



THIS WEEK'S FEATURE

13 Lies in 120 Seconds: 'Weaponized' IGs and 'Radical Leftist' Complainants

Hegseth Takes Aim at the 'Weaponized' I.G. System and the 'Radical Leftists' that Use It

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In a mere two minutes of a video released this past week announcing his overhaul of the military Inspector General (IG) system, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth makes thirteen statements that mislead, overreach, or leave out what matters. His claims are not founded in actual data, facts, or reality. His actions are instead guided, yet again, by anecdotes, bias, and personal axes to grind. We at the Walk the Talk Foundation are all for IG reform in the military – it is an unequivocal failed experiment that needs a massive overhaul. But the Secretary's measures are two steps in the wrong direction and of all the misrepresentations of truth in his briefing, the assertion that the new measures are a reflection of remaining "committed to its warriors" is perhaps the largest lie of them all.

View the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-wLJ_wpkIE

1. The title: "Commanders are now back in charge."

They never left. Commanders hold nonjudicial punishment, adverse evaluations, reprimands, relief for cause, and the power to start separation. Under the UCMJ and Service regulations they can end a subordinate's career with almost no real recourse. The only thing that changed is who controls the front door of the complaint process. Calling that a restoration of command authority hides how much authority commanders already held. So, if commanders weren't in charge, it wasn't because the IG seized authority, it was weak commanders relinquishing it.

2. "During the Biden administration, activists, poor performers, and malcontents weaponized and ultimately hijacked the work of the inspector general, the independent watchdog inside the Pentagon."

The trouble with the inspector general system long predates the Biden administration. In 2012, the Government Accountability Office [found](#) that the DoD IG generally missed mark for military reprisal investigations, with unreliable case dates and incomplete files. In 2017, GAO [found](#) that the DoD IG missed its timeliness goals in more than 83 percent of civilian and contractor reprisal cases closed in fiscal years 2013 through 2015. Both reports describe slowness and weak documentation. Neither describes a flood of frivolous complaints.

3. "Activists, poor performers, and malcontents."

Complainants get these labels after they file. They do not arrive with them. In the records we see, the large majority of complainants are high performers with no history of poor performance. In fact, of 242 case records, over a third were of the rank O-5 / E-7 / WO3. You don't make those ranks by whining. Further, in over three quarters of our cases, the complainants had zero derogatory information in their personnel record. "Boat rockers"? Yes. After they filed a complaint.

The Department on the other hand does not track this data, so the Secretary had none to cite, and he cited none. A conclusion with no data behind it is an attitude, however confidently it is delivered. But regardless of the amount of bravado, it still is simply not true.



4. "Weaponized."

The Inspector General does not make personnel decisions. An IG does not fire anyone, sideline a high performer, or derail a career. They do not have the authority to do so. Commanders do those things. If a weapon exists in this story, it sits in the chain of command, and the person who decides whether it is used is the commander the Secretary says he is putting back in charge. A reform that takes a complaint away from the IG and hands the verdict to the chain of command moves the weapon closer to the target, but if the Secretary is looking to "de-weaponize" the system, maybe he best look at those he purports to have such a vested interest in.

5. "Ultimately hijacked."

In fiscal years 2022 through 2024, DoD IG's own published figures show a substantiation rate of 1.7 percent.

If complainants hijacked the system, they did a piss-poor job of it. Leadership closed these cases without substantiation about 98 times out of 100. Defenders will say the number proves most complaints lacked merit, and some surely did. But the Secretary offered no data on either side, and a system that rarely finds against itself is not one that critics have captured.

6. "The independent watchdog inside the Pentagon."

The phrase carries its own contradiction. Throughout the Services, IGs answer to the commanders of the installations they oversee. Army IG training material calls the IG an extension of the commander's eyes, ears, voice, and conscience, and AR 20-1 states that "IGs work **only** for their commanders." The statutory DoD IG operates with considerable independence, as the Congressional Research Service [notes](#). The Service IGs where most complaints land do not. A Secretary who praises independence while directing how the process works has already shown how much he values that independence.

7. "A complaint must be credible, and the new framework will determine if the information warrants further inquiry."

Who, exactly, will make this determination? The speech does not say. The September 2025 [memo](#) that sets the seven-duty-day credibility assessment does not say either. Neither names the qualifications of the screener, the standard applied, or what happens to the complainant when the answer is no. The audience is invited to infer a fair and impartial filter. Nothing in the text builds one.

8. "No more investigations launched based on speculation, personal gripes, or hearsay."

