

# **Massachusetts State Police Colonel Mason announces enhancements to internal investigation capabilities**

“Massachusetts State Police Colonel Christopher Mason announced that he recently consolidated formerly separate Internal Affairs and Staff Inspection units into a single new section, the Office of Professional Integrity and Accountability (OPIA). The new merged unit increases the number of officers available to do both timely internal investigations into complaints and inspections of barracks and units to ensure adherence to Department policies and regulations.

The restructuring of those functions into a single unit created an OPIA staff of 20 MSP officers, all holding the commissioned rank of detective lieutenant, under the command of a captain, each of whom is trained to do both internal investigations and Department inspections. Previously, smaller groups of officers did either investigations or staff inspections, not both.

The restructured unit creates efficiencies by allowing the OPIA commander greater flexibility and capacity to assign officers to either function as needs arise, which will, in turn, decrease the time needed to complete investigations or inspections. Regular inspections of Department entities is crucial to ensure compliance with the Department’s operational and administrative policies and procedures.

Colonel Mason also announced that the State Police and the Attorney General’s office will regularly engage in a review of all new and open internal investigation cases to determine if

any are more appropriately referred to prosecutors for potential criminal investigations.

“Each of these enhancements to our internal control framework help point the way toward a more efficient and accountable agency and support both the public we serve and the members of the Massachusetts State Police who proudly and professionally fulfill our law enforcement mission. We also urge the swift passage of Governor Baker’s pending legislation which would further increase accountability and enhance the Department’s discipline process.”

There are approximately 2,300 sworn members of the Massachusetts State Police, the vast majority of whom perform their duties with integrity and dedication to the job. Part of the Department’s strategy to ensure excellent policing services includes investigating even minor infractions of policy, which reflect the overwhelming majority of allegations made against members, both sustained and not sustained. The Department will continue to investigate and discipline violations of its code of conduct committed on or off duty, regardless of whether they rise to the level of prosecutable offenses.

The number of external complaints made to the Department has dropped each of the last five years. In 2016, the Department received 193 external complaints. That number fell to 142 in 2017, 124 in 2018, 106 in 2019, and 24 this year to date.

The Department additionally is focused on proactively identifying potential job performance issues among members at an early stage and taking corrective actions to prevent potential problematic conduct from repeating and escalating. This is being accomplished through the implementation, over the past two years, of increased training in ethics, bias-free policing, enhanced time and attendance rules, and supervisory responsibilities; regular payroll audits; installation of automated vehicle locator technology in cruisers; creation of

an early intervention committee, and establishing a body/cruiser camera program expected to roll out in the coming months. The Department has also increased the number of personnel assigned to handle trial boards and other disciplinary matters to enhance efficiency and ensure expedited resolution."