

Lestenkof makes changes in command

by Anna M. Pickett
Tundra Times staff

General Jake Lestenkof, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard and commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, has made new appointments on his staff, which include:

Lt. Col. Gregory K. "Bo" Austin, a Tlingit, to the post of deputy commander of the 207th Infantry Group (Scout), Alaska Army National Guard, effective April 9;

Lt. Col. Milton Cross, an
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Inupiat Eskimo, as the State Army Aviation Officer, effective March 13. Cross recently gave testimony about high ranking officers' discrimination against Alaska Natives (see related story). Cross has not, however, been selected to be promoted to a full colonel as of this date, one of his major complaints; and

Lt. Col. Ken Allen has been reassigned to serve as special assistant to the adjutant general, effective March 13. Lestenkof stated in a Guard memorandum that he looks forward to working closely with Allen. Allen is one of several high ranking officers accused of high ranking racial bias in a preliminary investigative report produced by Willie Hightower of Washington, D.C. The allegations, including those against the other officers, are the subject of a current board of inquiry.

Austin is from Kake, Alaska and graduated from Sheldon Jackson High School and attended Sheldon Jackson Junior College in Sitka. His Guard career started in 1964 and has received many awards during his Guard service.

Some of his new duties will consist of the day-to-day operations of full-time personnel of the 207th Infantry (Scout) which span from Nome to Bethel, to the southeast portion of Alaska. He will be responsible for all the full-time personnel in the Alaska Army National Guard.

Austin says that his goals and ambitions are in line with Gen. Lestenkof and is always looking for the positive in the people who serve in the Guard.

"He (Lestenkof) has the right focus for the Alaska Army National Guard. He knows the strength of the Army Scouts is in the villages of Alaska, outside of

Anchorage," said Austin. "Unfortunately, we have have experienced some bad times outside of the Anchorage area, but I think that is only a temporary setback."

With what is currently going on in the Guard, Austin hopes to see a unified organization.

"I would like to see a combat capable organization. I believe a lot of the soldiers in the rural areas are very good soldiers," said Austin. "They are the strength of the Alaska Army National Guard. I would like to see us get through this reorganization and the overall military downsizing, that we come out of it as a viable, combat capable organization."

Austin is pleased to be back among the troops, he says it fits his personality.

"I'm happy. I'm glad, it's a new challenge, and I'll be back among the troops," said Austin. "I prefer to be with troops."