

The Riot Troopers Who May Balk

A group of military reservists and National Guardsmen said yesterday they might disobey orders to take arms against students or blacks in riot situations.

They called a Hilton Hotel press conference to announce their decision, which they said is shared by 390 other part-time soldiers who signed a petition.

The six of them, members of the year-old Reservists Committee to Stop the War, noted that yesterday was the anniversary of the killing of four students by National Guardsmen at Kent State.

PETITION

"We are not proud of having taken arms against our fellow Americans. We do not want to do so again," said the petition.

It said protests can only be answered by full employment, reconstructed cities and a total end to American involvement in Southeast Asia.

The petition suggested that reservists and guardsmen be trained to provide medical services and rebuild slums rather than be schooled in war.

VOICE

"The purpose of this is to add our voices to the military people and students actively protesting against the war," said Jacob Sperber, 24, a radio operator in the National Guard.

When questioned, the men — all of them in their early 20s — said the petition was not meant to indicate a flat refusal ever to do duty in a riot situation.

"If my unit was called to participate in a logical police

action, I wouldn't automatically refuse," was the way Sperber put it.

ASSERTION

The group asserted that the petition has the support of from 40 to 70 per cent of the men in the units. But most refused to sign.

"The big stumbling block is there is a tremendous amount of fear," said Dennis Anderson, 24, a sergeant in a Sacramento Air Force Reserve unit.

In Sacramento, Colonel Anchew Wolf, a spokesman for the National Guard, said anyone refusing a "legitimate order" is subject to a court-martial.

But Colonel Wolf said no guardsman has refused to go on riot duty at any time on the 40 occasions Guard has been called out since 1965 in California.