



## State Police official faces theft charges



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

By [Kay Lazar](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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Amid intense scrutiny of hefty overtime payouts and financial irregularities at the Massachusetts State Police, the agency's head of payroll will face criminal charges for allegedly stealing from the department, officials said.

Denise Ezekiel, the State Police director of payroll, is charged with larceny on accusations that she misappropriated over \$23,000 in public money, prosecutors with the Middlesex district attorney's office

said Wednesday.

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Ezekiel, who oversaw a payroll last year of at least \$290 million, is accused of stealing money over the last two years related to travel and reimbursement expenses. She is scheduled to be arraigned Monday in Framingham District Court.

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Ezekiel worked as a civilian supervisor and has been on unpaid leave since Nov. 1, said State Police spokesman David Procopio.

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The criminal charges are the latest black mark on an agency [beset by controversies and scandals](#) — many of them involving money. It's unclear, however, if Ezekiel is tied to the other financial probes at the department. Details of the alleged theft were first published Wednesday by MassLive.

In February, the department posted an online job opening for a payroll director position. The duties include managing six staff members who handle timesheets, overtime and paid details, and more.

Ezekiel, 49, of Holbrook, has worked for the department since at least 2013 and was paid at annual rate of \$95,000, records show. She previously worked at the state's Department of Revenue.

She did not respond to a request for comment.

Sarah Finlaw, spokeswoman for Governor Charlie Baker, said in an e-mailed statement: "The Baker-Polito administration is pleased that the State Police took action and expects [Ezekiel] to be held accountable for this alleged criminal activity."

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In recent weeks, lawmakers have ratcheted up criticism of the state's largest police force, called for investigations, and sought the creation of a special legislative commission.

On Wednesday, the Globe [reported](#) that state officials had recently released new State Police pay figures for its Troop F division. The figures revealed more than \$3.4 million in payouts had been hidden from the public.



Troop F is a Massachusetts Port Authority-funded unit that patrols Logan International Airport and the Seaport area. The disclosure followed a series of reports raising questions about payroll transparency, extraordinary overtime spending, and oversight.

At the same time, [Troop E](#) is at the center of a separate scandal regarding overtime, involving at least 30 troopers who allegedly put in for shifts they didn't work. That matter is under investigation by the state attorney general's office.

Dennis Galvin, president of the Massachusetts Association for Professional Law Enforcement, said he and others are dismayed by the drumbeat of revelations about the State Police.

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"I spent 30 years of my life working to try to maintain the reputation of that department, and we're watching it unravel and it's very disheartening," said Galvin, who retired from the State Police in 2003 and now leads the 35-member group of current and former law enforcement officials and criminal justice educators.

"There are hundreds of dedicated men and women on the State Police who are working hard to uphold the law and protect the citizens, and this undermines what they're doing and this demoralizes them," added Galvin.

"I can almost guarantee you that the rank-and-file folks are trying to go out and do their jobs every day and this is affecting them and how the public views them and they're wondering about their own leadership," he said. "This has to stop."

Galvin called on Baker to convene a "blue-ribbon commission" of nationally recognized experts in law enforcement management to review the entire department.

State lawmakers are seeking tighter oversight of the troubled agency, as several investigations push forward. Last week, House leaders called for a special legislative commission to study promotion policies at State Police as well as the agency's overall management structure.

*Kay Lazar can be reached at [kay.lazar@globe.com](mailto:kay.lazar@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter [@GlobeKayLazar](#). Matt*

*Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@Mrochele](#).*

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