



History of the Air Force Inspector General

The United States Air Force traces the history of its Inspector General (IG) function back to the American Army of 1777. Throughout the years, the Army IG essentially served as the "eyes and ears" of its senior military leaders by being an inspector, investigator, teacher, and reporter. The creation of the US Air Force from the US Army-Air Forces in September 1947 included a similar oversight activity with a primary focus on aviation activities.

General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff, officially established the Air Force IG function in January 1948. He outlined the IG's mission as: determining the combat and logistic effectiveness of the Air Force, insuring the maintenance of discipline and security, and investigating matters involving crime and other violations of public trust.

Since 1948, the IG's responsibility gradually evolved, either growing to add new functions or reducing to align with new AF reorganizations. The IG acted as a special staff function, reporting directly to the Air Force Chief of Staff. In 1973, Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) Robert Seamans, Jr., increased the IG's reporting and advisory role, including it in the Secretariat. This was followed by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which not only reaffirmed the IG's ability to work independently for both military and civilian leaders, but also officially mandated the existence of the IG position. In March 1987, the Air Force IG officially became the SAF IG to reflect the dual responsibility to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

Reorganizations in the early 1990's brought a major change to the IG's responsibilities. Notably, the Air Force Security Agency moved on 1 April 1991 from the IG to the Air Staff, while the IG's subordinate Air Force Inspection and Safety Center at Norton AFB, Calif., divided into two separate agencies on 1 August 1991 -- effectively heralding the separation of the inspection and safety functions in the Air Force. The resulting Air Force Inspection Agency provided the Air Force IG an independent assessment of Air Force leadership, fighting capability, and resource management.