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State Police boss launches probe into union-related payroll fraud allegations

















JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Colonel Kerry Gilpin said an initial review found troopers were using a taxpayer-funded time-off benefit afforded to union members for illegitimate purposes.

## **By Matt Rocheleau**

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The head of the Massachusetts State Police has launched an investigation into new accusations of trooper payroll fraud, alleging some members used the union as an excuse to take paid leave.

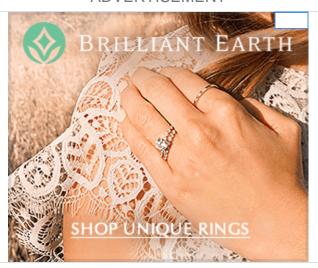
Colonel Kerry Gilpin said an initial review found troopers were using a taxpayer-funded time-off benefit, afforded to union members, for illegitimate purposes, according to a letter she issued late last month to the State Police Association of Massachusetts, or SPAM.

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"SPAM officers and members cannot continue to receive compensation and benefits from the department to which they are not lawfully entitled," Gilpin wrote in her letter.





In response, the union, which represents nearly all of the agency's 2,150 officers, filed a complaint with the state labor relations department opposing changes Gilpin announced to union leave practices. The filing did not contest Gilpin's allegations.

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The department uses public money to allow union members a limited amount of leave to participate in union activities. Gilpin believes troopers abused that privilege and said the department would crack down on the practice.

It's unclear whether an administrative or criminal investigation is taking place. A State Police spokesman did not respond to requests for comment Wednesday. Union officials declined to comment.

The back-and-forth comes amid a time of tumult for both groups.

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alleged payroll abuse. Meanwhile, the head of the union, Dana Pullman, <u>abruptly resigned</u> late last month amid a separate federal investigation into the possible illegal reimbursement of campaign donations by union members.

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Gilpin's letter to SPAM was dated Sept. 28, the same day that Pullman resigned after six years at the helm. He cited "personal reasons" for leaving the union.

Gilpin's letter was included in the now-public labor complaint.

Gilpin wrote that a review of department records found union members had used union leave on days when they were not scheduled to work and to attend their own disciplinary hearings.

Gilpin said the department will start requiring advance written notices specifying why members need to use union leave. Gilpin also barred members from using department resources, including cruisers, for union business.

In addition, Gilpin said the department will move to end its practice of paying for two full-time union

positions via the union leave policy. She said the department will "make adjustments to past compensation and accrued benefits improperly granted."

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In its labor complaint, the union alleged Gilpin and other officials failed to bargain in good faith in unilaterally changing longstanding policies and practices surrounding union leave. Those practices have been outlined in language included in the union's contract for more than a decade.

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