



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Drug Enforcement Administration

*Office of the Administrator*

*Springfield, VA 22152*

June 25, 2026

Mr. M. Sean O'Neill  
Assistant Inspector General (Performing the Duties of the Inspector General)  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of the Inspector General  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Assistant Inspector General O'Neill:

I write to respectfully request that the Office of the Inspector General conduct an independent review of the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) conduct in connection with the investigation that has become the subject of public allegations by DEA Special Agent David M. Howell. I have copied Inspector General nominee Don R. Berthiaume on this correspondence in light of his pending nomination and the possibility that he may ultimately oversee or receive the results of this review upon confirmation.

The allegations have generated significant public attention and have raised questions regarding DEA's operational decisions, supervisory oversight, and response to concerns raised during and after the investigation. While I remain confident that DEA personnel acted lawfully, professionally, and in accordance with Department of Justice (DOJ) policy and established investigative practices at the time, I believe an independent review by the Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is appropriate to objectively examine the agency's actions and reinforce public confidence in the integrity of the oversight processes.

Specifically, I respectfully request that OIG review:

- DEA's operational conduct during the underlying investigation, including operational decision-making, supervisory oversight, and adherence to applicable DOJ and DEA policies;
- DEA's assessment and handling of allegations subsequently raised by Special Agent Howell;
- DEA's administrative response to those allegations, including whether agency policies, procedures, and standards were appropriately followed throughout the review process; and
- Whether any recommendations are warranted to strengthen DEA policies, training, supervision, documentation, or operational practices in future complex investigations.

This request should not be interpreted as reflecting any lack of confidence in the professionalism or integrity of DEA personnel or in the investigative decisions made during this matter. Rather, it reflects my belief that allegations of this nature—particularly those that have received widespread public attention—are best addressed through an independent, objective review conducted by the Department’s designated oversight authority.


If DEA’s actions are confirmed to have been appropriate, such a review will strengthen public confidence in the agency and in the professionalism of its workforce. If opportunities for improvement are identified, DEA is committed to implementing appropriate corrective actions and incorporating lessons learned into future operations.

DEA will provide the OIG its full cooperation and make available all personnel, records, investigative materials, policies, and other information necessary to facilitate a comprehensive review.

The men and women of DEA confront extraordinarily dangerous criminal organizations every day, frequently making difficult operational decisions under rapidly evolving circumstances. They deserve an objective evaluation based upon the complete factual record, and the American people deserve confidence that allegations concerning the conduct of their federal law enforcement agencies are reviewed independently, fairly, and without preconception.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for OIG’s continued commitment to independent oversight in service of the Department of Justice and the American people.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terrance C. Cole". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Terrance C. Cole

Administrator

Drug Enforcement Administration

cc: Mr. Don R. Berthiaume  
Nominee for Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Justice