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STATE POLICE TURMOIL

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Baker's plan to cut State Police OT spending faces major hurdles



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Massachusetts State Police headquarters is seen in Framingham.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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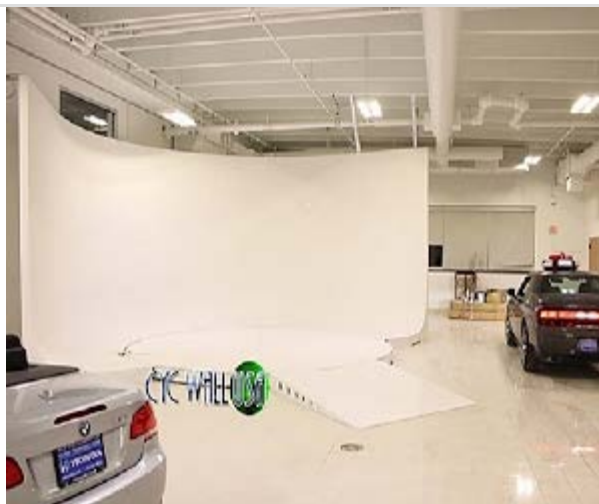
In early May, the governor and the head of the State Police [promised a crackdown](#) on overtime spending within the law enforcement agency, including a decrease of up to 40 percent in one of its most costly units.

But a Globe review of internal documents, past cost-control efforts, and the composition of Troop F

suggests that hitting the high end of that projection is unlikely, if not impossible. And Governor Charlie Baker's administration is now acknowledging that their overtime savings goal largely hinges on funding that doesn't exist.

Scaling back overtime to this degree would require a steady stream of new police recruits, but lawmakers so far have rejected such funding in the next state budget.

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In addition, a whopping two-thirds of the officers in Troop F are [eligible for retirement](#). If many of them leave, the troop that patrols Logan Airport and the Seaport would wind up where it was before: understaffed and hemorrhaging money through overtime.

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Even an internal study, cited by Baker and obtained by the Globe, said that a 40 percent decrease in overtime spending was theoretically possible in Troop F, but ultimately was improbable.

“It seems like a superficial attempt to try to assuage people,” said Brenda Bond, an associate professor at Suffolk University who specializes in organizational change in law enforcement.

“It gives people another thing to point to that doesn't reflect real, genuine reform, and it just

reinforces the perception — and perhaps the reality — that there's some significant issues with

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Dozens of current and former Troop E members have been linked in recent months to the alleged pay scandal, resulting in a wide-scale audit, a series of internal State Police investigations and the disbanding of the entire unit.

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transparency and the culture at the agency.”

Spokesmen for Gilpin and Baker said they were encouraged by a 27 percent dip in overtime hours in the three weeks since they transferred troopers to Troop F. And while they may fall short of a 40 percent cut, the changes could still save the state hundreds of thousands of dollars.

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The [focus on police force pay](#) has only intensified in the months since Baker and Gilpin announced the proposal. One former trooper has pleaded guilty in a Troop E overtime scandal and three others have been charged with embezzlement. Dozens more are under the microscope.

Meanwhile, Gilpin and Baker are racing to overhaul an agency whose troubles are being laid bare in federal court.

Following Globe inquiries last week, State Police officials and a Baker spokesman acknowledged that achieving their goal relies on money for new recruits.

Baker's budget proposal included \$5.2 million for new recruits, but both the House and Senate excluded funding in their proposals and the budget process is winding down.

State Police staffing has fluctuated only slightly in the last five years, and as of January, was at its highest level since 2014, according to statistics provided by the agency.

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Spokesmen for Baker and Gilpin said they didn't oversell the changes, stressing that they've consistently said a 40 percent reduction in Troop F overtime is a best-case scenario — not a guarantee.

Troop F — which is staffed and managed by the State Police but funded by the quasi-public Massachusetts Port Authority — was thrust into the spotlight in March when the Globe [discovered payroll records](#) for the troop had been kept hidden for years.

The records showed staggering levels of [overtime that pushed many trooper salaries](#) above \$200,000. In early April, Baker and Gilpin unveiled a slate of changes amid an outcry over the overtime matter and other scandals.

A month later, [they issued updates](#) on changes within the agency and announced plans to add 30 members to Troop F. The troopers were transferred from other units in the agency.

“Increasing staff levels will also reduce the reliance on overtime hours, which, holding all other factors equally, are projected to decline by up to 40 percent as a result of the staffing increase,” the officials noted in a press release.

However, they did not disclose that study’s projection was only mentioned as being possible “on paper,” or theoretically. The study, a joint effort by the State Police and Massport, ultimately described a 40 percent cut as impractical.

The study noted that many of the 30 troopers added to Troop F are senior officers entitled to maximum amounts of time off. Also, some new troopers were eyed for K-9 duties, which require extra training. The biggest hurdle? Troop F’s staffing is likely to shrink because two-thirds of its troopers are eligible for retirement, the study says. Previous attempts to lower the troop’s overtime by increasing staff generated fleeting success.

In 2012, Troop F’s staffing was boosted by 20 troopers. Records show overtime spending dipped the next year by about 12 percent to \$4.6 million. But overtime spending has risen significantly every year since. Last year, \$9.5 million was spent on overtime for Troop F.

The State Police analysis of Troop F overtime spending did not explore [a hotly debated suggestion for curbing overtime](#) — having the troop share, if not surrender, its exclusive coverage of Boston’s Seaport to the city’s Police Department.

Troop F’s control over the several-block section of the Seaport is based on a law enacted when that part of the city was little more than industrial warehouses and parking lots.

Boston police have asked to at least share jurisdiction so its officers can legally make arrests and provide other services there. But State Police for years have refused to relinquish control.

Even after Baker in early April ordered the State Police to consider a plan for the two agencies to work together, the agency ignored his request to explore the issue in the Troop F staffing study.

Officials declined to answer questions about why the issue wasn’t studied.

Kay Lazar of the Globe staff contributed to this report.

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