

Lestenkof issues vision statement

by Anna M. Pickett
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Earlier this month, Adjutant General Jake Lestenkof of the Alaska National Guard released a vision statement for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and named the members of his new Joint Executive Council which is designed to lead the Guard along a "quality" trail.

Along with the vision statement, which was reviewed by the council,

Lestenkof said this of his values and principles:

"I want this Department to be dedicated to the basic values of trust, loyalty, integrity, fairness, honesty, and service to country and state. ... And in keeping these values, I want us to adopt these principles: our number one priority is our people and their families; to do our duty effectively without complaint; to ... communicate, communicate, communicate; to take risk without fear

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of failure; and to treat service as the highest calling."

Members of the Joint Executive Council are: Mr. Roger Schnell, Brigadier General Sig Murphy, Brigadier General Ken Taylor, Colonel Jerry Gillean, Colonel Mike McCourt, Colonel Russ Gillaspie, Lt. Colonel Vern Watts, Mr. Roger Patch, Command Sergeant Major Cliff Newell, and CMSgt. Ada Hill.

The announcement of the vision statement comes after months of testimony taken by a Board of Inquiry which was appointed by Governor Tony Knowles after allegations of widespread racial bias surfaced in the

Alaska National Guard. Lestenkof stated that a Special Affairs Office would be established to implement the recommendations of the Board of Inquiry. However, that office has not yet been activated.

"Implementing the Board's recommendations is top priority," said Lestenkof, "but on the longer term, it's quality we're after."

One of the higher priority recommendations that the Guard will be focusing on is education. The Board had several recommendations to deal with the systemic discrimination against Alaska Natives, and to try to assist in raising educational standards in rural Alaska.

"It's almost criminal to not do anything," said Lestenkof, stating that additional funding is needed for rural education.