



Former public safety secretary to consult with scandal-plagued State Police



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2018

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) and [Danny McDonald](#)

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Kathleen M. O'Toole, a trailblazing former Boston police commissioner known as a specialist in reforming police agencies from Seattle to Ireland, will serve as a consultant to the beleaguered Massachusetts State Police, the agency announced Wednesday.

O'Toole will be a "strategic resource" to State Police Colonel Kerry A. Gilpin and her command staff,

assisting in the recruitment of qualified, diverse job candidates and the development and training of current personnel, according to a department statement.

The move follows several pledges of reforms earlier this spring from Gilpin and Governor Charlie Baker, and it comes amid a criminal investigation into a trooper overtime scandal as well as other disclosures of misconduct and mismanagement across the ranks of the 2,200-member police force.

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O'Toole, a former State Police lieutenant colonel and state public safety executive, will serve on a pro bono basis. She told the Globe she plans to focus on helping the state's largest law enforcement agency regroup.

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"The good, hard-working people in the organization need to see some light at the end of the tunnel so they can move forward," O'Toole said in an interview. "I always say, no one despises bad cops as much as good cops. And they need to see there's a future. That will be my focus."

O'Toole said she's had preliminary talks with State Police leaders about her role, adding that she doesn't know much about the recent scandals plaguing the department beyond what's been reported in the media.

O'Toole said she offered to help Gilpin when the two first met this spring at a forum at Harvard University. The department was facing public backlash at the time over fraud allegations and other problems. Shortly thereafter, Gilpin reached out to O'Toole to take her up on the offer of assistance. "Former commissioner O'Toole possesses a wealth of knowledge about, and experience in, leading and bringing positive change to major police agencies, and my command staff and I look forward to her input and ideas about law enforcement to help improve the department," Gilpin said Wednesday in a

statement.



TED S. WARREN/ASSOCIATED PRESS/FILE 2014

Kathleen O'Toole will serve as a "strategic resource" to State Police Colonel Kerry A. Gilpin and her command staff on "various topics related to the operation of a large police agency," according to a statement from State Police.

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The president of the Massachusetts State Police union said bringing O'Toole on board should help restore confidence to a department that sorely needs it.

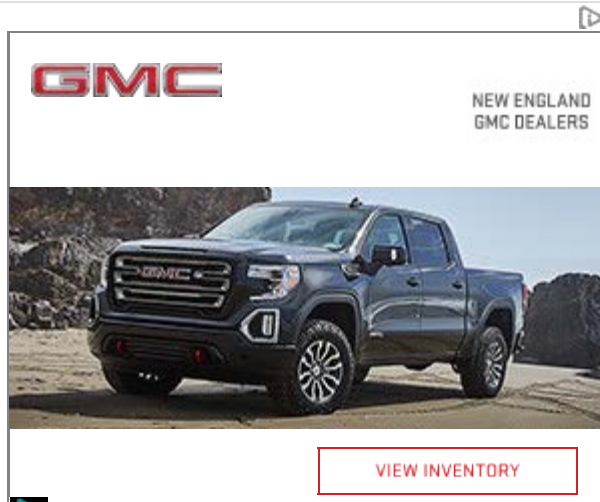
“She is a respected leader and she doesn’t make [foolish] decisions,” said Dana Pullman. “She takes all sides into consideration. From a union perspective, she has been nothing but a voice of reason.”

O’Toole, a Pittsfield native, has deep ties to the state’s law enforcement community. She joined the Boston Police Department in 1979 after graduating from Boston College. She joined the State Police and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the early 1990s. In 1994, then-Governor William Weld appointed her to head the state’s public safety secretariat, which oversees several agencies including the State Police. She held the job until 1998.

O’Toole, who receives an annual pension of \$75,000 for her state work, said she doesn’t think that her law enforcement ties pose any conflicts.

“I’m a straight shooter,” O’Toole said. “I call them as I see them and I’ve done that throughout my career, and I’ve been separated from the [State Police] organization for so long I don’t really know anyone there any more.”

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In 2004, she was named the first female commissioner in the history of the Boston police.

After leaving [that role in 2006](#), she served as chief inspector of the Gardia Síochána Inspectorate, “an oversight body responsible for bringing reforms and greater accountability to the 17,000-member Irish national police service,” according to the State Police.

She became Seattle’s first female police chief in 2014 and retired from that role in December. O’Toole recently moved back to Massachusetts and worked as a consultant for police agencies in Chicago and [Ireland](#).

O’Toole said she sees herself as “a trusted confidante” for Gilpin.

“I certainly don’t claim to have all the answers, but I’ve seen similar situations elsewhere, so hopefully some of those lessons learned can apply here,” she said.

Wednesday’s announcement comes after months of controversy at the agency. Three state troopers were arrested [late last month](#) and accused of pocketing thousands of dollars for overtime they didn’t work, marking the first charges in a broadening federal probe into allegations of rampant fraud at the agency.

One trooper pleaded guilty as part of a deal with prosecutors.

In May, the scandal-plagued Troop E unit was [eliminated](#) as part of an overhaul in response to allegations of false charges for overtime.

This week, a criminal case that triggered a different State Police scandal [was resolved](#).

That problem, which involved the arrest report of a judge's daughter, resulted in Gilpin's predecessor and three members of the command staff retiring.

When O'Toole [took the helm](#) of the 1,400-officer Seattle agency in June 2014, it was grappling with federal scrutiny over its use-of-force practices and biased policing of minorities.

O'Toole instituted a series of changes during her tenure there, with former City Council member Tim Burgess telling the Seattle Times, "She modernized policing in Seattle and helped restore the public's confidence."

"Under her leadership, the use of force by our officers declined dramatically," he told the newspaper.

She's also led and served on committees and commissions to overhaul aspects of the [Boston Fire Department](#), worked as a consultant to the US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, and [helped](#) the Massachusetts Gaming Commission vet casino license applicants.

O'Toole's portfolio, as both an insider and outsider, will help, said Brenda Bond, an associate professor at Suffolk University who specializes in organizational change in law enforcement. Still, it won't be easy.

"I hope there is the will to invest in the long haul because this change won't happen overnight," Bond said. "It will take a decade. It's hard to change institutions and people. But you've got to take your first step and go."

Kay Lazar of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. McDonald can be reached at daniel.mcdonald@globe.com.

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