

Guard activates 297th Scout Group

by Barbara Crane
Tundra Times reporter

NOME — Col. Joseph P. Beans has accepted command of the Alaska Army National Guard's new 297th Infantry Scout Group (Provisional).

As the new Group's first commander, Beans will direct operations of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Scout Battalions throughout Western Alaska.

Gov. Steve Cowper participated in the 297th's July 14 activation ceremony in Nome.

"The activation of the 297th shows beyond any doubt the increasing importance of the Alaska National Guard," Cowper said.

"In recent years the Guard has played a much greater role in the national defense and in helping to permit better relationships with the Soviet Union on the other side of the Bering Straits."

Beans said he was honored to be named the group's first commander.

"We are citizens of Western Alaska," Beans said, "and we have the mission in Western Alaska of providing security and assisting the people in times of emergencies."

Beans takes command of this group as a traditional part-time Guardsman, and he will continue his full-time job as chief of staff for the Department of



photo by Barbara Crane

Col. Joseph P. Beans is the first commander of the new 297th Infantry Scout Group of the Alaska National Guard.

Military and Veterans Affairs. Born in Mountain Village, he has been a Guard member since 1968.

Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, explained that the Guard's activities in Western Alaska will be now be

directed from Western Alaska instead of from Anchorage.

"For the first time," he said, "the Scouts up here will control almost everything they do. It's important that the people who make decisions affecting the Scouts should live and work

in the same areas and under the same conditions as the Scouts do.

"This 297th headquarters in Nome will provide the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions with even better support than we have been able to provide from Anchorage in the past."



Alfred Attla is from Hughes.