



STATE POLICE TURMOIL

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State Police payroll head struggled with debt before alleged theft began



KEITH BEDFORD/GLOBE STAFF

Denise Ezekiel, a former payroll director for the State Police who is alleged to have stolen nearly \$24,000 from the department, stood in court on Monday.

By [John R. Ellement](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF APRIL 23, 2018

FRAMINGHAM — The former head of payroll for the Massachusetts State Police kept her head bowed in

court Monday as she pleaded not guilty to stealing \$23,900 in public funds.

Denise M. Ezekiel, 49, was released without bail after her arraignment in Framingham District Court.

State Police say Ezekiel, of Holbrook, deposited \$23,900 of state money into her personal account, falsely claiming the 29 payments were reimbursements for travel and training expenses.

David Procopio, spokesman for State Police, said that investigators have reviewed overtime and reimbursement records during her tenure, which began in 2013, and found no other misuse of state funds.

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“As part of our investigation into Ms. Ezekiel’s alleged theft, we audited overtime and reimbursement pay she received throughout her entire career at MSP,” Procopio wrote in an e-mail. “We found no other thefts or irregularities.”

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After the hearing, she was escorted to a Jeep Cherokee by a plainclothes state trooper and rode off. She is due back in court June 4.

Quincy District Court records show Ezekiel faced significant financial troubles shortly before the alleged theft began in 2016.

In late 2014 and early 2015, a year before the theft, Ezekiel was sued three times by three credit card companies, which claimed she

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owed them an estimated \$23,000, according to court records.

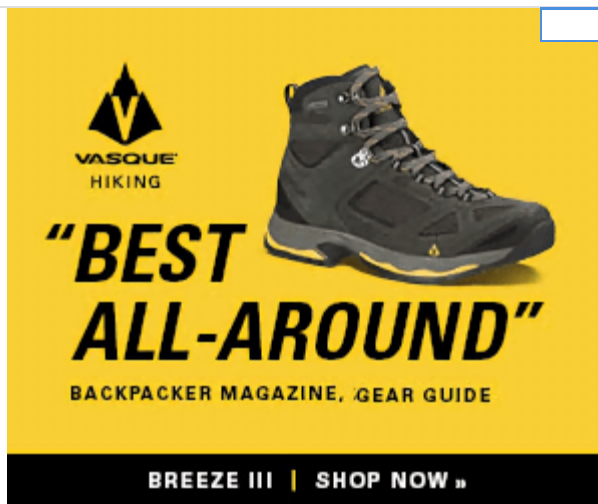
In March 2015, Ezekiel was ordered to pay some \$14,000 in one case, and records show she paid off the entire amount six months later.

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Records for Troop F, hidden from public view for years, portray a lucrative, overtime-laden operation that outpaces the compensation totals of troopers working in other State Police divisions.

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She settled another case for \$2,336 that same month.

In the third case, Ezekiel agreed to pay \$6,500 in 2014, but it was not clear from court records whether she has paid that debt.

The company has not recently tried to recover money from her, records show.

Before joining the State Police in 2013, Ezekiel worked at the state Department of Revenue dating back to 1987, records show. Ezekiel, a civilian supervisor, was paid \$95,000 a year.

Officials at the Department of Revenue declined to comment Monday.

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The State Police investigation into Ezekiel, who last year oversaw a payroll of at least \$290 million, overlapped with probes into alleged pay fraud by troopers.

Procopio said last week that Ezekiel's case had "no connection" to those other cases. He said investigators audited the payroll department and have not discovered missing money by "anyone else in that unit."

The agency has been under fire for several other scandals — including other payroll blunders — prompting additional investigations and criticism from lawmakers, some of whom have called for greater oversight of the agency.

Although the criminal complaint against Ezekiel was filed March 6, it was not known publicly until [Wednesday](#), when MassLive reported that her name was on a list of suspended State Police employees. Ezekiel had applied to receive pension benefits with the State Retirement Board just five days before the criminal complaint was filed, records show.

Officials at the state retirement board said that unless someone has been convicted of a crime related to their employment, retirement benefits are processed normally.

If there is such a conviction, the board can vote to revoke that person's pension and move to recoup any money beyond what the person paid into their pension over the course of their career.



A state trooper escorted Ezekiel into court.

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