

# New watchdog unit finds more overtime pay problems, lax oversight at State Police

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) Globe Staff, Updated March 5, 2020, 7:47 p.m.



Topic: 26lunapic Reporter: JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

Payroll violations and lax oversight are common across the Massachusetts State Police force and extend far beyond the corrupt unit that patrolled the Massachusetts Turnpike, according to a new report from the inspector general's office.

Investigators found that troopers who worked paid details at Logan International Airport had cut corners for years, improperly collecting pay while commuting to and from their regular shifts. Meanwhile, a lack of supervision of overtime patrols permeated the state's largest law enforcement agency.

The report, from the newly created Division of State Police Oversight, a five-person unit within Inspector General Glenn A. Cunha's office, makes clear that mismanagement went further than the now-defunct Troop E, which patrolled the turnpike. Forty-six former Troop E members have been accused of taking overtime pay for hours they did not work. Nine have been convicted.

The report, published online last week without fanfare, contains broad findings but few specifics. The inspector general's office declined on Thursday to comment, saying only in a statement that it's "working directly with the Massachusetts State Police on each of the areas described in the report."

The new oversight unit, created by lawmakers amid brimming State Police scandals in 2018, operates on a \$325,000 budget. It's tasked with "monitoring the quality, efficiency and integrity" of State Police operations and seeks to "to prevent, detect and correct fraud, waste, and abuse."

The former inspector general, Gregory Sullivan, said the report appears damning, and the findings beg for follow-up.

"The report raises these serious issues, but where are the details?" said Sullivan, whose 10-year run as inspector general

ended in 2012. "The obvious questions are: What is being done to get the money back? And what is being done to punish and hold accountable the people who allowed this to happen?"

State Police spokesman David Procopio said the department has addressed many of the issues raised in the report and implemented new policies to bolster accountability.

In a statement, Procopio noted the department has clarified its pay policies to troopers. He said the actions outlined in the report were administrative issues and "do not equate to criminal activity."

Governor Charlie Baker's spokesman Terry MacCormack said the administration recently sent a bill to lawmakers that would increase accountability within the State Police and that he "continues to support the implementation of new disciplinary reforms and other efforts outlined by Colonel [Christopher] Mason to rebuild public trust in the Department."

The attorney general's office, which recently prosecuted several Troop E members for overtime fraud, said its lawyers were reviewing the report. The US attorney's office declined to comment, citing its ongoing probe of State Police payroll fraud.

The inspector general's investigators reviewed records covering 5½ years ended in June 2018. The "vast majority" of troopers who worked paid details at Logan improperly collected pay, according to the report. For example, a trooper who ended his regular patrol shift at 3 p.m. would collect pay for a detail shift at the airport that started at the same time. Often, troopers did not account for the time it took to commute between jobs.

The report said troopers violated rules that require them to use a minimum of 30 minutes of personal or vacation time to account for their travel to and from paid details, which are voluntary assignments that pay \$50 an hour. The report didn't specify the number of troopers or the amount of money involved.

Procopio said the travel-time violations “were the result of inconsistent interpretation of former travel-time rules.” He said new rules issued several months ago permit the practice, allowing troopers to use the last 30 minutes of their regular shifts to travel to detail and overtime shifts.

The airport detail shifts are overseen by Troop F, a unit that’s funded by the Massachusetts Port Authority, the quasi-public entity that runs Logan. Troop F and Massport have come under fire for [keeping extraordinary trooper pay hidden](#) from the public and [not properly taxing](#) it for years. Massport declined to comment on Thursday.

Travel-time violations are neither new to the State Police nor limited to Troop F. Records obtained by the Globe show routine internal audits of barracks across the state have repeatedly uncovered instances of troopers not properly accounting for travel time, [among other suspected forms of pay abuse](#). There is no indication that State Police leaders took meaningful steps to address the issues, beyond having troopers submit corrected time sheets and reminding them of the rules.

The inspector general’s investigators are also looking into the management of four-hour highway overtime shifts throughout the department, shifts similar to the ones that were abused in Troop E, according to the report.

“Preliminary findings,” the report said, show “similar deficiencies in oversight, accountability and internal controls that led to the abuses of overtime in Troop E.”

The report does not elaborate on what investigators have found.

But it criticized the department for using roughly two dozen troopers, nearly all earning six-figure salaries, to handle

the processing of paid details. Despite a staffing crunch at the 2,100-member force, these troopers perform clerical and

administrative duties. Investigators said this work could be done by lower-paid civilians, freeing up troopers for other duties.

Procopio said the department was eyeing new technology to process paid details more efficiently and “considering the feasibility” of using civilians for that.

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