

Placerville man to oversee California National Guard

By Charles Piller, Sacramento Bee

Gov. Jerry Brown appointed Lt. Col. David Kauffman of Placerville as the first independent inspector general of the California Military Department, which includes the National Guard.

The position was established by Senate Bill 921, signed into law in September in response to concerns raised by a *Bee* investigation of the Guard that exposed widespread financial fraud, as well as neglect of Camp Roberts, a key training facility.

"I'm pleased the governor acted so quickly to appoint a new inspector general," said Ted Lieu, D-Torrance, an Air Force veteran and co-author of the new law. He said the governor's appointment signals that Kauffman will be independent from Guard leadership – meant to assure whistle-blowers that they can report wrongdoing without fear of reprisal. The law also bars such retaliation. Kauffman said in an interview that to help ensure that service members understand that they can safely share concerns about higher-ranking officers, he would visit units across the state to talk with rank-and-file soldiers without their leaders present.

In addition to examining complaints, Kauffman will issue quarterly and annual public reports. "The biggest challenge for anybody serving as an inspector general is making the hard call, whatever the pressure" or appearance of pressure from Guard leadership or from aggrieved service members, he said. "When the time comes to make that hard call, the office of the inspector general will do that."

His appointment "continues the process of restoring confidence

in the state's military," Lieu said.

Kauffman, 41, was appointed to a four-year term. Although he reports to the adjutant general, the Guard's top leader, he cannot be fired except for cause. Should claims arise against the adjutant general, Kauffman would be required to report them to federal authorities and the governor.

Kauffman has served with the California Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve for almost 20 years, including tours of duty in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. His professional experience includes work as a military attorney and as a deputy district attorney in El Dorado County. The position, which does not require Senate confirmation, pays \$141,619 annually.

The Bee series described fraud involving tens of millions of dollars in Guard enlistment incentive payments. An ongoing federal criminal investigation of those concerns so far has resulted in four plea agreements, including one that involved a prison sentence for a former incentive-program manager.

The series also exposed improper "double-dipping" payments to top pilots in the Fresno-based 144th Fighter Wing, which resulted in their removal, and to former Adjutant General William H. Wade II, who has agreed to repay tens of thousands of dollars.