

The petition

HERE IS ONE reported text of the petition. Its language could not be confirmed at edition time today but it is believed to be approximately that being circulated:

CITIZENS OF HAWAII AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES:

The 29th "Aloha" Brigade desperately needs your help.

Because of our ethnic and cultural backgrounds, we tend not to protest nor to complain as we had intended to remain silent and had done so until the situation became intolerable.

Now, in our time of need, we fear we have been forgotten.

The undersigned men of the 29th, both Islanders and Mainlanders, demand the deactivation of the Brigade and to be returned to civilian life, and we beg your support toward that goal.

On April 11, 1968, a public announcement was made by the Department of Defense that some 24,000 reservists and guardsmen were being called to active duty effective 13 May, 1968, as members of the elite reserve and guard units.

Of this total, some 17 per cent were to be from Hawaii to form the 29th Infantry Brigade, despite the fact that the State of Hawaii comprises less than one per cent of the nation's population and even though Hawaii up to now has suffered the nation's highest per capita death rate in all wars since World War II.

At the time of our activation, our elected representatives were assured by the Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Stanley Resor, and others that the 29th Infantry Brigade was not to be deployed except in case of emergency and would not be broken up in any case.

Since we were called as members of a supposedly crack unit, time and time again we were assured the unit integrity would be maintained.

Now these happy Army word games have come to a shattering end with the announcement that the 29th Infantry Brigade would, in effect, be broken up since virtually all the men in the 29th would be in combat in the next six months as a result of individual levies and that the "unit integrity" would be

maintained only by the futile gesture of leaving the flag of the 29th fluttering in the breeze over Schofield Barracks while the men of the 29th made the ultimate sacrifice in the rice paddies of Vietnam, forgotten, unmourned and alone.

Now that our purpose has been clearly stated to be no more and no less than to provide bodies for Vietnam, we demand a clear and straightforward answer as to why it should be the reservists and the Guardsmen rather than the deactivated 4th Brigade, 6th Infantry Division and draftees.

It is interesting to note that the draft calls for April and May, before the callup (48,400 and 45,000) were the highest since the Korean conflict while the draft calls after the callup (10,000 for November, interestingly enough, election month) were the lowest since the Korean War.

Is there any reason why reservists and guardsmen should be called upon to die as individuals in Vietnam simply because they happen to belong to fairly good units as opposed to draftees who might never have been called, having been replaced by more politically experienced reservists and guardsmen?

In considering the wisdom of such replacements it must be borne in mind that the reservists and guardsmen are generally older, more settled in their communities, jobs and families, and are people who have already served once before.

By the same token the communities from which we were removed suffer more from the callup of reservists and guardsmen than from the drafting of 18 and 19 year olds since we are comprised of doctors, lawyers, accountants, bankers, businessmen, teachers and civil servants, and others whose talents are sorely missed in our civilian occupations.

For years and since the formation of the Army Reserve and the National Guard, their purpose has been to serve as a last line of defense ready on a minute's notice in time of crisis as units. It is a sad mockery to see 4,600 reservists and guardsmen waste six months and more of their lives in the frustration and boredom of a garrison situation while awaiting the orders

which will sever them from their units and send them to combat where no national emergency exists.

No one can say that the purpose of the reserve and the guard is to serve as a manpower pool so that the draft calls may be lowered.

It seems almost silly for us to be leaving the units with which we have lived, worked and played to give our lives individually when this brigade is the most expensive in the history of the Army and when the U.S. negotiates a peace in which the country for which we are supposedly fighting refuses to participate.

It is hard not to be melodramatic but if we are not to die we at least stand an excellent chance of being killed or wounded on foreign soil simply to satisfy an ill-defined political expediency. When one faces a crisis like this, it would at least be satisfying to have the citizens of one's own state and one's own elective representatives working for our lives and safety rather than, as one prominent Hawaiian senator, telling us that this is our opportunity to make Hawaii look good. We personally feel that Hawaii looks less than good when she is willing to sacrifice one generation of its youth and young leaders without even a modicum of objection.

No one, if we are to believe what we are told about the government of the United States and the rights of its citizens, is without representation in that government, by and for the people. This holds true for servicemen as well as civilians.

Accordingly, various members of the Brigade at different times have pursued their inalienable rights, to find an ear in the machinery of the Army. Having failed, they have petitioned their respective congressmen to enlist their aid and support.

It can only seem a mockery of representative government that these same congressmen have repeatedly referred the petitions and communications to their constituents back to the very instrument of government that has already proved deaf.

In closing, the undersigned beg your help, your support, and your voices of protest.