



Metro

State Police probe clears leaders in hiring of trooper with drug-dealing past



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Leigha Genduso was an unindicted co-conspirator in a marijuana trafficking case.

By [Andrea Estes](#) and [Shelley Murphy](#)

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An internal Massachusetts State Police investigation has cleared agency officials of wrongdoing for hiring a trooper with [a drug-dealing past](#), and blamed her for not [disclosing her role](#) as a key witness in a high-profile trafficking case.

Trooper Leigha Genduso resigned Friday afternoon upon reviewing the internal investigation, which her attorney called “a coverup from day one.” She received a dishonorable discharge, which she said she will appeal.

The internal affairs report recommended her termination and cited 11 violations of the agency’s rules and regulations. It concluded a 2013 background check was “thorough and complete” and the only reason the investigation didn’t turn up her “illicit past” was because of Genduso’s “omissions and deceptive responses.”

The report made only a glancing reference to [Daniel Risteen](#), a top agency official who lived with Genduso at the time she applied to work as a trooper. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Hughes, described by several troopers as a close friend of Risteen, was a member of the three-person review board that approved Genduso’s background investigation.

Neither appeared to have been questioned as part of the internal probe, according to the 44-page report. Neither Risteen nor Hughes could be reached for comment Friday.

“For them to completely absolve themselves is disingenuous,” Genduso’s attorney, Daniel Moynihan, said of State Police officials. “They went along with it. Now they act shocked.”

State Police spokesman David Procopio said Friday that the internal probe found Genduso didn’t disclose her past to any member of the agency, and she made “demonstrably false statements regarding her past involvement in criminal activities” on her application.

“Under the leadership of Col. Kerry Gilpin, the Massachusetts State Police recently created a new checklist for the background check process, and broadened the questionnaire for recruit candidates to include questions about involvement in any criminal investigation, even if the candidate was not charged with a crime,” Procopio said in a statement.

Questions about how Genduso, an unindicted co-conspirator in a major marijuana trafficking case, became a civilian dispatcher in 2008 and then a trooper erupted earlier this year as the law enforcement agency was [embroiled in a series of scandals](#).

Moynihan has maintained that Genduso's involvement with her former boyfriend, convicted drug trafficker Sean Bucci, was well-known across the State Police ranks, even before she was hired as a dispatcher.

"Our investigation has revealed that it was clear that numerous members of the command staff, both past and present, were aware of the Bucci matter before Ms. Genduso's hiring even as a dispatcher, much less a trooper," Moynihan wrote in a Aug. 6 letter to Gilpin. He called Genduso an exemplary employee and noted she received positive evaluations and [a commendation](#).

Following her resignation Friday, Genduso said she decided to "walk away with some dignity rather than keep battling."

"Nobody wants to talk about how I did the job the best I could," she added.

A year before becoming a State Police dispatcher, Genduso testified in federal court in 2007 in a case investigated by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration and State Police. Genduso admitted that she helped Bucci cut up bales of marijuana and delivered gift-wrapped, 10-pound packages of marijuana to a customer of her own.

The internal investigation minimized the fact that details of the Bucci case — and even a transcript of her testimony posted on the court website — were readily available at the time she was hired.

Her former North Reading address, cited on her application, was a house owned by Bucci and forfeited to the government following his 2007 conviction, according to a press release from the US attorney's office that was posted on the Internet.

The internal State Police probe, conducted by Detective Lieutenant David J.

McQueeney, indicates that Genduso withheld information or lied nine times — including failing to disclose her involvement with drugs and lying when she said she had never been with someone who committed a crime and that she had never been accused of committing a crime.

The investigation also concluded that she was untruthful during her internal affairs interview in April, saying among other things that she didn't know why she was granted immunity before she testified in 2007.

In the April interview with investigators, Genduso said she didn't believe anyone on the State Police was aware of her past drug dealing or testimony.

But investigators don't appear to have asked anyone directly whether Genduso's background check was less rigorous than usual because she was involved with Risteen.

Detective Lieutenant Jodi Dotolo, the trooper who conducted Genduso's background check, said she wrongly assumed that Genduso had already undergone a thorough vetting when she was hired as a dispatcher in 2008. Even so, the internal affairs report found Dotolo's background check was "thorough and complete."

In a recent interview with the Globe, Genduso said Dotolo told her "she didn't need to go to my house because she knew who I lived with."

The internal investigation acknowledged that at the time Genduso applied to be a dispatcher, the background check process was not as thorough as it should have been.

The department was in a "hiring crunch," the report said, so a "modified background investigation" was conducted.

Bob Long, a retired State Police detective lieutenant and security consultant, said it was "absurd" for State Police to conclude that Genduso's background check was thorough.

“They never would have had this problem if it was done right.” Long said. “I think the fact that she wasn’t forthcoming is a problem, but I think the State Police failed in their due diligence.”

The internal investigation quoted Shawn Givhan, director of State Police Human Resources, who said background investigators assume that applicants are telling the truth — unless the department received a tip, they would have no way of finding information on someone’s background.

Long called it “a definite failure” by State Police that the agency neglected to ask the North Reading police about any calls or reports involving Genduso’s former residence, where she lived with Bucci up until 2004.

In fact, a North Reading police detective told State Police that if the troopers conducting Genduso’s background checks had asked about the address, they would have found “numerous entries and reports.”

Troopers involved in the federal drug case told internal affairs investigators they had no memory of Genduso, even though she was a key witness and an unindicted co-conspirator given immunity to testify.

The internal affairs investigation concluded that “no evidence” exists that three troopers involved in the federal probe knew Genduso was associated with Bucci or that they “withheld information” from the department.

Genduso had been on unpaid suspension since the Turtleboy Sports blog first disclosed her past in February.

Genduso believes that if the revelations had not been posted online, she would have gone on to have a long and exemplary career as a state trooper.

“I think the hardest thing is on my 10 years on the State Police, I did nothing but try to be the best dispatcher, the best trooper,” Genduso said earlier this month. “I was trying

to do the right thing for 10 years. I wouldn't even call in sick. Now that's gone.”

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