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### In Seaport, it's State Police vs. Boston police in battle over turf



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

### The Massachusetts State Police substation at the Boston Fish Pier in the Seaport District.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF APRIL 04, 2018

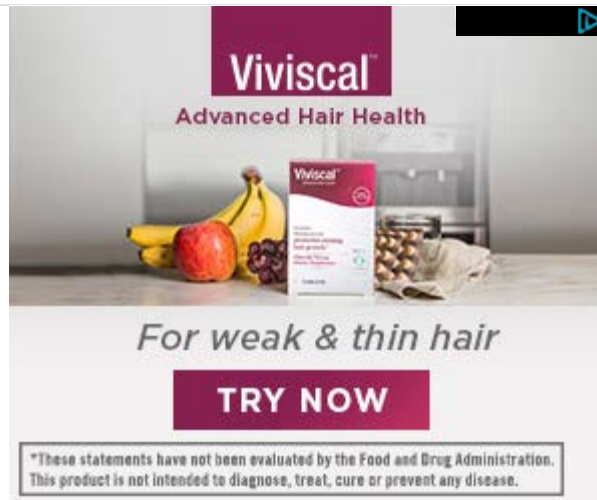
On a clear spring morning several years ago, a caller reported that a body had been found on a boat docked at a pier in the Seaport section of South Boston.

Without skipping a beat, Boston Police Department officers, State Police troopers, and Massport Police raced to the scene.

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Then the investigation came to a grinding halt. Instead of a debate on whodunit, the different agencies bickered over who owned it, Boston Police Commissioner William Evans recalled.

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“For an hour and a half, we argued over whose body and whose jurisdiction it was,” said Evans, one of the many officials at the scene.

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This, Evans said, was just par for the course in the Seaport and one of the more dramatic examples in a [long tug of war](#) over who polices the blocks along the South Boston Waterfront.

The feud has been thrust into the spotlight amid recent revelations of [hidden payroll records](#) and [hefty overtime payouts](#) in Troop F, the State Police division assigned to the Seaport and Logan International Airport.

“All we want to do is share jurisdiction,” Evans said. “To prevent us from coming in is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard of. I’ve asked for one good reason why not, and no one can give me one.”

The State Police payroll controversy, the latest in a [series of agency scandals](#), sparked a number of proposed reforms this week from Governor Charlie Baker and Colonel Kerry A. Gilpin. Among them: a mandate that Gilpin explore creating “a plan for the Boston Police Department and State Police to work together to ensure the safety of the Seaport District.”

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### **State Police overhaul will ‘require’ union talks, Baker says**

“Nothing changes on the timetable,” Baker told reporters Wednesday at the State House.



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**The State Police payroll controversy, the latest in a series of agency scandals, sparked a number of proposed reforms this week from Governor Charlie Baker and Colonel Kerry A. Gilpin.**

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Central to the Seaport debate is jurisdiction, which for law enforcement means potential overtime and paid policing details, both of which can vastly supplement an officer's compensation.

For dozens of Troop F members, overtime and details pushed their compensation past the \$200,000 mark, and some earned more in overtime than in base pay.

"If it's money and the details they want, we're willing to give them that," Evans said of State Police. "They can make all the money they want down there. They can handle the road, we'll handle the businesses and the house calls. We've offered to give them that, and they don't want to give it up. In this era of cooperation, it makes no sense."

Boston police said the Seaport is small enough that full-time oversight would not require extra staffing

or overtime.

Officials from the State Police, the governor's office, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, and Massport declined to comment on the jurisdiction issue.

