



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

15/39

Accounting and Information
Management Division

B-257013

April 14, 1994

The Honorable William L. Clay
Chairman, Committee on Post Office and
Civil Service
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter responds to your request that we compare certain operations of the Chief Postal Inspector, who is also the Inspector General (IG) of the Postal Service, with the operations of other IGs. As agreed with your staff, we addressed your questions regarding

- the appointment and removal of IGs in various agencies, including the Postal Service;
- the role of the Chief Postal Inspector and other IGs in providing security for their agencies' personnel and facilities;
- the scope of investigations by the Chief Postal Inspector and other IGs to address physical crimes and illegal drugs within their agencies; and
- the rotation of postal inspectors between audit and investigative work and postal program offices, and whether other offices of inspectors general (OIGs) have similar rotation practices.

Our review showed that under the IG Act, as amended, and other legislation, 32 IGs, including the Chief Postal Inspector, are appointed and may be removed by their respective entity heads. However, the Postmaster General must consult with the Postal Board of Governors on the appointment of the Chief Postal Inspector and obtain its concurrence for removal. In

addition, the act and other legislation provide for 28 other IGs who are appointed by the President with Senate confirmation. These IGs may also be removed by the President.

In its mission of protecting the mails and enforcing postal laws, the Postal Inspection Service has some unique responsibilities and operations which are unlike those of other OIGs. These include providing for the security of postal personnel and buildings; investigating physical crimes such as threats and assaults by and against postal employees; and conducting investigations intended to eliminate the use, sale, and possession of illegal drugs by postal employees. Also, the practice of staff rotation between audits and investigations and the concerted recruitment of staff from program positions is generally unlike that of other OIGs.

We compared requirements of the IG Act, as amended, for the appointment and removal of the Chief Postal Inspector with those applicable to other statutory IGs. We also compared the responsibilities and operations of the Postal Inspection Service to those of the eight OIGs having the largest staffs and annual budgets, and with the Justice and Treasury Department OIGs which, like the Inspection Service, operate in agencies having law enforcement responsibilities.

We reviewed the Postal Inspection Service's policies and procedures, operating instructions, organization charts, and statistical information on the use of staff resources. To gain an understanding of postal inspection activities, we interviewed the Postmaster General, the current and former Chief Postal Inspectors, the Secretary of the Postal Board of Governors, and Inspection Service officials. We compared this information with data obtained from the Assistant IGs for Investigations in the Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, Justice, and Treasury, and the General Services Administration.

BACKGROUND

The functions of the Postal Inspection Service are over 200 years old, tracing their origins back to the activities of Benjamin Franklin in 1737. The Inspection Service has

traditionally been responsible for protecting the mails and enforcing postal laws. In addition, the responsibility for internal audits was transferred to the Chief Postal Inspector on August 1, 1957, and the responsibility for postal plant and personnel security was transferred on January 18, 1971. The 1988 amendments to the IG Act (Public Law 100-504) require that the Chief Postal Inspector also hold the position of Inspector General for the Postal Service.

The combined missions of the Inspection Service are to (1) enforce postal laws and ensure the Postal Service is as free as possible from criminal attack on its employees, its assets, and the mail entrusted to it, (2) provide audit services to help management provide effective and efficient postal services, and (3) prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in the Postal Service. To accomplish these missions, the Inspection Service investigates white collar crimes, robberies, physical attacks on employees and patrons, and illegal use of the mails. It also audits Postal Service programs and activities and provides physical security of personnel and facilities through its postal police force.

The Postal Inspection Service's operating expenses for fiscal year 1993 were \$340.2 million. Its current staff totals 4,354, including 2,108 inspectors, of which 400 have audit assignments at any given time. Also included are 1,423 postal police and 823 support staff. The Inspection Service is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has 30 division offices and 5 crime laboratories.

