

# IG report finds State Police overtime reform flawed

By [Shelley Murphy](#) Globe Staff, Updated March 4, 2021, 7:42 p.m.



State Police Troop E, which primarily patrolled the Mass. Turnpike, was disbanded soon after overtime pay fraud allegations surfaced in 2018. DAVID L. RYAN

A highly touted reform aimed at uncovering overtime abuse within the ranks of the Massachusetts State Police in the wake of a widespread scandal is flawed and should be revised, a new report from the state inspector general's office has found.

Quarterly audits of the State Police's 50 highest-paid employees, an oversight measure ordered by Governor Charlie Baker in 2018, were not effective in targeting potential overtime fraud because they "placed too much emphasis on those troopers who earned the most money for the relevant quarter as opposed to troopers who worked the most

overtime hours,” according to the annual report, which was issued Monday.

Many of those audited had landed on the highest-paid list because they had retired and received a large payout for unused leave, or were high-salaried employees who worked less overtime than other troopers, the report said. Last year, the State Police expanded the initiative to include weekly audits of troopers chosen at random, regardless of earnings. But the inspector general’s Division of State Police Oversight found that approach was inadequate.

The State Police “could better achieve the Top 50 Audit’s goal of identifying overtime abuse by focusing on troopers who work the most overtime hours,” the report said.

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David Procopio, a spokesman for the State Police, said the agency is reviewing the report and is working closely with the Division of State Police Oversight “to identify additional opportunities for operational improvements.”

He said the audits have not detected any fraud.

Dennis Galvin, a retired Massachusetts State Police major and current president of the Massachusetts Association for Professional Law Enforcement, said front-line supervisors

should know if someone isn't working a full shift and there should be internal controls for how overtime money is spent.

"If that's not happening, it's a major breakdown in the way this department is being managed," Galvin said. "If that doesn't exist, then you are going to get continuous fraud."

In 2018, 46 troopers from Troop E were implicated in a sprawling overtime [pay fraud](#) scandal that resulted in a series of federal indictments. The fraud, investigators found, stretched back years and included phony tickets and falsified time sheets to cover for hours never worked. Ten troopers were charged criminally, and nine of them have pleaded guilty. The remaining troopers were not charged criminally, but had charges sustained against them in an internal probe. The unit, which primarily patrolled the Mass. Turnpike, was disbanded soon after those allegations surfaced.

In December, two retired State Police supervisors were arrested on federal charges of conspiracy, fraud, and theft for allegedly stealing overtime pay while overseeing the Traffic Programs Section and destroying records to cover up their actions.

According to the inspector general's report, inspectors reviewed overtime shifts from 2016 in Troop A, which patrols the area from Revere to the New Hampshire border, and did not find "the large-scale overtime abuse, or evidence of the sophisticated fraud schemes, that troopers perpetrated in Troop E."

But in reviewing 207 overtime shifts, inspectors found 93 instances in which police radio records indicated that troopers did not work a full shift.

"This practice has a negative impact on public safety," the report said. "Indeed, a trooper's presence on the highway, highly visible in a police cruiser, cannot be overstated. It is also an inappropriate use of public funds to pay troopers for overtime work that was not fully completed."

The records, which show when a cruiser radio is off, indicated the troopers were absent for an average of 51 minutes over a four-hour shift, while one trooper was absent for

more than three hours. The report said that further investigation would be needed to determine whether the troopers' absences indicated wrongdoing.

The review also found that troopers often treated their commuting time as part of their overtime shift in violation of State Police policy.

“We expect and demand all personnel fulfill the duties and responsibilities of our public safety mission in accordance with department policy, rules, and regulations,” Procopio said in a statement.

He said the review covered data from several years ago and predates reforms that have been enacted since then, including enhanced time and attendance oversight through internal controls, training and supervisory systems, and installation of GPS systems in vehicles.

*Matt Rocheleau of the Globe Staff contributed to this report.*

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