



Office of the
Inspector General

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

March 16, 2011

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

This is in response to your letter of March 8, 2011, to Kevin L. Perkins, in his capacity as Chair of the Integrity Committee of the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). You expressed concern that the Department of Justice's Office of Inspector General would not be able to apply a publicly acceptable level of independence and objectivity in carrying out a review that the Attorney General had requested it to perform regarding an operation of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF).

In accordance with the Integrity Committee's rules, because this matter involved the DOJ-OIG, Mr. Perkins, as an official of the FBI and other Justice Department staff recused themselves from any involvement in this matter. Accordingly, as the Committee's senior member, I am acting as Chairperson for this case.

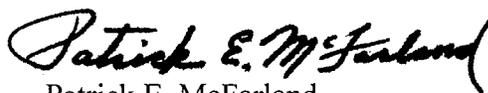
At a special meeting called on March 14, 2011, to consider the issues identified in your letter, the membership concluded unanimously that neither the Committee's authorizing statute nor its internal rules and procedures apply to the matters you identified. The Committee's jurisdiction, as defined by section 7(d)(1) of the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-409, October 14, 2008), is to "receive, review, and refer for investigation allegations of wrongdoing that are made against Inspectors General and staff members." In this context, the Committee has consistently interpreted its mandate to extend only to questions of improper or wrongful conduct on the part of individuals occupying positions of significant responsibility in Inspector General offices, and then, as required by the statute, make recommendations, where appropriate, to the Chair of the CIGIE. However, your statement of reasons why "the public may be unable to trust that the DOJ-OIG is completely disinterested and independent" appears to involve concerns of an institutional or organizational nature, about which the Committee is not empowered to act. Furthermore, the IC has no authority to mandate the recusal of an Office of Inspector General.

However, as the name Integrity Committee implies, scenarios may occur from time to time that cause the membership to comment in a manner that goes beyond the chartered structure. Your stated reservations about the suitability of the DOJ-OIG to properly investigate the Project Gunrunner case present one of those instances.

While that office is currently headed by an acting Inspector General, the organization, managed for many years by former Inspector General Glenn Fine, has established itself as a model of independence, objectivity, and above all, integrity in every aspect of its daily pursuits. It fully earned an unquestioned reputation for successfully addressing highly difficult and sensitive cases, and deserves the trust and confidence of the public. Further, its prior involvement in a review of a portion of the same ATF program can properly be viewed, not as an impediment to objectivity, but rather as an opportunity for the DOJ-OIG staff to have obtained familiarity with the subject-matter and working environment that would be used advantageously in the investigation requested by the Attorney General. Thus, although an Inspector General from another agency could feasibly conduct this work, it would face a learning curve that might involve some delay in completing the assignment. Finally, it appears that the belief DOJ-OIG was not responsive to disclosures made by an ATF agent may have been initially reached without obtaining information from that office.

If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on (202) 606-1200.

Sincerely,



Patrick E. McFarland
Inspector General