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R.I.P., I.G. THE DEATH OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL





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R.I.P., I.G.

The Death of the Inspector General

With each passing “reform” measure under the current administration, we witness another death knell for the Inspector General (IG) system of old. The question is no longer if the IG is dying — but *what, if anything, replaces it...*

Consider the recent sequence of so-called reforms: [the planned defunding of the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency \(CIGIE\)](#), [the removal of former Department of Defense \(DoD\) Inspector General Robert Storch](#), and the SECWAR's rollout of the [“No More Walking on Eggshells” policies](#) on Inspector General and Equal Opportunity (EO) reform. The Secretary's own words made the intent clear enough: the IG and EO systems, he said, had become a weapon for “complainers, ideologues, and poor performers” through which the mere existence of a complaint would “derail careers.”

If that is the new orthodoxy, then oversight itself is being rewritten. Conceptually, the Inspector General is tasked to serve, albeit [very imperfectly](#), as a safeguard of integrity, a check on the inertia and corruption of bureaucracy. Secretary Hegseth's September 30, 2025, policy changes, however, represent a paradigm shift from the concept, however [poorly executed](#), to a reality of IG and EO systems being recast as strictly an instrument of discipline — not to uncover wrongdoing, but to suppress dissent.

The IG may be dead. But what's rising in its place may not be reform at all, but instead: control.



The Final Blow: Defunding the Watchdog of Watchdogs

If Storch's removal and the "No More Walking on Eggshells" campaign were the opening salvos, the administration's defunding of CIGIE marks the decisive blow — though perhaps not for the reasons many think.

[CIGIE](#), the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, was designed to be the watchdog of watchdogs, the body that ensured federal inspectors general upheld their own standards of accountability. In theory, it policed the police. In practice, it too often failed that mission. It became a club more interested in collegiality than correction, protecting institutional reputation over public trust. Its peer reviews rarely led to consequences, and its oversight mechanisms often stopped where politics began.

So while critics warn that defunding CIGIE will cripple transparency and isolate IG offices, there is a harder truth beneath the outrage: a body that refused to enforce accountability had already made itself irrelevant. The council's paralysis became its own indictment.

In that light, its defunding is not a tragedy — it is an overdue reckoning. But reform cannot end there. Eliminating the inefficacy of the council is only the first step. The second, essential step is replacing it with a structure that truly embodies the mission CIGIE abandoned: genuine oversight of the overseers.

To our knowledge, no such plans exist.

The Committee That Watched It Die

If CIGIE is the skeleton, the [Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee](#) (HSGAC) and [House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform](#) (HOS) are meant to be the heart. Yet as the oversight system collapses, the committees have stood by — holding hearings, issuing letters, and performing concern, but not resistance.



Even in past crises, from IG firings to delayed confirmations, HSGAC and HOS rarely used their subpoena power. Now, as the infrastructure of accountability is dismantled, the committees offer silence. No hearings. No funding riders. No fight. Just more defeatist malaise.

Once the “watchdog of watchdogs,” HSGAC and HOS have become a witness to the funeral. Oversight has turned ornamental. The watchdogs are being muzzled, and the kennel masters applaud.

The Sins of Yesterday’s IG

The Secretary of War’s campaign against the Inspector General system draws its moral cover from real failures. The old IG system *was* faltering — slow, timid, and selectively blind. The Red Hill fuel spill stands as a shining exemplar of that failure. Whistleblowers warned of leaks, corrosion, and containment failures at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in Hawaii. The DoDIG did nothing. Only after thousands were poisoned by fuel-contaminated water did the office launch an inquiry – one that dragged on for over 3 years and ultimately failed to accurately assess accountability and failure. Meanwhile, the whistleblower was punished – the watchdog watched, the house burned, and the messenger was exiled. The old system mistook delay for diligence and silence for neutrality and in doing so, helped justify its own final destruction.

Reform efforts under Secretary Hegseth’s banner now appear to be animated less by systemic analysis and more by anecdote, by the emotionally-charged stories of “low performers derailing leaders” and the frustration of one-off “frivolous complaints.” These narratives, while politically compelling, have become the basis for sweeping institutional change. The Secretary’s new policies add *more* scrutiny against members who report misconduct and their complaints in an IG system that [already substantiates only 1.7% of reprisal complaints](#) — a figure that reflects not a spirit of due process, but one already designed to defeat “boat rockers.” What the system needs is *not* more bureaucratic fortifications, but professional investigators empowered to conduct fair, timely, and impartial inquiries. Instead, the new framework risks becoming yet another barrier between victims, truth tellers, and true justice.



Sins Not Even of the IG

The greatest irony of the Secretary of War's reform campaign is that it targets the wrong actors entirely. Neither Inspector General nor Equal Opportunity offices possess the authority to carry out personnel actions — they cannot admonish, punish, demote, or “derail” careers. Their function is investigative and advisory, not disciplinary. Any career consequences, whether justified or retaliatory, must ultimately be executed by command and/or civilian supervisory channels.

By directing reform measures at the IG and EO systems, the Secretary's policies misfire. They address the visible messengers rather than the command structures that wield real power. This fundamental misunderstanding reveals a troubling lack of understanding of the issues at play: the reform effort is not fixing the system that fails whistleblowers or mishandles accountability — it's dismantling the only mechanisms, however imperfect they are, left to expose it.

What Comes After the Funeral

Every revolutionary government begins with a [purge](#). In that sense, the dismantling of the old IG and EO systems were as inevitable as it was necessary. Institutions built for accountability had hardened into instruments of self-preservation.

But what rises in their place? The President, [in a speech two years ago](#), promised a new era of “independent inspector entities.” If that promise materializes, it could mark a rebirth of integrity within the defense establishment.

But if the purge ends in consolidation, if the mechanisms of oversight become levers of control, then what we're witnessing isn't reform at all. Instead, we are watching the quiet replacement of accountability with obedience and oppression.

The future of the IG system now rests on a single question:

Is this a reformation — or a requiem?



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