



140

BUS

U



State Police under scrutiny for handling of guns seized at Logan Airport



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2013

At Logan Airport, there were 21 firearms seized from carry-ons at checkpoints last year. Nationwide, the number of such seizures has been rising.

By [Shelley Murphy](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#)

GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 20, 2019

The disappearance of an antique gun that was seized from a passenger at Logan Airport last year has brought more scrutiny on the Massachusetts State Police, sparking a judicial inquiry and the removal of the trooper who oversees the handling of evidence at the airport.

The episode, which has unfolded in low-profile court hearings in recent months, began in February 2018, when a Coast Guard member passed through a security checkpoint at Logan. A Transportation Safety Administration officer spotted a firearm in his backpack as it went through a baggage scanner, according to court records.

ADVERTISING

[inRead](#) invented by Teads

The TSA alerted a state trooper, who seized the unloaded black powder pistol. The passenger, who was assigned to a base in Maine, told the trooper that he didn't know it was illegal to carry the firearm in Massachusetts or that the TSA prohibits firearms in carry-on bags, according to court records.

ADVERTISEMENT

Handmade
boots,



The passenger was summoned to East Boston Municipal Court to face a charge of illegal possession of a firearm, but the charge was dismissed when Judge Richard Sinnott noted that the law doesn't apply to firearms, like the black powder pistol, manufactured before 1900.

Get **Metro Headlines** in your inbox:

The 10 top local news stories from metro Boston and around New England delivered daily.

Sign Up

In June, Sinnott ordered State Police to return the antique gun to its owner — only to be told the agency had destroyed it, along with seven other weapons seized at Logan Airport in recent years.

“I have serious questions about the way evidence is being handled,” Sinnott told State Police Major Charles Atchison III, the commander of Troop F, during a Jan. 23 hearing about why the antique gun was destroyed.

For the state’s beleaguered law enforcement agency, the destruction of evidence in a pending criminal case has sparked another internal investigation. The State Police has been embroiled in an overtime pay scandal that led to criminal charges against 10 former and current members. In addition, a grand jury is investigating allegations that several troopers received free guns from a state-contracted firearms dealer while assigned to the department’s armorer’s unit.

On Tuesday, the State Police disclosed that of the eight guns destroyed last year, a second one had also been mistakenly destroyed after it was seized from another passenger’s carry-on a year ago, according to an affidavit filed in court. That case had been dormant for a year, but the passenger has now been ordered to appear for arraignment in May, even though the evidence has been destroyed.

ADVERTISEMENT

2018 BMW
330i xDRIVE

CONVENIENCE PACKAGE, 18"
WHEELS, HEATED SEATS/WHEEL,
NAVIGATION

STOCK# #B23461
MSRP: \$45,545

Lease for

\$389

Plus Tax/Per Mo/36 Mos
With \$3,000 Down



The Ultimate
Driving Machine®



[View Inventory](#)

Herb Chambers BMW of
Boston / BMW of Sudbury


State Police said the remaining six guns were destroyed after their owners voluntarily surrendered them or the ownership was unclear. Those guns were not related to ongoing criminal cases, State Police said. Initially, Atchison told the judge the antique gun was mistakenly destroyed last May along with seven other firearms that had been seized at the airport and ordered destroyed by the court. Months later, he acknowledged there were no court orders authorizing the guns’ destruction and that he had just assumed there were.

“How do you know they were destroyed?” Sinnott asked.

Atchison said Trooper David Fladger, the officer who oversees the handling of evidence at the airport, told him the eight firearms had been destroyed.

Sinnott said he was troubled by “a lack of curiosity” about the department’s handling of guns and ordered State Police to provide a detailed explanation of how they were seized and destroyed.


ADVERTISEMENT



Brand New 2018
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Q4 AWD
STK# AWB92102 | MSRP: \$47,490

LEASE FOR
\$359 /MO**
24 mos.
\$3,999 CASH OR
TRADE DOWN

[View Inventory >>](#)

 Herb Chambers Alfa Romeo of Millbury
Herb Chambers Alfa Romeo of Boston
Herb Chambers Alfa Romeo of Warwick

In its affidavit Tuesday, the agency said Fladger had been removed from his job as evidence officer at the airport and an internal investigation had been launched into how the two guns seized from passengers were destroyed while those cases were pending.

Fladger remains on duty, according to State Police.

The department is auditing how evidence is handled at Troop F, which oversees the airport, and officers have been ordered not to destroy any evidence in the future without a court order, according to the affidavit.

David Procopio, a spokesman for the department, said the two guns should not have been destroyed while cases were pending.

