

110 Gurkhas sacked after officers hit

EXCLUSIVE By WALTER CHEUNG 2-6

A TOTAL of 110 Hong-kong-based Gurkhas — most of whom served with gallantry in the 1982 Falklands campaign — have been discharged following a rowdy incident in Hawaii after a party to celebrate the end of a military exercise.

Final approval for the dismissal of the 110 soldiers from the support company of the 1st Battalion 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles has come from the British Ministry of Defence.

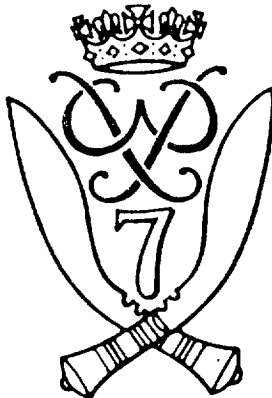
The soldiers, who make up most of the 137 members of the support company, were asked to leave because they refused to co-operate with military police conducting an inquiry into the incident, a British Army spokesman said last night.

During the May incident the company commander, a British major, received cuts to the head and cracked ribs and a Gurkha officer also suffered cracked ribs.

On their return in late May, an investigation was launched but none of the Gurkha soldiers came forward to give evidence.

The spokesman said the army took "a poor view" of the breakdown of discipline and their unwillingness to co-operate in an inquiry.

There was not enough evidence to bring military charges against the men, and it was not known how many



soldiers took part in the camp incident.

"There was a serious breach of discipline," said the spokesman.

"The failure to assist led to a breakdown of trust between the soldiers and the officers."

It was then decided by the commanding officer of the battalion, and then the Commander British Forces, Major-General Tony Boam, that their services were no longer needed.

The 110 soldiers, the majority of whom have served for more than seven years, will leave their Cassino Line barracks near Mai Po this week to return to their home country — Nepal.

The spokesman said the party in question was held by the support company for members of the American army who had helped in their month-long exercise in Hawaii as guests of the American forces.

Following the party where the Gurkhas drank a bit, the Gurkhas returned to their camps and people were milling around noisily.

A Gurkha officer and the British major, tried to keep the situation under control but were hurt in the melee.

The spokesman said before the incident, there had been some complaints about the type of rice they had to eat, but the matter was later rectified.

He said replacing the 110 Gurkhas will not be difficult as there has always been a rush of applications from Nepal.

"Hundreds compete for one job," the spokesman said.

It was a pity, he said, that the sacked soldiers who had gone through the competitive edge have to leave.

"We feel sad about it," he said.

The fact that advice from the Ministry of Defence was sought meant that the decision was not taken lightly, he said.

● A young regiment —
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