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### State Police to hire firm to audit pay practices after overtime fraud scandal



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

**Massachusetts State Police headquarters is seen in Framingham.**

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 24, 2018

Massachusetts State Police will hire Ernst & Young to audit the department’s payroll policies and other protocols in the wake of an overtime fraud scandal involving dozens of troopers and retired workers. The agency announced Monday it has signed a contract with the firm to independently assess the department’s “policies, protocols, internal controls, and record management systems,” to bring them “into line with best practices in similar organizations.”

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A key area of focus for Ernst & Young will be how the state's largest law enforcement agency manages and monitors employee earnings and benefits, including regular, overtime, and detail pay, the agency said.

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“We are substantively increasing the operational and fiscal oversight of this agency to increase efficiency and accountability to the public,” State Police Colonel Kerry Gilpin said in a statement.

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The firm will be paid up to \$275,000 and is expected to start the review this week, said department

spokesman David Procopio.

The move fulfills a promise Gilpin and Governor Charlie Baker made in early April when they vowed to hire outside auditors to review the agency as part of a slate of reforms to try to restore public trust that was badly damaged after a [series of controversies](#).

The [most high-profile problem](#) for the department has been the findings of its ongoing internal audit, which has found 46 current or former troopers collected pay for overtime hours they didn't work while writing "ghost" traffic citations to cover up their absence. That triggered parallel ongoing federal and state criminal investigations that have led to charges of embezzlement or fraud against eight troopers, with prosecutors saying to expect more.

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Ernst & Young will also review employees' use of leave, the agency said.

The Globe last month [detailed](#) how dozens of troopers have been suspected of abusing of sick leave in recent years, though they received little, if any, punishment beyond an infrequent written warning. State Police this spring beefed up its internal inspections and investigatory units and [disbanded](#) the division that the alleged overtime fraud stemmed from, Troop E, which patrolled the Massachusetts Turnpike.

But other key reforms pledged this spring remain unfulfilled.

Gilpin and Baker in April said the department would start conducting quarterly audits of the 50 highest-paid troopers "to ensure they adhere to rules regarding limits on hours that can be worked per day and

per week,” and that the results would be made public.

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Yet nearly two quarters of the year have passed since, and the audits remain “ongoing,” according to Procopio, who did not say when results are expected.

Officials also have not yet installed GPS monitoring technology in unmarked cruisers and other department vehicles, something they vowed to do in the spring after [activating](#) the capability in the department’s 1,000-plus marked cruisers to more effectively deploy troopers and keep tabs on them. Procopio said department officials are still deciding which vendor to buy the equipment from, noting they hope to make their choice soon.

The department is also continuing to assess its options for rolling out a body camera program it promised to develop. Procopio said the agency hopes to launch a pilot program in early 2019.

On Monday, Baker applauded Gilpin’s efforts “to increase accountability and transparency at the State Police,” while saying more must be done.

“While the vast majority of state police troopers serve the Commonwealth honorably each day, we know there is more work to do in strengthening policies and procedures to ensure taxpayer dollars are being used responsibly by the department,” Baker said in a statement.

State Police officials also announced they have seen a reduction, albeit less than they’d hoped, in overtime hours worked by troopers in one division that came under fire recently because of [particularly high spending on overtime](#).

The department, as part of its reforms in the spring, assigned 30 more troopers to Troop F, the division that patrols Logan International Airport and other properties managed by the Massachusetts Port Authority. The move aimed to reduce the need to backfill shifts with overtime.

The agency on Monday said overtime hours in Troop F were 29 percent lower during the month of August than officials had previously projected.

Still, the reduction falls short of Gilpin and Baker’s goal of cutting overtime hours by up to 40 percent in the troop.

The Globe [reported](#) in July that cutting hours in that troop by 40 percent was unlikely, if not impossible, based on a review of internal documents and past cost-control efforts.

In addition to Ernst & Young, State Police have [other outside eyes watching](#) .

The state inspector general's office is launching an independent auditing unit, researchers at UMass Boston will study the department's management structure, and a legislative commission will explore ways to bolster transparency and accountability with recruitment, hiring, promotion, and retention at the agency.

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