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### 245 State Police troopers earned more than \$200,000 last year



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

By [Michael Levenson](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#)

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A state trooper who fired his rifle during a recent confrontation with a Cape Verdean man was roundly condemned after [it was revealed](#) that he had written racist comments online. But Matthew Sheehan's pay also raised eyebrows: He took home \$237,468 last year.

Those earnings, however, are not unusual at a state agency where 245 troopers — or about 12 percent of the force — made more than \$200,000 last year, often by working long overtime shifts or taking on

multiple details directing traffic or providing security at special events, according to a Globe review of payroll data.

Four troopers collected more than \$300,000, including three who were given sizable buyouts when they retired amid controversy. The median pay for a state trooper was \$145,413.

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The allure of big pay for long hours has raised concerns among critics that troopers could be too tired to safely do their jobs and that State Police could save money simply by hiring more troopers to cut down on overtime hours.

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“It’s pretty scary to think that so many top-paid troopers can double or nearly double their pay with overtime and detail work,” said Mary Z. Connaughton, director of administration and finance and director of government transparency at the Pioneer Institute, a conservative think tank in Boston. “A key question is whether all those hours worked compromise public safety.

“It’s hard to argue that the fatigue that goes with long hours doesn’t impact performance in some way.”

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**Table: Troopers who made more than \$200,000**

In 2017, 245 State Police troopers — or about 12 percent of the force — made more than \$200,000.

**How much State Police troopers made last year**

This graphic shows the number of State Police troopers whose pay fell within certain ranges in 2017.

Less than \$25,000

39

\$25,000 to \$49,000

21

\$50,000 to \$99,000

186

\$100,000 to \$149,000

874

\$150,000 to \$199,000

711

\$200,000 to \$299,000

241

\$300,000 to \$499,000

4

**SOURCE: Office of the Comptroller**

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David Procopio, a State Police spokesman, said the troopers' collective bargaining agreement limits the amount of hours they can work to 16.5 in a single day and 85 in a single week.

"These rules ensure that work performed beyond a regular shift, while necessary, nonetheless does not compromise a troopers' mental and physical wellness," he said.

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State Police pay overtime, he said, for official duties like patrols and investigations, as well as court appearances for those who work nights. Details involve voluntary assignments, like directing traffic at a construction site, and are sometimes paid by the contractor doing the construction work or the company hosting a large event.

Procopio said both assignments are necessary for public safety.

“Consider that the demands of a homicide or drug-trafficking investigation usually extend beyond the limits of a regular shift,” he said. “Likewise, troopers searching for a dangerous suspect or a lost child do not just pack up and go home at the end of their shift, if the mission is not yet completed. Details, whether they entail protecting a road construction crew or ensuring crowd and traffic safety at an event, also fulfill a public safety need.”

Both assignments can also significantly boost a trooper’s pay.

Sergeant Mark Lombardi, for example, doubled his base pay of \$122,505 by collecting \$128,243 in detail pay, the most earned in that category by any trooper. Along with \$6,505 in overtime, his total compensation was \$257,254, making him the 23rd-highest-paid trooper in the state.

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Trooper Brian O’Neil earned the most in overtime pay: \$108,434. Along with his regular salary of \$108,577, his total compensation was \$222,703. Seven other troopers also topped \$100,000 in overtime earnings last year.

Thomas Curran, a former State Police lieutenant who retired in 2007 after 27 years on the force, said he did not see anything generally wrong with troopers earning high pay from overtime and detail work. Those shifts are paid at a rate of time and a half.

“If they’re going to put the time and the effort in, and they can make the money that’s offered to them, why not?” Curran said. “It’s like any other profession. My only concern when I was a lieutenant was if someone was tired. I didn’t like that.”

The two highest-paid members of the State Police last year were Richard McKeon, the former superintendent, and Francis Hughes, the former deputy superintendent, both of whom retired in November amid [allegations](#) that they ordered a subordinate to remove embarrassing details from a report about the arrest of a judge’s daughter.

The State Ethics Commission, Attorney General Maura Healey, and the new State Police superintendent,

Kerry A. Gilpin, have launched separate investigations.

## Top pay for State Police

State Police officials who were paid the most in 2017.

Name	Title	Pay
Richard McKeon	Superintendent	\$386,829.60
Francis Hughes	Deputy Superintendent	\$339,444.38
John O'Grady	Lieutenant	\$307,903.19
Denis Mahoney	Sergeant	\$305,381.47
David Douthwright	Sergeant	\$296,807.28

**SOURCE:** Office of the Comptroller

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McKeon collected \$386,830 by taking a buyout of \$161,688 on top of his base salary of \$224,441. Hughes collected \$339,444 by taking a buyout of \$130,369 in addition to his base pay of \$208,376. Lieutenant John O'Grady, the third-highest earner, was the subject of [a WCVB investigation](#) in October that examined possible overtime abuse in Troop E, which patrols the Massachusetts Turnpike. After reviewing payroll and speeding ticket records, WCVB found O'Grady, along with three other lieutenants, were being paid for overtime shifts to catch speeders but were not writing any tickets at all, or were writing tickets only at the start of their shifts.

O'Grady, who retired after the story broke, took home \$307,903 — \$128,515 in base pay, a buyout of \$58,229, overtime pay of \$83,259, and detail pay of \$37,900.

Despite the high pay, the median pay for a Boston police officer was actually higher in 2017, at \$149,614. And while four State Police troopers earned more than \$300,000, 10 Boston police officers cracked that mark last year, including one, Haseeb Hosein, who collected \$366,232.

Governor Charlie Baker's salary, by comparison, was \$151,800.

Eileen McAnneny, president of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, a business-backed budget watchdog group, said State Police overtime pay partly reflects the increased demands on law enforcement in an era of heightened concern about terrorism.

But she suggested it could be more cost effective to hire additional troopers, rather than relying heavily on overtime. About \$46.4 million, or 15 percent of the State Police's payroll budget, was spent on overtime last year.

McAnneny said hiring additional State Police might also lessen the physical toll on troopers who work long hours to increase their earnings.

"People working that amount of overtime to make \$300,000 a year are probably not as alert or high-

performing as we'd want them to be, and that could compromise public safety," McAnneny said.

Michael Levenson can be reached at [mlevenson@globe.com](mailto:mlevenson@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@mlevenson](https://twitter.com/mlevenson).

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele).

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