

# HISTORY OF THE ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL



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**The History of the United States  
Army Inspector General**

**Major General Frederick W. A. H. F. von Steuben**

The First Effective Inspector General  
28 March 1778 - 15 April 1784

## **HISTORY OF THE ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL**

### **PREFACE**

The modern Army IG is an extension of the eyes, ears, voice, and conscience of the commander. The IG is a personal staff officer providing the commander with a sounding board for sensitive issues. IGs are honest brokers and consummate fact finders. Their primary tools include training, inspecting, assisting, and investigating.

For more than 220 years, Army IGs have inspected, audited, investigated, trained,

and performed those duties necessary to support the Army in achieving its mission. During that time the organization and function of the American Army IG system have changed considerably. This student text presents an historical overview and functional explanation of the Army's IG system. It identifies the system's unique attributes and highlights the functional differences between the Army's IG system and cabinet level IG systems.

### **HISTORICAL CONSTANTS OF THE ARMY IG SYSTEM**

Throughout the history of the United States Army Inspector General system, four historical constants have emerged that depict the value of IGs to commanders at every level:

1. The IG is often the substitute for experience.

2. IGs are a means whereby the commander checks and instills discipline, ethics, and standards.

3. IGs enable the commander to get quick responses for his own and higher level interests.

4. IGs are assigned unanticipated items necessary for the unit's successful mission accomplishment.

### **HISTORY**

#### **1775-1783**

The U.S. Army Inspector General system was born during the Revolutionary War. The Continental Army, when formed in 1775, was a disorganized array of militia from different states, with little uniformity in organizations, procedures, drills, appearance, or equipment. The Continental Army's leadership was not comparable to the experienced, solid officer leadership of the British Army, and General Washington was not satisfied with the training and readiness of his diversified and inexperienced forces.

By the time of the American Revolution, the appointment of inspectors, at least in functional areas, was an established routine in European armies. The tactics of the day, volley fire and massed bayonet charges, required stern discipline and extensive drill and training. Commanders needed a way to assess the readiness of their units.

On 29 October 1777, General Washington, realizing that the future of the

army and the Nation was in peril, met with 14 general officers and decided among other things that an Inspector General for the Army was necessary. The Inspector General would superintend the training of the entire Army in order to ensure troop proficiency in common tactics. Moreover, he would be the commander's agent to ensure tactical efficiency in the Army, focusing on the greatest and most pressing need of the troops, that of tactical competence. The duties envisioned were those of a "drill master general" or a "muster master general."

At the same time, the Continental Congress recognized the need for an inspector general to provide it with information concerning military affairs. Quality training was expensive. It required a significant public investment. Therefore, the Congress wanted an agent in the Army to help in the oversight and accountability for the military investments. It also wanted assurances the military would remain subordinate to its authority.

This parallel IG requirement [General Washington and Congress] created tension between military and civilian authorities. General Washington's preference for an IG answerable only to the Army chain of command finally prevailed, and subsequent inspectors general were ordered to report to the Commander-in-Chief.

On 13 December 1777, Congress created the Office of Inspector General of the Army. The Congressional resolution directed that two Inspector General positions would be authorized. They would be responsible to:

- Review the troops;
- See that officers and soldiers were instructed in exercise maneuvers established by the Board of War;
- Ensure that discipline was strictly observed;
- Ensure that officers commanded properly and treated soldiers with justice.

The first Inspector General of the Army, appointed by Congress, was MG Thomas Conway. Conway, an Irish

soldier of fortune, had been a member of Washington's council of 14 generals and had self-serving and political motives. He was forced to resign shortly after his appointment due to his ineffectiveness and inability to get along with fellow generals, most notably General Washington.

The first effective U.S. Army IG was Baron Frederick William Augustus Henry Ferdinand von Steuben. Von Steuben was a retired Prussian captain who had spent a significant portion of his career on Frederick the Great's general staff. He was recruited for duty with the American Army in Paris by Benjamin Franklin in 1777. Franklin recognized the quality of von Steuben but was concerned that Congress would not accept a captain for a position of responsibility in the Army. Accordingly, Franklin "doctored" von Steuben's letter of introduction to Congress, making him a former lieutenant general, a grade he knew would be acceptable to members of the Continental Congress.

Von Steuben was accepted as the Inspector General of the Army on a temporary basis by General Washington. He reported for duty at Valley Forge in February 1778. While he initially spoke no English, he learned quickly and impressed everyone with his hard work to improve the training, drills, discipline, and organization of the Continental Army.

The "von Steuben Model": From the very conception of the Army Inspector General system, IGs have been responsible for assisting commanders in *Readiness and Warfighting Capabilities*. Today's Army IGs perform their primary duties using this model, or principle, established by von Steuben.

In May 1778, von Steuben was officially appointed Inspector General of the Army with the rank and pay of major general. Congress also appointed two ranks of inspectors general under the him, providing us the first Inspector General organization.

