

The DoD Times (Redacted)



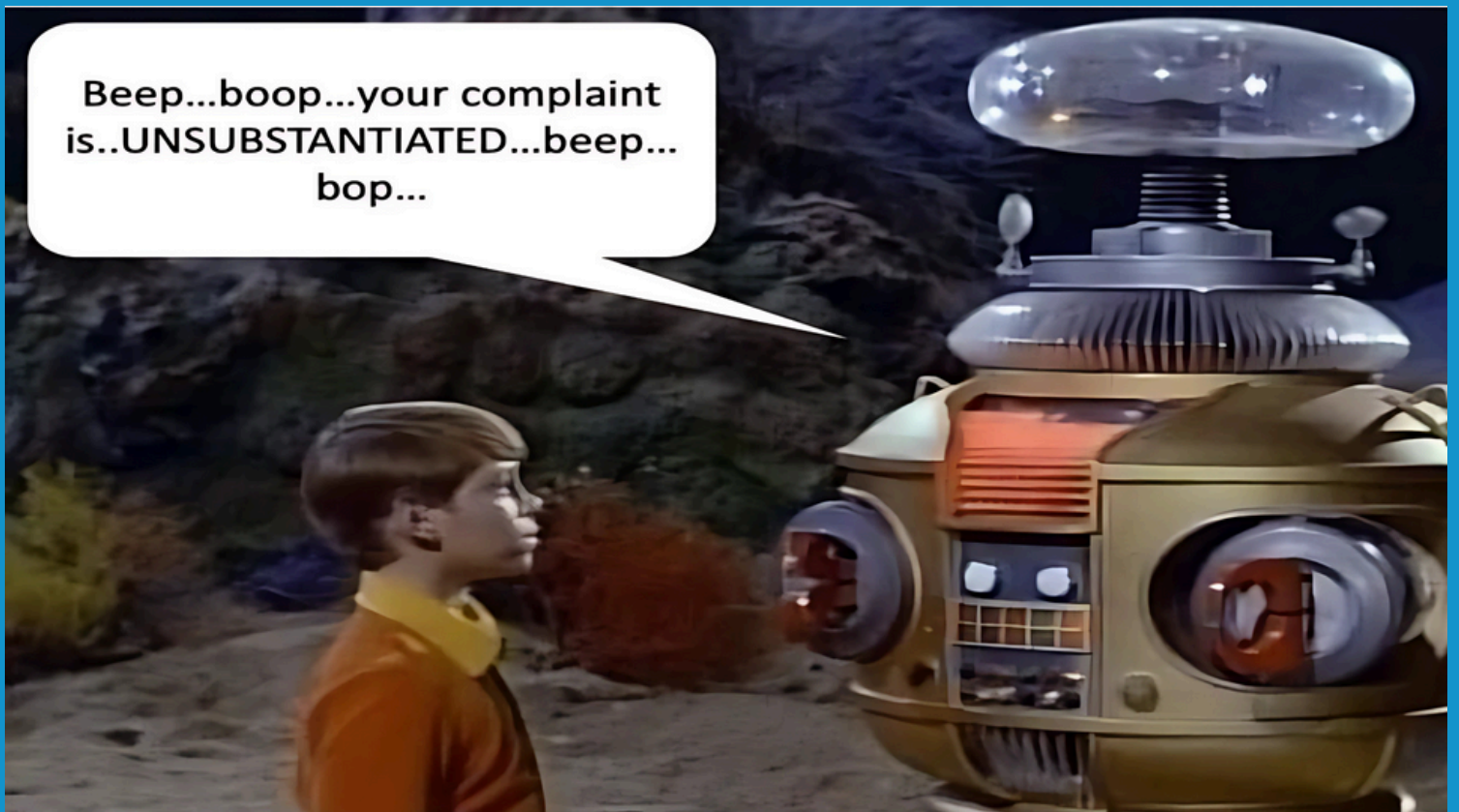
NEWSLETTER

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THE ILLUSION OF PARALLEL POWER: HOW THE IG OVERSHADOWS EO—AND STILL ANSWERS TO COMMAND

Beep...boop...your complaint
is..UNSUBSTANTIATED...beep...
bop...





LTC (Ret) Francesca Graham (Retired, Army – United States Military Academy), COO of the [Walk the Talk Foundation](#), authored this article. (Published July 5, 2025)

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The Illusion of Parallel Power: How the IG Overshadows EO—and Still Answers to Command

When a service member experiences discrimination, harassment, or reprisal, the military presents two apparent paths to justice: the Equal Opportunity (EO) program and the Office of the Inspector General (IG). On paper, these entities offer separate, impartial lanes for redress. EO addresses misconduct based on protected categories like race, sex, and religion. IG investigates broader misconduct: violations of law, regulation, abuse of authority, or whistleblower reprisal. But in practice, this dual-track system is neither clear nor independent. The EO system is visibly tied to the chain of command. The IG system, while nominally independent, is still controlled by that same chain—only one echelon higher.

Structurally, EO is a command program. EO advisors report to the same leaders who may be the subject of complaints, making them vulnerable to subtle or explicit pressures to protect the institution. The IG, by contrast, presents itself as independent, governed by the Inspector General Act of 1978 and internal service regulations. But most IG offices at the installation, wing, or component level report directly to commanders within the service hierarchy. Their career progression depends on the very leaders they are supposed to investigate. IGs are appointed, funded, and supported by the same commands whose actions they are tasked with scrutinizing. That is not independence—it's proximity in disguise.

To complicate matters, when the IG declines to investigate a complaint—often citing "no evidence of wrongdoing," "command prerogative," or "not IG-appropriate"—the issue is typically handed to a command-appointed Investigating Officer (IO) under AR 15-6, JAGMAN, or a service equivalent. These IOs are handpicked by the commander who either leads the accused's unit or is within one or two levels of command. These officers often lack investigative training, follow guidance shaped by IG policies they neither control nor fully understand, and operate with



limited oversight. And yet, their findings are treated as fact and carry tremendous weight in shaping careers and reputations.

This patchwork system erodes justice from every angle. For complainants, it creates delay, confusion, and a fear that any report will be funneled back to the very leaders they're seeking accountability from. For those accused, it offers no clear path to due process—just opaque processes that shift wildly depending on who picks up the case. For both, it undermines confidence in institutional fairness.

The long-term effects on good order and discipline are corrosive. Justice in the military is supposed to be swift, impartial, and above reproach. But when outcomes depend more on jurisdictional technicalities and command optics than facts, discipline becomes arbitrary. Service members see early on that the rules don't apply equally. They stop reporting. They stop trusting. Some separate. Some stay and disengage. And some are retaliated against until their careers implode.

Recruiting suffers too. Gen Z and Millennial recruits are not persuaded by slogans—they want functional systems. When they hear from peers, veterans, or the media that internal accountability is a bureaucratic theater of optics and plausible deniability, they look elsewhere for service and purpose.

Most damaging of all is the loss of institutional legitimacy. Trust in the military has historically been one of the last bipartisan norms in American life. But every time a complaint is buried, a whistleblower is punished, or a command investigation rubber-stamps abuse, the public notices. And so do our service members.

Fixing this won't be easy. It will require statutory independence for IG offices, outside review of IO appointments, and EO programs that report *outside* the chain of command they are tasked with policing. Until then, the current structure persists: a closed loop of command-controlled accountability masquerading as impartial justice. And those who dare to use it are often the ones who suffer most.



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Feel free to reach out privately at francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org or in the comments.

PETITIONS: [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) demanding that our leaders in Congress change the DoD's unjust administrative investigatory system.

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