Once more, no data supports the claim. If the Secretary were serious about reform, the investigators themselves would be the point of attack. The Army's basic IG course runs three weeks, with only one week devoted to investigations. The Air Force's runs five business days, with about three days of actual training, very little of it from professional investigators. Command investigations lean on collateral-duty officers, and the regulation governing them, AR 15-6, requires no training course at all. The Secretary's memo demands trained, credentialed investigators and sets no standard, no hours, and no funding.

9. "If so, it now moves quickly."

The memo sets three clocks: a seven-duty-day credibility assessment, closure of command-directed investigations within 30 days, and status updates every 14 days. It cites no baseline and sets no implementation deadline. In AR 20-1, AFI 90-301, and 10 U.S.C. 1034, there exists no mandated completion timelines. The statute requires only 180-day status notices and a report within 30 days of completion. GAO documented missed timelines in 2012 and 2017. A deadline with no added investigators, no training, and no budget is a closure target. Speed is not the same as diligence, but advertised speed with no regulatory backbone is simply smoke and mirrors.



10. "Consistent with the law, anonymous complaints will only be considered when they allege fraud, waste, or abuse..."

Consistent with the law, as in, an actual law that exists? The speech cites none because it is fantasy. Section 1034 of Title 10 covers reprisal and restriction and says nothing about anonymous complaints. Neither does 10 U.S.C. 141, which establishes the DoD IG, nor the Inspector General Act at 5 U.S.C. 407. The DoD Hotline [accepts](#) anonymous complaints today. A discretionary policy dressed as a legal requirement tells every would-be complainant the door is shut by law, not by choice.

11. "Otherwise, no more baseless anonymous complaints."

Who decides what is baseless? Someone inside the organization has to make that call, and the speech does not say who. If it is not the IG, it is some other office, and every such office is subordinate to the commander and not independent. The result may be commanders asked to vet complaints against themselves. The DoD Hotline cannot contact an anonymous filer for more information, so "baseless" is judged on the face of the complaint alone. A true allegation that lacks supporting detail cannot be rescued later.

12. "This is essential to establishing a system that supports those who report legitimate wrongdoing."

The system has never supported the whistleblower, and these policies do not change that. After all, what is the risk mitigation for a whistleblower in the military? None. What does the Secretary offer in that regard? Also nothing. The memo mentions whistleblowers only in its section on repeat complainants. It names no reprisal protections, no confidentiality, and no remedies. The protections it does create run to the subjects of complaints: no flagging during screening, status updates every 14 days, and no personnel effects from an investigation's existence alone. The memo's own title is "Enhancing Timeliness, Transparency, and Due Process in Administrative Investigations." The beneficiary is the commander, and the title never pretends otherwise.

13. "The days when radical leftists or people who were just plain bad at their job worked behind the scenes to undermine the greatest military in history are finished."

How many complaints have come from "radical leftists"? The Secretary cited no figure, and we know of none published. How many came from people who were bad at their jobs? Same answer. At Quantico in September 2025, the Secretary called complainants "whiners and ideologues." The labels never come with data, and they never come with definitions. A label with no definition can be attached to anyone who complains, which is exactly why it frightens the people who might.

SOME ACTUAL FACTS NOW: WHAT THE SECRETARY IS TEACHING COMMANDERS

The Secretary has said, in effect, that he does not need the facts of a complaint or the record of a complainant to decide what each deserves. A label is enough. Commanders are watching, and they take their cues from the top. We have seen commanders disparage whistleblowers in front of large official audiences. We have watched as Directors slandered those who rose their hand. A Secretary who models that conduct from the top of the chain makes it easier for every commander below him.

Some complaints are frivolous, no doubt. Real reform would answer them with competent and independent investigators, published timelines backed by resources, and screening that sits outside the chain of command of the person complained about. It would publish the data the Secretary did not have and provide for professional investigations by professional investigators that today (and quite probably in the future) do not exist. And it would protect the person who files a valid complaint, so a service member weighing the risk knows what the system will do for them and not only what the Secretary thinks of them.

Instead, the Secretary leapt to conclusions not supported by data and shot for the nearest ideological target to him: radical leftist low-performers who derail careers. The actual issues afflicting the IG system, however: training, transparency, competency, and trust... well, those will have to wait for the next administration to fix, evidently.



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Lt Col (Ret) Ryan Sweazey is the President and Founder of the Walk the Talk Foundation. All articles are posted on [LinkedIn](#) and online at walkthetalkfoundation.org. The Star Chamber podcast is available on [Apple](#), [Spotify](#), and [YouTube](#).

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