



# Your Friendly IG Quarterly

September 2025

## Command Referral vs. IG Investigation

A **Command Referral** and an **Inspector General (IG) Investigation** are both tools used within the military to address issues of misconduct, but they differ significantly in purpose, authority, and process.

### Command Referral

• **Definition:** A **Command Referral** is when the **IG refers a matter** back to the subject's **chain of command** to be handled at the unit level.

• **Who Handles It:** The **commander or supervisor**.

• **When It's Used:**  
- The issue **doesn't meet IG investigative threshold** (e.g., no violation of law, policy, or regulation).  
- The issue is best resolved by the **lowest level possible**.

• **Typical Issues:**  
- Minor leadership concerns  
- Personality conflicts  
- Administrative errors

• **Outcome:**  
- Command takes **corrective or disciplinary action** if needed.  
- IG will **follow up** to ensure the issue was addressed appropriately.

### IG Investigation

• **Definition:** A **formal investigation or inquiry** conducted by the IG to resolve serious complaints involving violations of law, policy, reprisal, and restriction.

• **Who Handles It:** The Inspector General office, which is independent of the chain of command.

• **When It's Used:**  
- Allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, reprisal, or restriction.  
- Complaints involving senior officials, discrimination, or misconduct that can't be addressed at the command level.

• **Typical Issues:**  
- Unlawful orders  
- Misuse of government resources  
- Whistleblower retaliation  
- Restriction from protected communications

• **Outcome:**  
- A report of investigation is completed.  
- Findings may lead to command-directed action, UCMJ punishment, or policy changes.  
- The complainant is notified of the findings.

- Col Joyce Storm

## What is a Headquarters Inspection (HQI)?

The primary purpose of an HQI is to:

• **Assess Mission Readiness:** Determine the HQ's ability to execute its assigned missions effectively.

• **Evaluate Organizational Effectiveness:** Measure how well the HQ is organized, staffed, and equipped to perform its functions.

• **Ensure Compliance:** Verify adherence to applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures.

• **Identify Areas for Improvement:** Pinpoint weaknesses, inefficiencies, and potential risks within the HQ.

• **Promote a Culture of Self-Assessment:** Encourage continuous improvement and a proactive approach to identifying and resolving problems.

### **How an HQI Differs from other Inspections/Evaluations:**

• **Focus:** HQIs are specifically focused on evaluating *headquarters* organizations and their ability to perform their unique functions.

• **Complexity:** HQIs are typically more complex and comprehensive than inspections of smaller units or organizations.

• **Expertise:** HQIs are conducted by specialized teams with expertise in HQ operations and management.

### **Important Considerations:**

• **Transparency:** HQIs are conducted in a transparent manner, with open communication between the inspection team and the HQ being inspected.

• **Collaboration:** The inspection team works collaboratively with the HQ to identify and address areas for improvement.

• **Positive Impact:** The goal of an HQI is to have a positive impact on the HQs' performance and mission effectiveness.

### **In Summary:**

A HQI is a critical tool for ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of DAF HQ organizations. It's a comprehensive assessment that helps identify areas for improvement and maintain a high level of performance.

- Mr. Paul Dunbar

Air Force Inspector General  
Hotline: File a Complaint



USAF Inspector General:  
File a Complaint



USAF Inspector General:  
General Inquiries





**Work Smarter, Not Harder.**

## Claiming Exercise Credit for Real-World Events

Most people dread the word "exercise," but here at USAFA we've found a more efficient way to claim readiness. Because of USAFA's unique mission, the IG leverages "real-world" events to earn training credits, avoiding the artificiality of a planned exercise whenever possible. DAFI 90-301, Table A2.1, outlines several exercise requirements that the IG must capture during each inspection cycle.

The IG uses real-world events to meet requirements by creating After Action Reports (AARs) or through inspectors observing an event as it occurs. To determine if a real-world event qualifies for credit, the IG assesses if the event demonstrates proficiency in several key areas, such as incident response, communication, and resource management. AARs then capture the details of the event and validate its effectiveness in meeting those standards.

Earlier this year, USAFA claimed real-world credit when the installation experienced power and telephone outage in May 2025. The IG embedded within the Wing Operations Center (WOC) -- formerly the Crisis Action Team (CAT) -- and took notes from the initial event to the restoration of services. The IG specifically observed and recorded how the WOC communicated the outage, coordinated resources, and followed established procedures to restore services. This observation fulfilled specific communication and emergency response training requirements.



Sometimes, though, the USAFA IG must conduct exercises to address requirements that real-world events haven't covered. In May 2025, the 10 MDG conducted its annual Mountain Medic Exercise. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC), 10 SFS, Fire and Emergency Services, and medics across the Front Range activated. The IG leveraged Mountain Medic to receive credits for Emergency Management, Major Accident Response Exercise (MARE), and CBRNE. Specifically, the exercise tested the 10 MDG's response to a CBRNE incident and the activation of a Point of Distribution. Instead of closing the 10 MDG and causing an access-to-care shortfall, Mountain Medic allowed the IG to capitalize on a yearly exercise to efficiently meet those training requirements. This tested the 10 MDG's ability to respond effectively to a hazardous incident, manage patient flow, and distribute critical resources.

By utilizing both real-world events and strategically planned exercises, the USAFA IG effectively assesses the readiness and compliance of the installation while minimizing disruption to the overall mission.

- Mr. Mark Estorga



## The IG's Role in Supporting Commanders Against Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Commanders in the Air Force bear a significant responsibility for the efficient and ethical operation of their units. Fraud, waste, and abuse (FWA) can undermine mission readiness, erode public trust, and divert valuable resources. FWA encompasses a spectrum of unethical and illegal actions that harm an organization. Fraud involves intentional deception or misrepresentation for personal gain, such as falsifying claims for reimbursement or engaging in bribery. Waste refers to the careless or extravagant expenditure of resources, including unnecessary purchases or inefficient processes. Abuse constitutes the excessive or improper use of authority or resources, such as using government vehicles for personal trips or creating a hostile work environment. While fraud often involves criminal intent, waste and abuse may stem from negligence or poor judgment. However, all three contribute to the depletion of resources, the erosion of ethical standards, and the weakening of organizational effectiveness.

Fortunately, commanders have a powerful ally in combating these issues: the Air Force Inspector General (IG). The IG serves as an independent and objective agent tasked with promoting integrity, accountability, and efficiency within an organization. The IG's role in combating FWA is multifaceted and provides commanders with invaluable support. Firstly, the IG acts as a confidential channel for reporting suspected FWA, offering whistleblower protection to encourage individuals to

come forward without fear of reprisal. This is crucial, as many instances of FWA are initially discovered by concerned employees. When the IG receives these types of reports, they are analyzed and, if deemed appropriate, will be referred to the appropriate level of command for their action. This ensures that potential problems are brought to light, even if individuals are hesitant to raise them through the chain of command. Additionally, the IG conducts inspections and assessments that proactively identify vulnerabilities to FWA. These evaluations examine various aspects of unit operations, from financial management to resource allocation, seeking to uncover inefficiencies and potential avenues for misconduct. By highlighting these weaknesses, the IG empowers commanders to implement corrective actions and strengthen internal controls, preventing FWA before it occurs. The IG is an indispensable resource for commanders seeking to combat fraud, waste, and abuse. By providing a confidential reporting channel, proactively identifying vulnerabilities, and promoting a culture of integrity, the IG empowers commanders to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct and resource management. A strong partnership between commanders and the IG is essential for ensuring the Air Force remains a trusted and effective force, capable of fulfilling its critical mission.

- Ms. Kathleen Soldano