REQUIREMENTS FOR APPOINTMENT
AND REMOVAL

Under the IG Act, as amended, and other legislation, 32 IGs, including the Chief Postal Inspector, may be appointed and removed by their respective entity heads. Consistent with the act, the Chief Postal Inspector is appointed by the Postmaster General in consultation with the Postal Board of Governors, and may be removed with the Board's concurrence.

Another 28 statutory IGs are appointed by the President with Senate confirmation. These IGs may also be removed by the President. For all IGs, including the Chief Postal Inspector,

the reasons for removal or transfer must be communicated to both houses of the Congress.

PROTECTION OF PERSONNEL
AND FACILITIES

Unlike the other 10 IGs included in our review, the Chief Postal Inspector is responsible for the security of postal personnel and facilities through the postal police force of the Inspection Service. The postal police are armed, uniformed, and provide physical security for postal buildings and personnel at selected Postal Service locations.

In contrast, the other 10 OIGs are not responsible for the physical security of their agencies' personnel and facilities and have no staff assigned to these security functions. This responsibility is assigned to program offices, which rely on contract police or the Federal Protection Service, a unit of the General Services Administration.

INVESTIGATIONS OF PHYSICAL
AND DRUG CRIMES

The Postal Inspection Service's investigations of physical crimes, such as threats and assaults by or against postal employees, and drug crimes are broader in scope than those of the other 10 OIGs. Inspection Service reports for fiscal year 1993 show that approximately 5 percent of total staff hours were used to investigate physical crimes and about 3 percent of staff hours were used to conduct investigations intended to eliminate the use, sale, and possession of illegal drugs by postal employees.

The other 10 OIGs told us they generally do not investigate physical crimes. Four OIGs told us they have these types of investigations, but that they amount to fewer than 10 each year. All 10 OIGs said that they usually refer physical crimes to either the local police authorities or the Federal Protection Service.

The other OIGs also told us that their agencies rely primarily on agency program offices other than the OIGs to ensure a drug free workplace for their employees and that most drug crimes

are referred to local police authorities or the Drug Enforcement Agency. While 4 of the 10 OIGs told us that they do investigate allegations of illegal drug use, the scope of the OIGs' efforts are generally focused on the oversight of specific program areas within their agencies responsible for the enforcement of drug laws.

STAFF ROTATION

Unique to the Inspection Service is the rotation of staff between audit and investigative assignments. Consequently, postal inspectors perform both audits and investigations. Inspection Service officials told us that the ability to move the same staff between audits and investigations allows increased flexibility in auditing and investigating the Postal Service. This practice requires that all postal inspectors be armed and have Series 1811, Criminal Investigator, classification. In contrast, the other 10 OIGs maintain separate audit and investigation staffs who do not rotate between audits and investigations.

Another aspect of staff rotation is the movement of people between Postal Service program positions and the Inspection Service. This occurs mainly as a result of the Inspection Service's practice of recruiting experienced staff from the Postal Service. Inspection Service officials told us that staff rarely move back into program positions. The other 10 OIGs told us that they recruit staff mainly from outside their agencies and that movement into agency program positions is infrequent.

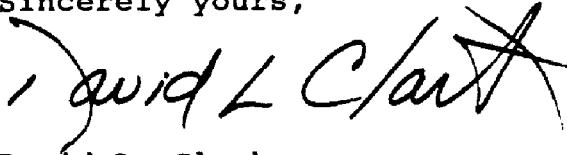
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We conducted our work from November 29, 1993, through March 4, 1994. At the end of our fieldwork, we discussed the facts in this letter with Postal Service officials, including the Chief Postal Inspector, the Assistant and the Deputy Chief Inspectors for Audit, the Deputy Chief Inspector for Operational Support, and the Chief Counsel for Enforcement. Their views have been incorporated where appropriate.

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If you would like to discuss these issues, please contact me at (202) 512-9489 or Jackson Hufnagle, Assistant Director, at (202) 512-9470.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D" and a long, horizontal stroke for the "C".

David L. Clark
Director, Legislative Reviews
and Audit Oversight

(911686)

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