

Thank you for using NewsLibrary

The Washington Times

Independent FBI overseer proposed

June 25, 2001

Section: A

NATION

Edition: 2

Page: A4

Jerry SeperTHE WASHINGTON TIMES

Two senators have introduced bipartisan legislation to create a separate, fully independent inspector general to oversee the **FBI** in a move they said will "increase accountability" for the nation's top federal law enforcement agency.

Sens. Richard J. Durbin, Illinois Democrat, and Arlen Specter, Pennsylvania Republican, both members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said there is "no reason" the **FBI** should not have the "same level of scrutiny" now available to 57 other federal agencies.

"The lack of accountability at the **FBI** has reached a level of national concern," Mr. Durbin said. "It's time for the nation's top law enforcement agency to be held to the same level of professionalism as every other agency of government."

The senators said that while the Justice Department has its own Office of Inspector General, it lacks authority without permission from the attorney general to investigate accusations of **FBI** misconduct. They said that under their proposed legislation, an independent inspector general for the **FBI** would report directly to the attorney general.

Currently, they said, the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General has several agencies under its purview and there is no requirement that it report any of the **FBI**'s own internal inspection service findings and activities in its semi-annual report to Congress. Additionally, the **FBI**'s own inspection division is often staffed by individuals on temporary assignment, they said.

"There is no reason the **FBI** should be protected from the same level of professional scrutiny the Central Intelligence Agency and virtually every other agency faces," Mr. Durbin said.

The **FBI** has come under fire in the past several months in the wake of a series of missteps, including a failure to turn over 4,000 pages of documents in the Timothy McVeigh case as required by a court order. It also saw one of its own, Robert P. Hanssen, a 27-year agent, arrested on espionage charges, and had to acknowledge he worked in the bureau's counterintelligence division during the 15-year period he is accused of stealing U.S. secrets.

The **FBI** also was criticized for its handling of the investigation of former Alamos scientist Wen Ho Lee, who initially was identified as a spying suspect but eventually pleaded guilty to one of 59 counts charged in a December 1998 indictment in a plea agreement with the Justice Department. Last week, the **FBI** arrested one of its own security specialists on charges of selling classified files to organized crime figures and others under investigation.

Three separate investigations of the **FBI** are under way: one by a Justice Department **management** team headed by Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson, another by the department's Office of Inspector General and a third by former **FBI** and CIA Director William Webster.

The **FBI**'s problems have also drawn the attention of Congress, which has called for numerous investigations and reforms.

All content © 2001-, by News World Communications, Inc.; 3600 New York Avenue, NE; Washington, DC 20002 and may not be republished without permission.

All archives are stored on a SAVE (tm) newspaper library system from MediaStream Inc., a Knight-Ridder Inc. company.