



DoD OIG Commemorates National Whistleblower Appreciation Day



National Whistleblower Appreciation Day is recognized each year on July 30th to commemorate the significant contributions of whistleblowers in exposing fraud, waste, and abuse, and other violations of law in Government programs and operations.

Since 2013, the DoD Office of Inspector General (DoD OIG) has held an Annual Hotline Worldwide Outreach event comprised of hotlines from components of the DoD, other Federal

Offices of Inspectors General (OIG), states, and non-Governmental organizations. The Worldwide Outreach provides an opportunity for hotlines to share and refine best practices they can use to better support whistleblowers. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic, the 8th Annual Hotline Worldwide Outreach will not be held this year.

It is important, however, to recognize the crucial role whistleblowers play in effective government. A whistleblower is someone who makes a good faith report to an authorized recipient regarding violations of law, rule, or regulation; gross waste of funds; gross mismanagement; an abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. Our Government and its taxpayers rely on whistleblowers to disclose violations of law without fear of reprisal. “Whistleblowers play a crucial role in assisting Inspectors General by exposing fraud, waste and abuse in Government programs and operations— they must be protected from reprisal when they make protected disclosures,” said Marguerite Garrison, Deputy Inspector General, Administrative Investigations, DoD OIG.

To help facilitate protected whistleblower disclosures, the DoD OIG manages the DoD Hotline for individuals to disclose allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, or misconduct related to DoD programs and operations. Protecting the identity of whistleblowers who wish to remain anonymous or confidential enables a whistleblower to share their concerns without revealing their identity. Inspectors General provide an added layer of protection of the identity of a confidential whistleblower. “Whistleblower disclosures can save lives as well as billions of taxpayer dollars. Inspectors General will strive to protect the identity of the whistleblower unless the Inspector General determines such disclosure is unavoidable during the course of an investigation,” said Sean O’Donnell, Acting DoD Inspector General.

Whistleblower disclosures have resulted in significant DoD OIG investigations. For example, in 2007, the DoD Hotline was contacted by a whistleblower calling from overseas to report a crime. That call resulted in the conviction and imprisonment of U.S. contractors who were selling the U.S. Government substandard, foreign-manufactured ammunition repackaged to conceal that it was manufactured in China. The call would later be reenacted as the infamous whistleblower call in the movie, “War Dogs.”



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Another more recent example is Glenn Defense Marine Asia (GDMA) PTE, LTD, which is one of the largest and most complex public corruption criminal cases in DoD history, involving bribery and fraud by its chairman and owner, Leonard Glenn Francis, also known as “Fat Leonard.” The case involved Navy personnel accepting gratuities from GDMA in exchange for providing GDMA with classified ship movements, and steering business to the GDMA ship husbanding services.

This case resulted in Francis, several former GDMA employees, and 17 former Navy and DoD officials—including a rear admiral and a Senior Executive Service member—pleading guilty to criminal conduct in addition to the indictment of nine senior officers.

The DoD Hotline is the hub of the DoD OIG, working collaboratively with DoD Components, Federal agencies and local law enforcement agencies, when appropriate. This requires a network of partners and interactive processes that correlate with the unique processes of each partner agency. Some of the most significant matters reported to the DoD OIG, such as the examples mentioned previously, are reported through the DoD Hotline and involve threats to national security, such as potential espionage and threats to Government property and personnel, including the President of the United States. “The whole-of-government-approach across the hotline community of practice is the cornerstone to developing and continuously refining best practices to quickly adapt to the ever-changing environment and making timely, actionable, efficient, and effective use of the valuable information provided by whistleblowers,” said Patrick Gookin, DoD Hotline Director, DoD OIG. This collaborative approach also applies when working cross-functionally with other directorates within the DoD OIG.

DoD Hotline referrals to the Defense Criminal Investigative Service have increased by 30 percent since FY 2016. These referrals have resulted in the recovery of nearly \$360 million and 27 suspensions and debarments from the DoD acquisition system. When a Defense Criminal Investigative Service investigation discovers an allegation that a whistleblower suffered retaliation for blowing the whistle, the matter is reported to the DoD Hotline and subsequently to the Whistleblower Reprisal Investigations Directorate.

When a whistleblower is the subject of retaliation for making a protected disclosure, it is important that the Government make them whole. The DoD OIG Whistleblower Reprisal Investigations directorate investigates allegations of whistleblower reprisal made by members of the Armed Forces; appropriated and non-appropriated fund civilian employees of the DoD; members of the DoD intelligence community and all DoD employees with access to classified information; employees of DoD contractors, subcontractors, grantees and subgrantees; and personal services contractors. As reflected in the DoD OIG [Semi-annual Report to Congress](#) for the six-month period ending March 31, 14 complaints referred from the DoD Hotline to the Whistleblower Reprisal Investigations directorate substantiated that responsible management officials retaliated against whistleblowers who had made protected disclosures.



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It is important that Whistleblowers understand that they are protected against retaliation for making a protected disclosure. “Whistleblowers are our eyes and ears to wrongdoing that threatens the public interest. For them to continue in that role, they need to believe that it is both worthwhile and safe to come forward,” said Shanna Devine, Director of the House Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman, who was scheduled to be the key note speaker at the 8th Annual Hotline Worldwide Outreach. Whistleblower Protection Coordinators and Whistleblower Ombudsman do not receive disclosures or complaints, but there are indirect ways in which they can support whistleblowers through generic guidance, such as best practices to consider when making a disclosure, and a roadmap of the relevant laws.

Whistleblowers provide a valuable public service by reporting wrongdoing in Government programs and operations. Inspectors General rely heavily on the information that whistleblowers provide and will continue to be an efficient and confidential means to report violations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Government. If you are a DoD employee and believe you have witnessed wrongdoing or unlawful practices within the DoD, click [here](#). To learn more about whistleblower protections and related statutes, visit the DoD OIG Whistleblower Protection Coordinator’s webpage, [here](#).