Many of the Continental Army's regimental colonels resented bitterly the

efforts of the inspector general, whose duties as outlined by Congress included “to report all abuses, neglect and deficiencies to the Commander in Chief.” It was von Steuben’s character, tact and innate military experience which overcame a great deal of this resistance

and set the precedent for the manner and behavior for future IGs. Major General von Steuben was not only the first effective IG, he is often recognized as the “father” of the Inspector General system.

### 1783-1900

The number of IGs and their relative influence within the Army rose and fell, at times dramatically, during the 18th and 19th centuries. This wide variance was caused by Army strength fluctuations, changing personalities in senior leadership, and differing philosophical approaches to doing business by the Army policymakers of that era. During the 1790s the Inspector General was second in command of the Army. For a period after 1800 the IG duties were relegated to the Department of the Adjutant General. There were several times when the position of Inspector General was eliminated altogether.

The Inspector General’s Department was established on 3 March 1813, though it would not be until 1878 that the Department became a formal part of the Army organization. In addition to an the Inspector General of the Army, the act provided for eight subordinate inspectors general and

many assistant inspectors general. These inspectors general performed duties inconsistent with those of the present day IG. This inconsistency in IG mission was created primarily by not having a centrally developed IG doctrine that clearly defined the role of the IG.

Commander’s use of the IG improved greatly following the Civil War, when the War Department published an order clearly defining the duties of the Inspector General. In 1876, the Secretary of War directed the Inspector General of the Army to report to the General of the Army on all subjects pertaining to military control and discipline and all “field IGs” to report directly to the unit Commanding General (CG). This directive placed IGs under the local CG’s control for all matters. An inspector general was no longer a “spy” from a higher headquarters. This relationship continues today.

### 1900 - 1949

The greatest hindrance to IGs in inspecting the “old” Army was the dispersion of its force across the globe. After 1898, Army troops were scattered around the world, occupying Caribbean Islands and trying to suppress the growing rebellion in the Philippines. By 1900, IGs were inspecting all regiments deploying to the Philippine Insurrection. IGs also established a systematic inspectorate in the islands. The IG responsibility to inspect units deploying for combat overseas resurfaced during World Wars I and II, and continues today.

From immediately after World War I until 1939, the number of IGs in the Army changed very little and IG duties remained the same. By 1940, all subordinate commanders down to and including divisions were allocated an inspector general under their direct control to conduct inspections and investigations within their commands. By 1945, there were about 3,000 IGs serving with the Army around the world.

The inspector general mission grew in importance and scope during World War II and this trend continued into the postwar

Army. Of particular note was the emergence of the assistance function as we know it today. The rapid reduction in Army personnel from over 9 million in 1945 to a few hundred thousand in 1946, necessitated the inspector

general to respond to thousands of requests for help from soldiers being released from the Army. (Many because they were not being released quickly enough.)

### 1950 - 1959

The statutory basis for the current Army IG system comes from the 1950 Army Reorganization Act. This act replaced the Inspector General's Department with the Office of the Inspector General (OTIG). The Inspector General (TIG) was directly subordinate to the Chief of Staff, Army (CSA), and responsive to the Secretary of the Army (SA). The reorganization charged TIG with inquiring into and reporting upon the discipline, efficiency, and economy of the Army. Specifically, IGs were to focus their effort on training and combat readiness.

In 1952, OTIG initiated an orientation course for officers selected to be IGs. Prior to this there was no specific provision for the formal instruction of IGs, although the old Inspector General's Department had maintained and distributed instructional material to each IG in the form of inspection and investigation guides, handbooks, and other procedural material.

A legal case in 1953 resulted in the classification of IG records as having restricted access and use. Inspector General investigations and reports were declared "privileged" as a matter of law. As such, they could not be used as evidence in judicial or other proceedings, except as specifically

authorized by the authority ordering the investigation or higher authority.

Qualifications for IGs were first formally codified in 1957. Army Regulation (AR) 614-100 stated only the highest caliber of Army officers should be detailed as IGs and should meet the following minimum qualifications:

- Mature with broad military experience.
- Have not previously completed a normal 3 year tour as an IG.
- Moral and personal traits which are necessary for a position of dignity and prestige.

The mission to conduct the indoctrination course for all officers newly detailed as IGs was transferred from the OTIG Inspections Division to a newly established Field Service Division on 5 November 1956. The course was originally for officers in stateside assignments. It was three weeks long, and provided training in inspections, investigation and procurement matters. In 1958 the frequency of the course was increased from four times a year to six. Attendance was expanded to include selected civilian employees and NCOs assigned to IG duties. A two-week IG orientation course was also begun in some overseas areas.

### 1960 - Present

In May 1956, the Secretary of the Army directed the Department of the Army to assume responsibility for technical proficiency inspections (TPI) of Army atomic organizations worldwide. General Order #40, dated 24 August 1956, placed these inspections under the jurisdiction of the IG.

