

National Guard is sound economic return

By Cadet Harold White

In these times of economic hardships, when a good deal is hard to find, Wyoming's best return may be the National Guard.

Because of the dual state-federal mission of the National Guard, Army and Air Guard funding comes from both state and federal monies.

According to the annual report of the adjutant general, in fiscal year 1987, state expenditures equalled 6 percent of the total Wyoming National Guard budget for that fiscal year.

The remaining 94 percent was funded with federal dollars. This equates to roughly 16 federal dollars for each state dollar.

Additional federal funds are periodically made available to the state by National Guard Bureau to support armory maintenance, repair and utilities.

"This is the second time we will receive supplemental funding for armory maintenance," Maj. Gen. Charles Wing, Wyoming adjutant general, said.

The U.S. Army also contributes funding for the Wyoming Army National Guard. This funding comes in the form of new equipment purchases.

In fiscal year 87, the U.S. Army spent \$5.87 million to purchase new equipment for the WYARNG including the 15 new M-198, 155mm towed howitzers, assigned to First Battalion, 49th Field Artillery.

The pay Guard members receive for their military services and the expenditures associated with operating the units and facilities are returned to the communities in many ways.

"The average monthly payroll for the Wyoming National Guard is in excess of \$2 million a month," Wing said.

For example, in the 18-month period—July 1, 1985, to Dec. 31, 1986—\$36.3 million of the Wyoming National Guard's total expenditures of \$42.2 million were for payroll, local purchases and construction where National Guard units are located, the 1987 annual report noted.

A study conducted last year by the

state Research and Statistics Division estimated the \$36.3 million in direct expenditures generated an additional \$46.7 million, for a total impact of \$82.9 million. This money resulted in an estimated 500 new jobs statewide.

"I think the image of the Guard is very positive," Wing said. "The people of Wyoming realize the importance of the Guard's economic impact."

Even though the state's expenditures for the Wyoming National Guard are substantially less than the federal government's, the state mission remains an important segment of the Wyoming National Guard's role.

In 1987, members of the WYARNG were called to state active duty on six occasions to assist in protecting lives and property and to preserve public safety.

"These missions come into the Wyoming National Guard's Plans, Operations and Training Office from the State Emergency Management Agency. We then contact the unit that can provide the necessary support, and they go on state active duty," Lt. Col. Gary Ayers, plans operations and military support officer, said.

Funding for these state missions comes from the governor's contingency fund, Ayers said.

"We have received authorization from the governor before any units are sent out," Ayers said. During life-and-death situations both the local commander and the Plans, Operations and Training Office can give approval for state active duty. "But this is only in dire emergencies," Ayers said.

From early February through December 1987, members of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Third Battalion, 49th Field Artillery, provided non-potable water for washing and other domestic needs to the residents of the Brookhurst subdivision in Natrona County.

While attending drill in April 1987, members of Detachment 1, 133rd Engineer Company were called to assist in evacuating the Platte County Memorial Hospital in Wheatland following a bomb threat.