this fine organization which we all have every reason to be proud of; that feels they want to be a party to a document as flamboyant and misleading as is this petition. I can honestly sympathize with those of you who would prefer returning to your civilian pursuits and your rights to query and even petition to this end is your privilege. Whether or not you will achieve your ends I do not know, but have you considered what action of this nature does for the heretofore always high morale and spirit of our Brigade? Do you want to see us disintegrate into a group of discontents without the resolve or character that has always distinguished any unit from Hawaii. As a native son I am proud of you and so is our community—I hope you have some of that same pride in yourselves.

3. I have on many occasions tried to clearly explain the purpose, as I see it, of the mission of the 29th Brigade, our status in the structure of our armed forces, why we were activated and what is behind the levies we are apparently confronted with. Let me try to restate this again.

a. Why we were called up—We were activated at the time of the Pueblo Incident. International tension was high and the United States urgently needed trained troops that could be used immediately. We of the Brigade were proud of the fact we could be of service. We attacked our training with vigor, morale was high and we were ready and available. Talk, that the 4th Brigade could have taken our place is without merit as they only had a few hundred men and would have taken at least six months to reach the same level of training as the 29th. It is true that a large percentage of the call up was from Hawaii as compared to the country as a whole but a brigade has to be called on as a unit and wherever that unit is located, individual communities are similarly affected.

b. Why are we possible subjects of levies?—At the outset let me state that

at no time was it stated by the Army that individuals would not be reassigned (levied) out of the Brigade. An examination of the record will show that we and the public were told that we would not be levied for at least 4 months and that levies would not exceed 10 per cent per month (originally 15 per cent was the figure used). This is just as true then as it is now.

c. What is the rationale of any levies at all?—I feel the levy system will save lives and make for more efficient units in Vietnam. Consider how much better off a replacement in VN is, having had the additional training we have gone through as compared to one having only his basic training. This man is better equipped to take care of himself and of more value to his unit than one with only basic training. As we send qualified and well trained soldiers to VN we in turn can receive replacements to train for eventual VN service.

d. It has been said that if we are to be levied, why not send the Brigade as a unit. There are many reasons why this is impractical. For us to go as a unit would increase the U. S. A. troop strength in VN beyond limits set by Congress; and a switch of brigades would be far too costly. Besides, there is the age old problem of the possibility of a single unit from one of our communities having an inordinate number of casualties, thereby creating an unduly grievous burden for the community.

e. Our mission. While the Pueblo incident seems to have died down, we still are performing an important mission of real service to our country. We are the country's essential reserve force in this part of the world today to be used whenever and wherever needed.

4. Many statements were made in the petition which I'm certain most of you would rather not have included—such as: "situation became intolerable;" "we have been forgotten;" "forgotten, unmourned and alone."

I won't comment on these as I know they do not really represent your thinking. You know I would not let such conditions persist.

5. The petition also states: "... the country which we are supposedly fighting refuses to participate ..." and the fighting is "... to satisfy an ill-defined political expediency ..."



Brig. Gen. F. A. Schaefer III

Do you realize that the South Vietnamese have over 1,000,000 men in combat, are sustaining heavy losses and participating to the fullest? Do you really feel that our participation is an ill-defined political expediency wherein this has been our national policy as set forth by our President and Congress.

6. In view of the above I really wonder how many of you realize what you signed and if perhaps as loyal Americans you are now somewhat ashamed. I know I am in realization that you would support such statements as I have quoted above.

7. I know many of you are not overjoyed about being on active duty. To many of you being activated was at great personal sacrifice (as it was to me), but you took your choice on joining the National Guard (or Reserves) over that of being drafted and as such you are serving your military obligation to our great country.

8. In closing let me say, that petition notwithstanding, I and all of Hawaii have been proud of your service to the 29th Brigade. In spite of your individual personal situations and beliefs you have been and I know will continue to be superior soldiers. I have confidence in you and am behind you 100 per cent.

F. A. SCHAEFER, III
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding