

NYPD INSPECTOR GENERAL: FACT V. FICTION

The Brennan Center welcomes City Council Speaker Quinn’s support for creating a police monitor. Unfortunately, some who are against oversight of the NYPD have mischaracterized how it would operate. This fact sheet brings clarity to the debate by separating fact from fiction. For additional information, see the Brennan Center’s [recent proposal](#) to establish an Inspector General for the NYPD.

<p>Fiction: An inspector general will make New Yorkers less safe.</p>	<p>Fact: The FBI and CIA have operated for decades with an inspector general overseeing their activities and have never asserted that the office hampers their efforts. The LAPD, which has also operated for more than a decade with an inspector general, has seen crime rates drop and improvements in police-community relations. An NYPD inspector general will make New Yorkers safer by ensuring that the police use practices that are effective. By increasing transparency and accountability, an inspector general can also help restore trust between the police and the communities they serve.</p>
<p>Fiction: An inspector general will create two competing police commissioners, leading to questions in the department’s ranks about who is actually in charge.</p>	<p>Fact: An inspector general never makes operational decisions, so there is no risk of confusion about lines of authority. No one doubts the Director of the FBI leads the Bureau, not its inspector general. In New York, the Department of Investigation oversees some 300 city agencies, but not the police.</p>
<p>Fiction: An inspector general would have the authority to impose changes on the NYPD and interfere with law enforcement operations.</p>	<p>Fact: An inspector general would not be involved in operational decisions and cannot impose changes on the NYPD or discipline police officers. He or she would review and audit police policies and practices and offer recommendations for improvement to the Police Commissioner and elected officials to assist them in ensuring that the NYPD is functioning efficiently and legally.</p>
<p>Fiction: It is irregular for an inspector general to monitor police programs, such as stop and frisk or the surveillance of American Muslim communities.</p>	<p>Fact: Monitoring law enforcement programs is precisely what inspectors general do. The FBI and CIA inspectors general audit those agencies’ highly sensitive operations. The LAPD’s inspector general does so as well. It’s a time-tested arrangement that protects operational secrets and increases transparency and accountability.</p>
<p>Fiction: An inspector general is unnecessary and would duplicate the work of district attorneys, the NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau, the Civilian Complaint Review Board, and/or the Commission to Combat Police Corruption.</p>	<p>Fact: Existing oversight mechanisms in the city focus on instances of corruption or individual cases of police misconduct, but do not look at the NYPD’s overall policies and practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mission of Internal Affairs is “effective corruption control.” • The Civilian Complaint Review Board examines allegations against individual officers. • The Commission to Combat Police Corruption studies the NYPD’s systems for combating corruption. • New York’s DAs may prosecute criminal behavior by police officers, but do not actively oversee NYPD policies or practices.