

The DoD Times (Redacted)

# NEWSLETTER

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# IMPOTENCE – FRONT AND CENTER





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### *Impotence – Front and Center*

The Department of Defense Office of Inspector General (DoDIG) has always been a watchdog with a very short leash — able to investigate, to admonish, to publish “scathing reports,” but never to enforce. [Its latest report](#), which found that Secretary Pete Hegseth leaked sensitive operational information via the Signal messaging app — conduct the DoDIG concluded could have potentially endangered American service members’ lives — exposes the full extent of this structural impotence. The IG may shine light into dark corners, but ultimately, the chain of command decides whether anything actually happens. And, predictably, nothing did.

### **The Chain of Command: Sovereign and Untouchable**

Despite common misconception, an IG is not empowered to carry out personnel actions. It cannot discipline, relieve, demote, or fire. Only commanders can. Likewise, a Board for Correction of Military Records is not required to follow IG findings; it may accept them, reject them, or ignore them outright.

This is the bedrock reality: a DoDIG report — no matter how damning — imposes no binding obligation on the chain of command to act.

Thus, accountability depends not on findings, but on whether leadership feels like doing something about them.



## The Irony of Hegseth’s Claim That IG Investigations “Derail Careers”

Just on 30 September, Secretary Hegseth lamented that IG investigations “too often derail careers.” Yet the IG report about his own conduct demolishes that narrative.

[As confirmed by CBS News](#), after reviewing the IG report and related communications, Hegseth used a civilian Signal chat to share sensitive operational information regarding planned military actions. This amounted to a major Operations Security (OPSEC) breach that “potentially put U.S. service members at risk.”

And what consequences followed?

None.

No reprimand. No restriction. No negative personnel action — the very kind Hegseth claims the IG hands out “too often.”

Instead, he took to X to extoll “[Total exoneration](#).”

The irony writes itself.

### **A Refreshing — If Futile — Burst of Independence by the DoDIG**

To its credit, the DoDIG did what it is supposed to do: it operated independently, documented the violations, and presented the truth. Its work was thorough, detailed, and unflinching — especially regarding the risks posed by disclosing operational details in unsecured channels.

Yet independence is meaningless without enforcement. When the chain of command can dismiss findings at will, even the strongest IG report becomes little more than a well-written suggestion.



## Does This New “Standard” Apply to Everyone?

The IG found that a senior official risked operational compromise by sharing sensitive information — yet suffered no consequences. What should junior service members infer from this?

Would a lieutenant who leaked targeting details over Signal receive the same leniency?

Would a corporal who compromised OPSEC be allowed to declare themselves “exonerated”?

We all know the answer.

When the powerful are immune and the powerless are punished, trust erodes — and the system decays.

## Inside the Black Box: 30,000+ Administrative Investigations Per Year — and Congress Still Lacks the Data

This incident exposes a deeper systemic problem with military oversight: every year the Department of Defense conducts more than 30,000 administrative investigations, ranging from command-directed inquiries to AR 15-6s to IG investigations at every level. Yet Congress receives no comprehensive reporting on:

- ▶ how many allegations are substantiated,
- ▶ what types of misconduct are most common,
- ▶ how long investigations take,
- ▶ what corrective actions result (if any),
- ▶ how often commanders override or ignore findings,
- ▶ or whether demographic or rank-based disparities exist.



Congress is being asked to oversee a system it cannot see. Without data, oversight is impossible — and accountability becomes optional. And the solution is remarkably straightforward. Congress could require the DoD to submit aggregate investigative data through NDAA provisions or appropriations directives. It could also task the Government Accountability Office (GAO) — with bipartisan agreement — to independently gather and analyze that data.

Even better, Congress already has [model language drafted by the Walk the Talk Foundation](#), which requires the DoD to collect and report this exact investigative data. Lawmakers do not need to craft a new structure or invent new mechanisms. They simply need to adopt the language that already exists.

This Hegseth episode demonstrates precisely why such transparency is urgent. When senior officials can ignore IG findings entirely, Congress must have independent visibility into how investigations are conducted, how results are handled, and who benefits from selective enforcement.

### **Conclusion: If IG Findings Can Be Ignored, Real Oversight Must Come From Elsewhere**

If the military can disregard IG reports at will — as it did here, and as it does so often throughout the Department — then the IG system is symbolic, not substantive; a façade of accountability without any of its force.

So the ultimate question becomes: if senior leaders can nullify an IG report with a shrug, what is the point of the IG?

And the ultimate answer is: Congress must intervene — starting with data.



Requiring the DoD to disclose investigative data is the essential first step toward:

- ▶ real transparency,
- ▶ real oversight, and
- ▶ real accountability.

Fortunately, Congress already has the needed language in hand — [drafted by the Walk the Talk Foundation](#) — meaning lawmakers can act immediately without drafting new frameworks. Because when “Impotence – Front and Center” becomes the defining feature of DoD oversight, it is Congress — not the IG — that must reclaim the power to fix it.



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Feel free to reach out privately at [francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org](mailto:francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org) or in the comments.

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