

State Police lieutenant, a top earner, retires amid internal probe into paid detail violation

‘Did I shortcut the process? I did, but there was nothing unethical intended,’ he said

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) Globe Staff, Updated August 18, 2020, 6:27 p.m.





Massachusetts State Police recruits marched out of Gillette Stadium earlier this year after their graduation ceremony. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

One of the highest-paid Massachusetts State Police troopers retired last week amid an internal investigation into the scheduling of a lucrative detail shift, the latest pay-related controversy to hit the agency.

Lieutenant Mark J. Lombardi, a 27-year veteran of the force, allegedly scheduled himself for an assignment without authorization and without going through proper channels internally, according to a person familiar with the probe.

Paid detail shifts are supposed to be assigned first to troopers who have worked the fewest detail hours in the previous five weeks. The shifts pay \$50 per hour.

Lombardi made \$297,252 last year, the fourth-highest pay total in the department, including \$38,885 in overtime pay and \$112,321 in detail and “other” pay.

In a phone call Friday, Lombardi said the shift in question was an unfilled, early morning assignment that required someone on short notice.

“Did I shortcut the process? I did, but there was nothing unethical intended,” he said.

Lombardi said he took the assignment rather than first calling a list of other troopers at 5 a.m. who he doubted would be interested.

Records show the agency opened its internal probe on May 20. Lombardi said he was first questioned about the matter

about three months ago. He said his retirement was unrelated to the investigation.

“To tell you the truth, I thought that was all behind me,” Lombardi said. “This is kind of what I’d think is a non-story.”

The department in a statement said that it considers it an administrative issue.

“Troop H, upon learning of an alleged policy violation involving an administrative matter, immediately began an internal investigation into Lt. Lombardi,” the statement said. “That investigation is ongoing.”

The department issued Lombardi a “general discharge,” which is the second-worst of four possible discharge statuses, according to records reviewed by the Globe. It declined to provide additional records, citing the ongoing probe.

Lombardi said he retired because of constant pain and mobility issues from injuries he suffered from several car crashes, all of which were allegedly caused by other drivers while he was on duty. Another factor, he said, was an increasingly negative public view of police officers.

“It’s the physical pain, and it’s also the way I feel we’re being treated by the public and the politicians and the higher-ups in our own job,” Lombardi said. “Now everybody hates us.”

Lombardi acknowledged his earnings have been high, in comparison to his peers', but said that was a credit to his hard work and that all of his pay was earned fairly and aboveboard. Because he is a high-earner, he said, he has faced constant internal scrutiny.

“I understand the narrative of the day is every cop is stealing money and every cop is bad,” he added.

He said he’s never been disciplined in 27 years with the department. Records show he faced 10 prior internal affairs

complaints. One case — for “verbal abuse” in 1997 — was sustained.

The state’s largest law enforcement agency has seen its reputation battered by a series of scandals in recent years, including a [widespread scheme](#) in which dozens of troopers allegedly collected overtime pay for shifts they never worked. The troopers wrote phony traffic citations to cover their tracks.

Lombardi is [not the first trooper](#) to be accused of pay-related misconduct that occurred after the overtime fraud scandal, which landed some troopers in federal prison.

Earlier this year, a state inspector general’s [report](#) said that payroll violations and lax oversight have been common across the agency for years, including that troopers regularly broke rules relating to paid detail shifts.

The report criticized the department for using roughly two dozen troopers, nearly all earning six-figure salaries, to handle the clerical duties of processing paid details — work that could be done by lower-paid civilians.

In May, the department began seeking information from outside companies that could offer products and services “that can enhance the agency’s ability to monitor and ensure compliance in the performance of paid details,” records show.

The department in a statement said it is evaluating companies’ responses “and considering potential next steps, which may include technological options, increased use of civilian staff, or both.”

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