The March 1960 edition of AR 20-1 provided for the first time policy concerning IG TPI.

IG Technical Bulletin #4, published in 1960, standardized the approved method and procedures for IGs to receive and process Inspector General Action Requests (IGAR). In

1962, an OTIG investigation looked into allegations of inefficiencies during the callup of Reserve and National Guard units during the Berlin crisis.

The U.S. Army IG philosophy began to be shared with our allies when the OTIG presented its standard course of instruction to groups composed entirely of international officers. In 1961, instruction was presented to Republic of Korea Army officers in Seoul, Korea, and to Nationalist Chinese Army officers in Taipei, Formosa.

The early 1980s heralded a significant change in the way IGs conducted inspections. Traditionally, general inspections focused on evaluating a unit's compliance to regulation. However, purely compliance inspections tended to address symptoms rather than causes and assumed that policy guidance and directives were correct.

IGs began compliance-systemic inspections. They looked for causes rather

than symptoms, examined policy for errors or omissions, traced unit level problems to Army level problems, emphasized correction at the proper level, and minimized the need for pre-inspection preparation by units. IGs also stressed follow-up inspections to verify that corrective action had occurred and to ensure the corrective action truly solved the problem.

The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act reversed the IG portion of the 1950 Army Reorganization Act in that TIG became responsible to the SA and responsive to the CSA. TIG's other responsibilities remained the same.

During the 1980s, the IG system became automated. Automation gave IGs the ability to assimilate more effectively all available IG information as well as audit reports written by outside agencies. The first effort was called the IG Management Resource System (IGMIRS). IGMIRS was later replaced by the IG Worldwide Network (IGNET).

### **OTHER FEDERAL INSPECTORS GENERAL How they are different**

This section explains the key professional and functional differences between the federal department IG system and the U.S. Army IG system.

The federal department IG system was created with the 1978 Inspector General Act. This Act and a 1988 revision established IG agencies at numerous federal agencies. These IGs are appointed by the President or by the agency heads, who are themselves appointed by the President. Federal IGs are supposed to operate independently of their agencies in order to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse through audits and investigations. They keep the head of their agency and the Congress fully informed about agency problems and deficiencies. They are watchdogs for the Congress concerning the performance of their respective department or agency.

The 1978 IG Act did not create a Department of Defense (DOD) IG. That office was created by the 1983 DOD Authorization Act. The DOD IG is equivalent to the other cabinet level IG offices and provides Congress with oversight of the uniformed Services and their respective IG systems.

The functions of the federal departments IG's are important and complex, but narrower in scope than the Army IG system. The cabinet level IG primarily conducts audits and investigations. Audits typically involve issues of Congressional interest and statutory requirements. The cabinet level IG is especially sensitive to the interests of the applicable Congressional oversight committee.

The statutory department IG primarily investigates allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse, and will occasionally



inquire into allegations concerning standards of conduct. The federal department IG typically takes an oath, in some cases is armed, and may have arrest powers. On occasion, the cabinet level IG agency contracts special investigation requirements with private non-government agencies.

The cabinet level IG is not a trainer. He seldom performs the assistance functions commonly associated with Army IGs, and rarely performs special inspections.

Finally, the individual selected to serve as an Army IG also differs from the civilian counterpart in the cabinet level IG system. The Army IG usually has broad Army experience, knows the Army and how it works, and is a proven subject matter expert in at least one military occupational specialty. Further, the Army IG understands the functions of the chain of command, the importance of loyalty, and the value of being objective. Army IGs know IG duty is not a career track. They serve one 3 year tour and

return to line units. The Army IG demonstrates the institution's values, possesses the key soldierly qualities, and is technically and professionally prepared to train others.

The statutory IG, who might come from a position within the federal agency is different. Coming from within the agency is not necessarily a requirement for a federal IG. Many senior IGs in the federal system come from successful business careers. Their subordinates are often recruited from police forces and private sector auditors. New IGs might be expert investigators and auditors but they might easily lack a level of expertise in their agency's area of responsibility. They might be assigned to decentralized field offices that provide simultaneous reports both to their organization and to senior government officials and members of Congress.

## Inspector General Insignia

The Inspector General Insignia has three distinct parts: The sword; the fasces; and the wreath of olive and laurel branches. The sword represents military power and justice. It is subordinate to the fasces. The fasces consists of a military ax enclosed in a bundle of birch or elms rods tied together with a strap. Since the early Roman Republic, this has symbolized civil authority. The wreath ties the sword and

fasces together. Since classical times, it has been a mark of honor and distinction for winners of athletic, cultural, and academic honors. Today the wreath is especially symbolic of academic and intellectual achievement. The inscription *Droit et Avant* is French and literally means "right and forward." Freely translated it means "First be right; then take action." This motto is in blue, which stands for loyalty, faith, and fidelity.

Monument to:

**Major General Frederick W. A. H. F. von Steuben**

Lafayette Park, Washington, DC

