

LEAVITT NAMES COLONEL TO LEAD GUARD

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Col. Brian L. Tarbet will be the new leader of the Utah National Guard, Gov. Mike Leavitt announced Monday.

During a press conference in the Capitol, Leavitt said Tarbet will take over as the Guard's adjutant general in October. At that time, the present adjutant, Maj. Gen. James M. Miller, will retire.

Miller was not present for the announcement, but Leavitt said the present adjutant has enthusiastic support for his replacement. Responding to a Deseret News question, Leavitt said Miller is simply retiring and was not dismissed from the post.

Tarbet had been serving as division chief of the Tax and Revenue Division in the office of the Utah Attorney General. He also has worked as a private attorney in Salt Lake City.

"Col. Tarbet has had a distinguished military career," Leavitt said. He has served as senior intelligence officer in the Utah Army National Guard. He also has won numerous federal decorations, including the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Services Commendation Medal and two National Defense Service medals.

Leavitt noted that last year Tarbet attended Harvard University as a National Security Fellow of the U.S. Army War College. He has completed the training necessary for appointment as general, a promotion necessary for his new position.

Leavitt said the announcement was made this early to allow for an orderly transition when Miller retires.

"He is a person I have known and watched for many years," Leavitt said of Tarbet.

Standing with his wife, Mary, and four children (a fifth is in Germany), Tarbet said the appointment is a privilege. He noted that reserves make up more than half of national service personnel and that most of them are members of National Guard units.

Speaking of the Utah Guard, he said, "I'm confident that we will be able to make them full partners with their active-duty counterparts."

Leavitt praised both the incoming and outgoing adjutants.

On Monday, the Deseret News received an anonymous letter mailed Friday that attacks the appointment. Purporting to represent "Utah soldiers," it says the appointment is a political one, made against the advice of Leavitt's military advisors and the recommendations of his own selection committee.

Leavitt passed over four generals to choose Tarbet, it said. The letter charged that Tarbet is educationally qualified but "lacks in leadership and decision-making."

Misspelling Tarbet's name, the unsigned letter calls him "Leavitt's spy in Jan Graham's Attorney's General office."

Vicki Varela, Leavitt's deputy chief of staff, responded that the letter has a number of inaccuracies. "Obviously, we feel very good by Brian Tarbet as the governor's pick," she said.

"He was in fact recommended by the search committee. He was one of seven people who were interviewed by the governor," she said.

Tarbet does have the support of Utah soldiers, including Miller and his predecessor as adjutant, Maj. Gen. John L. Matthews, she said.

Tarbet is one of "one of the most experienced candidates among the group that was recommended to the governor," Varela said. "He has held three commands."