



## IRS Chief Reveals Hiring Plan for Armed Agents

### Description

IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel on Thursday provided details about plans to hire armed agents in the agency's criminal investigations division, amid Republican concerns about a proliferation of gun-toting tax enforcers.

Werfel said in a call with reporters that the share of staff working in the IRS Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) unit would not climb above the current level of around 2.6 percent of the IRS's overall workforce.

There are "no plans to increase" the hiring rate at the IRS-CI unit, Werfel said on the call. "That will stay at its current rate."

The IRS-CI examines potential criminal activity related to tax crimes and makes recommendations for prosecution to the tax division of the Department of Justice. Agents at the criminal investigations division are authorized to carry guns and use lethal force.

Dubbed "gun-toters," the armed special agents in the unit are responsible for enforcing those parts of the tax code in which violations amount to crimes, according to former IRS Special Agent Robert Nordlander.

According to the IRS-CI's annual report ([pdf](#)), there were roughly 2,077 special agents in the criminal investigations unit as of the 2022 budget year, which represents around 2.6 percent of the IRS's entire workforce.

The IRS employed 80,006 full time staffers as of the 2022 budget year, according to the agency's strategic operating plan released on April 6.

The plan indicates how the IRS plans to use the \$80 billion in new funding provided by Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act. The new cash infusion would be used to hire thousands of new employees, improve tax enforcement and customer service, and audit wealthy taxpayers and corporations.

The plan indicates the agency intends to hire nearly 20,000 new full-time employees during the 2023

and 2024 fiscal years, including 8,782 hires in enforcement and 13,883 in taxpayer service.

Assuming no attrition owing to resignation and retirement, that would put the IRS's total workforce by 2024 at roughly 100,000 employees.

In order to maintain the IRS-CI's 2.6 percent share of the entire workforce, it would need to bring up the number of armed agents to roughly 2,600 from the current 2,077.

Carissa Cutrell, a public affairs officer at IRS-CI, told The Epoch Times in an emailed statement that the unit is [hoping to hire](#) between 300 and 350 special agents this year.

This means that, if the following year another 300–350 agents are hired, that would put the total number between 2,677 and 2,777. That's around 2.7-2.8 percent of the IRS's overall projected full-time workforce of around 100,000 by the end of 2024.

In the mid-1990s, the criminal investigations unit had around 3,500 special agents and Cutrell said they lose between 150 and 175 agents each year owing to retirement and attrition.

The IRS's strategic plan did not provide hiring estimates beyond 2024. The agency noted that its operating plan will be updated annually and it will adjust its hiring plan.

Republicans have warned that the IRS's \$80 billion cash infusion would be used to hire an "army of 87,000" tax enforcers.

The 87,000 figure comes from a 2021 Treasury Department report ([pdf](#)) that estimated that the IRS could hire 86,852 full-time employees over the course of a decade if it were to receive an \$80 billion funding boost.

## **'Army of 87,000' Tax Enforcers?**

The idea of an "army of 87,000" new tax enforcement agents surged into the spotlight and became an internet meme after Republicans warned that the \$80 billion in new IRS funding under the Inflation Reduction Act would squeeze ordinary Americans for "every last penny."

"87,000 more IRS enforcers would make the IRS bigger than the Pentagon, the State Department, and Border Patrol COMBINED," Republican National Committee (RNC) Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said in a Twitter post last summer, when the Inflation Reduction Act was passed and the IRS funding boost hit headlines.

President Joe Biden, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, former IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig, and others have pushed back on such framing of the funding boost.

They've insisted the money would be used to increase collections from high-earners and help with customer service, while Americans earning less than \$400,000 wouldn't face increased scrutiny from the agency.

As regards armed staffers at the agency's criminal investigations division, some have questioned the

need for IRS agents to carry guns.

Nordlander, a former IRS-CI special agent, told Accounting Today that agents need to carry weapons because they never know what hazards lurk behind closed doors when executing warrants.

“You don’t know if the guy is a drug dealer that happens to just file false tax returns,” he said, recalling a case where someone arrested for tax crimes ended up also being wanted for armed robbery.

The IRS-CI itself says agents might need to respond to “life-threatening situations” on the job, be willing and able to participate in “dangerous assignments” and protect themselves and others from physical attacks, and be willing to use “deadly force.”

by Tom Ozimek

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