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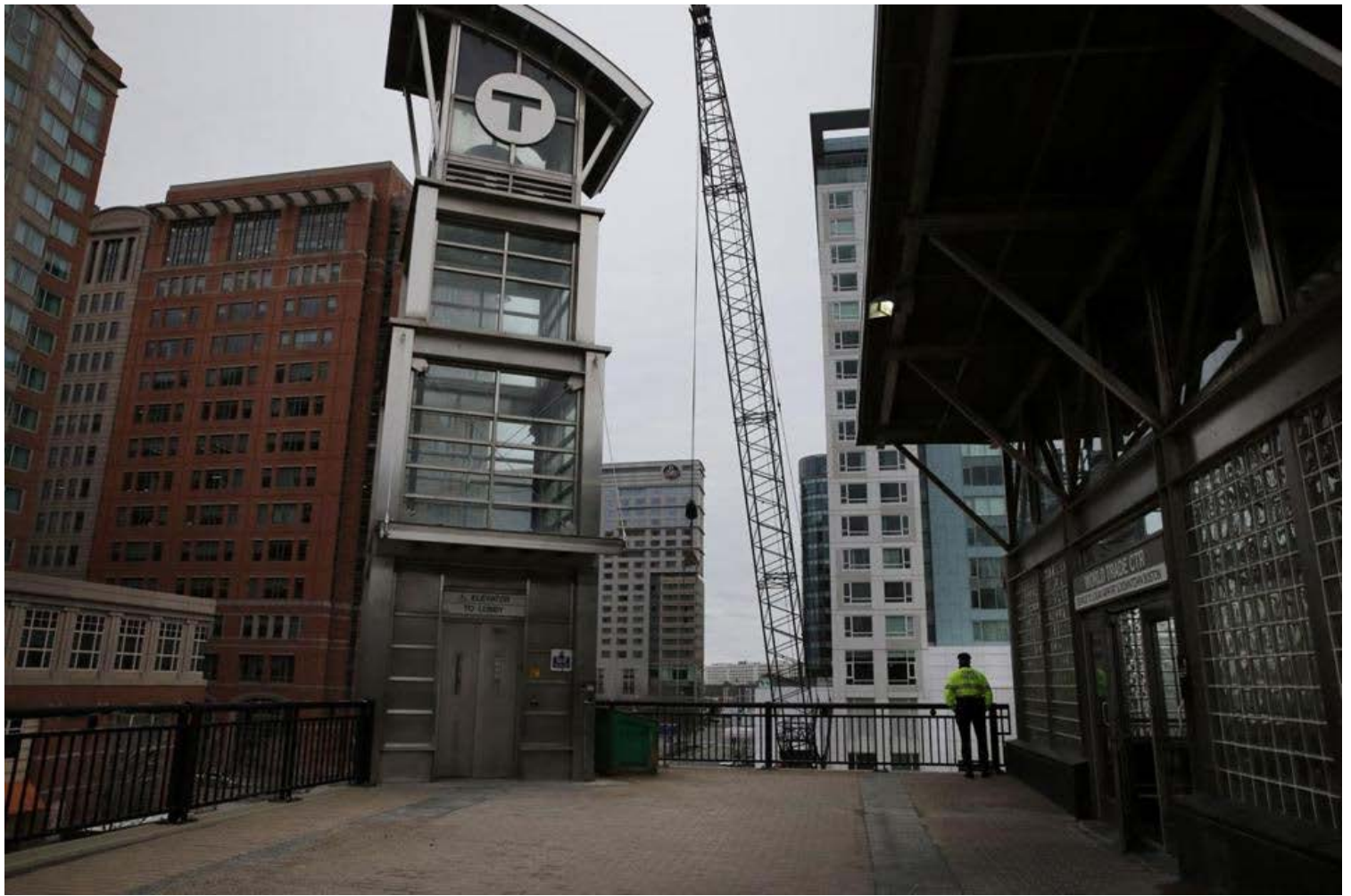
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On Wednesday, Mayor Martin J. Walsh called the matter a “critical issue that needs to be resolved.” In a statement, he noted the area has grown busier in recent years and said that updating the police jurisdiction “is a common sense change that will ensure all residents have access to the same police services as the rest of the city — services they are entitled to.”

Because the Seaport area consists of large swaths of real estate and shipping terminals owned and operated by the Massachusetts Port Authority, jurisdiction belongs to State Police and Massport Police. With few exceptions, Boston police can't legally make arrests there.

Massport, which is an independent public agency, funds the State Police employees in Troop F. Massport also has its own small police force, which assists troopers in the Seaport area.

The policing arrangement was spelled out in [legislation](#) approved in the mid-1990s, a time when Massport's Seaport holdings were little more than industrial warehouses and parking lots.



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

**In recent years, as the Seaport has transformed into an enclave for high-end living, dining, and entertainment, Boston police have begged for changes that would allow them to respond to emergencies and investigate crimes.**

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“It’s very safe. It doesn’t require a lot of policing,” Evans said. “And that’s one reason why it’s sad we’re fighting over it.”

The Seaport may be the most well-patrolled section of Boston, but police services aren’t streamlined. Emergency calls made from landlines, as well as a vast majority of 911 calls on cellphones, are routed to Boston police.

If needed, Boston police notify city fire and emergency medical services, both of which are allowed to respond to incidents across the Seaport.

If a Seaport call requires law enforcement, police dispatchers notify State Police and Massport Police. (Boston police said officers respond to Seaport calls in which there is a serious threat to public safety, regardless.)

Meanwhile, the agencies communicate on different radio channels, Boston police said.

The jurisdiction tussle has [sparked](#) repeated [arguments](#) over the years. Police officials and union representatives have cited cases in which disputes led to subpar law enforcement response and investigations.

“It’s very dysfunctional because no one [from the various agencies] communicates with each other down there,” Evans said. “I can hear them on the radio trying to figure out, ‘Whose jurisdiction is this?’ ”

Community leaders said they suspect few Seaport residents are aware of the turf dispute.

“I think most people don’t know about it,” said Joseph Gwin, who helped launch the South Boston Waterfront Neighborhood Association but moved out of the neighborhood about a year ago.

However, the regular presence of officers in different uniforms doesn’t go unnoticed.

“The police presence is huge down there,” said Tara Dynan, 26, a real estate agent at Seaport Realty Group. “There’s a cop on every street corner. It’s literally ridiculous.”

Boston police, along with city political leaders including former mayor Thomas M. Menino, have lobbied the Legislature to change the two-decade-old law.

Numerous [bills have been filed](#), but each gained little traction.

Baker administration officials said Monday that it was too early to say whether new legislation would be filed to settle jurisdictional control, and that any talks would happen after a broader, 30-day review of “staffing needs” at Troop F, which is funded by Massport.

“That’s a conversation that will happen with BPD,” a senior Baker aide said.

In years past, those conversations have been rocky.

In the case of the dead body found on the boat, which occurred in March 2012, the district attorney’s office eventually stepped in and assigned the case to State Police, records show.

## **POLICE BATTLE FOR TURF IN THE SEAPORT**

By law, State Police and Massport Police have jurisdiction over policing the authority’s properties. Boston Police want to share jurisdiction in these areas, primarily in the several-block area surrounding the Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center that in recent years has transformed into an enclave for high-end living, dining, and entertainment.

 PROPERTY OWNED BY THE MASSACHUSETTS PORT AUTHORITY IN SOUTH BOSTON



*Globe correspondent Matt Stout and Jeremiah Manion of the Globe staff contributed to this report.*

*Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau](mailto:matthew.rocheleau)*

*[@globe.com](http://globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele).*

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