“The department is prepared to take further action if necessary to ensure this does not occur in the future,” he said. He said the ballistics unit had provided written confirmation that the guns were destroyed.

Of the eight guns that were destroyed last May, four were seized from carry-on luggage at checkpoints; the others were seized from rental cars or other vehicles, according to court records.

Although firearms aren’t permitted in carry-on luggage, and violators face fines of up to \$13,333 per violation, last year a record-setting 4,239 firearms were discovered in carry-ons at checkpoints nationwide, according to the TSA.

At Logan Airport, there were 21 firearms seized from carry-ons at checkpoints last year, and 14 firearms seized in 2017, according to the TSA. The federal agency turns confiscated guns over to local authorities, who determine what to do with them.

In recent years, routine internal State Police inspections have flagged at least 18 barracks across the state for problems with sloppy and inaccurate recordkeeping on logs troopers use to track the contents of evidence and contraband — including confiscated guns and other weapons, drugs, and money — that are stored inside barracks, according to records the Globe obtained through public records requests. Inspectors also have found items stored haphazardly inside barracks' evidence rooms and contraband lockers.

An inspection in 2015 found items listed in the Troop F barracks' contraband ledger as destroyed that were actually found in the contraband locker. The report did not make clear what these items were and whether they were firearms or other contraband. That inspection also found that records about the barracks' lost and found property room were missing or incomplete.

In 2016, some logs indicated that six guns were still present inside an evidence room at the Medford barracks even though they had already been returned to their owner. The following year, some logs also listed two guns as evidence in the Belchertown barracks even though they had also been returned.

Shelley Murphy can be reached at shmurphy@globe.com.

Show 140 Comments

SPONSORED BY ALLWAYS HEALTH PARTNERS



How Do Copays, Deductibles, and Out-of-Pocket Maximums Work?

By AllWays Health Partners - Here's a helpful guide to the terms for costs you may encounter as you receive care. [More](#)

Top 10 Trending Articles

Viewed	Commented	Shared
--------	-----------	--------

People in open-concept homes are realizing the walls were there for a reason

Ideas | Linda Rodriguez McRobbie: Too old to be president? Science says yes.

Here's what NFL free agent market looks like ahead of league's legal tampering period

The backyard mechanic who is taking on Tesla

Mass. authorities face steep hurdles in shutting down sex trafficking

This week in watching: The fall of 'Arrested Development,' the return of 'Billions,' and the power of punk

Road to Recovery: Drugs took their children, but not their hope that others might be saved

Sharon principal placed on administrative leave

Julia Ruth Stevens, Babe Ruth's last surviving child, dies at 102

Maybe we need to just let Kyrie be Kyrie and enjoy the ride

Five things to know before the Bruins take on the Senators

'I'm just worthless. You want to throw my life away'

Turbulence injures 30 on flight from Istanbul to New York

[Why teens need live theater in the age of YouTube](#)

[The custom justice of 'problem-solving courts'](#)

[Eliza Dushku: I worked at CBS. I didn't want to be sexually harassed. I was fired](#)

[Greater Boston's first recreational marijuana shop slated to open in Brookline soon](#)

[Man shot, killed outside halfway house](#)

[Thinking about cord-cutting? Our film writer did it. Here's what he found out](#)

[Television review: Michael Jackson documentary 'Leaving Neverland' is riveting, shattering](#)

[Trump will seek more money for border wall](#)

[In N.H., Bernie Sanders says now 'Democratic candidates all across the board' support his ideas](#)

[Kyrie Irving, Celtics finish off Lakers this time](#)

[Baseball News, Scores, Analysis, Schedules & More](#)

['SNL' tackles R. Kelly sex assault accusations with parody of CBS interview, Pete Davidson monologue](#)

[David Krejci's goal with 45 seconds left rallies Bruins](#)

[157 people, including 8 Americans, killed in Ethiopian Airlines crash](#)

[Merrimack, N.H., man allegedly impersonated police officers, first responders](#)

[Turbulence injures 30 on flight from Istanbul to New York](#)

[Lawrence man arrested on strangulation charge](#)

[Most Popular In Metro →](#)

Subscribe Now

[Digital Access](#)

[Home Delivery](#)

[Gift Subscriptions](#)

My Account

[Manage my Account](#)

[Mobile Customer Service](#)

[Sign Up For Newsletters](#)

Contact

[Help](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Globe newsroom](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Order back issues](#)

Social

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Google+](#)

More

[ePaper](#)

[News in Education](#)

[Archives](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Terms of service](#)

[Terms of purchase](#)

[Work at Boston Globe Media](#)

© 2019 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC