

New McChord Field Inspector General outlines purpose

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JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. - As your newly appointed wing Inspector General, I wanted to introduce myself and provide a brief overview of the IG office complaint inquiries function.

The term "Inspector General" has been used historically in various governments and militaries throughout the world to denote an independent agency that ensures combat readiness of subordinate units. The lineage of the United States Air Force IG began with the American Army of 1777 and was established as an official Air Force function in 1948 by Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff at the time.

Vandenberg defined the IG mission as determining the combat and logistic effectiveness of the Air Force, ensuring the maintenance of discipline and security, and investigating matters involving crime and other violations of public trust. Subsequently, the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 institutionalized the IG for both military and civilians within the Department of Defense.

As McChord Field IG, we manage and execute the Air Force Complaint Resolution and Fraud, Waste and Abuse Programs. We analyze complaints for appropriateness and determine investigative requirements; refer non-IG issues to the appropriate commanders or agencies; coordinate Congressional inquiries and notify senior officials and leadership of issues. We do not determine guilt or innocence, do not take sides, and are not anyone's personal advocate. We are impartial and thorough fact finders working independently to resolve complaints quickly and objectively in order to resume focus on mission performance.

Anyone may submit a complaint to any IG within the Air Force or Department of Defense. However, individuals are encouraged to begin at the lowest level. According to Air Force Instruction 90-301, Inspector General Complaints Resolution, paragraph 2.1.2, "Complainants should attempt to resolve complaints at the lowest possible level (as appropriate for the circumstances) using supervisory channels before addressing them to higher-level command channels or the IG."

The three types of complaints the IG focuses on are reprisals, restrictions and improper mental health evaluations.

- Reprisals are unfavorable personnel actions, including withholding favorable personnel actions, taken or threatened against a member for making or preparing to make a protected communication.

Note: Protected communication is when a member communicates what they reasonably believe to be a violation of law or regulation to any person in the member's chain of command, first sergeant, command chief, chief master sergeant of the Air Force, inspector general, member of Congress, or

personnel assigned to DoD audit, inspection, investigation, law enforcement, equal opportunity and family advocacy organizations.

- Restriction refers to efforts made to deny a member from making a protected communication to a member of Congress or an IG.

- Concerning improper mental health evaluations, only the member's commander can direct them to undergo a mental health evaluation.

Serving as your local IG office, we stand ready to provide unbiased and timely complaint resolution. You can reach your McChord Field IG office at (253) 982-3323.