

Investigation into the MICHIGAN STATE POLICE



INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the investigation of the Michigan House of Representatives into the state of the Michigan State Police, including the leadership of its current director, the performance of its deputy director, and the morale of its troopers.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The House Oversight Committee is the organization within the Michigan House of Representatives responsible for investigating the efficiency and efficacy of governmental programs and entities within the State of Michigan, with a view toward improvements to budgetary and policy decision making on the part of the House. The Michigan State Police (MSP) is a statewide, full-service police agency, directed by a colonel who reports to the governor. The House Oversight Committee, through its chairman, Representative Jay DeBoyer, and in coordination with the House Appropriations Subcommittee for the Michigan State Police and its chairman, Representative Mike Mueller,^[1] has directed this investigation into the current state of the Michigan State Police.

The initiation of the investigation into the MSP was not triggered by, but roughly coincided with, the public release of votes of 'no confidence' given by the members of the Michigan State Police Troopers Association (MSPTA) and the Michigan State Police Command Officers Association (MSPCOA).^[2] Each of these organizations released the results of overwhelming votes of no confidence in May of 2025.

The investigation has, among other things, included:

- a. Documents received and reviewed by Representative Mueller;
- b. The deposition by House legal staff of nine current or former employees of MSP, including seven current or former uniformed officers, one former civilian employee, and one current civilian employee;^[3]
- c. A joint hearing of the Oversight Committee and the Appropriations Subcommittee for the MSP at which MSP Director Col. James Grady appeared and testified;
- d. Review of publicly available reports, correspondence, and other materials.

^[1] Representative Mike Mueller (R-Linden) is a retired Livingston County sheriff's deputy and chairs the House's Appropriations Sub-Committee on the Michigan State Police.

^[2] The MSPTA is a union made up of MSP troopers and sergeants. The MSPCOA is a voluntary association made up of officers and retirees who have achieved the rank of lieutenant or above.

^[3] Deposition testimony will be cited by the last name of the witness deposed and the relevant page number.

The investigation has revealed concerning developments and circumstances at MSP, all of which contribute to an environment of low morale in the department and low trust between MSP personnel and leadership. Col. James Grady and Lt. Col. Aimee Brimacombe, the department's director and chief deputy director, respectively, are prominent causes of the negative environment at the department according to those who have witnessed their leadership most closely. The primary themes of the investigation can be boiled down to concerns about a) promotions and demotions within the department; b) insular decision making by the director and chief deputy director; c) poor communication between leadership and troopers; and d) disregard for past practice and policy.

Many of the recurring themes of this investigation are interrelated. For instance, the director's tendency to shut out experienced voices when making major decisions has resulted in unexplainable promotions and demotions. The decisions over promotions and demotions result in poor communication that negatively affect department personnel and raise questions about performance levels. Similarly, Col. Grady's perceived lack of concern for prior practice and department policy appears to be caused in part by his preference for making decisions unilaterally, even at risk of mistakes. This report is organized according to these major themes, recognizing that there is overlap between them all.

Although morale at MSP appears to now be at an all-time low, it was likely ebbing during the time Colonel Grady's predecessor as director, Colonel Joe Gasper, commanded the department. At times, deponents noted parallels between Gasper's directorship and Grady's, as well as some contrasts.

PROMOTIONS AND DEMOTIONS

One of the most consistent themes of this investigation is the concern over the propriety and wisdom of certain personnel decisions made within the department since Governor Whitmer took office, and especially since Grady became director in September 2023.

A. Promotions to Colonel

The promotion of Joe Gasper from captain to colonel^[4] took some people by surprise.^[5] Until Gasper's promotion, directors had been chosen from more senior ranks.^[6] But when Gasper left the directorship in 2023, Governor Whitmer again opted to appoint a captain, James Grady, to colonel.

Former MSP Human Resources (HR) Director Stephanie Horton said, "Joe Gasper and James Grady were promoted from captain to director without that important experience in the middle."^[7] Former Lt Col. Dale Hinz, whose demotion to lieutenant will be discussed more later, observed "it is vital to have executive leadership experience on the leadership team in the lieutenant colonel or major rank before promotion to colonel" because of the "huge learning curve" a director must go through upon promotion to colonel.^[8] Upon his appointment to director, Grady "was the lowest ranking member" among the finalists.^[9]

Division Commander Tom Deasy, formerly the head of internal affairs at MSP, indicated in his deposition that service at the rank of major or above might not be strictly necessary to selecting a good colonel, because there are captain-level positions that directly support the leadership team, but neither Gasper nor Grady had served in those roles and, as it relates to leading the entire department, "really didn't have any experience at all"^[10] prior to their promotions. According to Horton, the lack of experience at the leadership level prior to becoming colonel had a "significant detrimental impact on the culture and function" of the MSP under Gasper and Grady.^[11]

^[4] In between these are the ranks of major and lieutenant colonel. MSP uses a modified Army rank structure.

^[5] Luebs, p 27.

^[6] Luebs, p 28.

^[7] Horton, p 142.

^[8] Hinz, p 22.

^[9] Hinz, p 22.

^[10] Deasy, p 52.

^[11] Horton, p 142.

Lt. Col. Michael Krumm said he was not surprised by Grady's promotion but said it "is a challenge" to "see the bigger picture" without having been on the leadership team.^[12] Krumm, who is still generally supportive of and not hostile toward Grady, described a meeting toward the beginning of Grady's tenure in which Krumm, Lt. Col. Dale Hinz, Lt. Col. Chris Kelenske, and Major Chris Hawkins, at Grady's request, gave their opinions about which "things that we felt worked well" and things which didn't work well during Gasper's tenure.^[13] Krumm said their goal was to "lay those [things] out for the colonel and support him."^[14] The intention to support Grady was common among those interviewed by counsel, including department personnel who were most sharply critical of his subsequent leadership. Pennell, Horton, and Deasy all related incidents in which they offered assistance to Grady toward the beginning of his time as director, only to be rebuffed.^[15] Nevertheless, as will be seen later in this report, it did not take long for Krumm's opinion to move closer toward those who were more skeptical of Grady's promotion in the first place, as his tendency to limit input from other members of the department began to wear on them.

Despite the initial efforts to support Grady, internal tensions quickly emerged as personnel decisions began to reflect a pattern of abrupt demotions, reassignments, and transfers. Several senior officers and staff described these actions as being driven less by performance or objective evaluation and more by loyalty to the director. One of the most prominent early examples was the demotion of Lt. Col. Dale Hinz to lieutenant. Hinz, a respected career officer with decades of experience, had been a key member of the executive team, and his reassignment was widely viewed as punitive.^[16] Former HR Director Stephanie Horton noted that the way Hinz was demoted sent a clear message that independent judgment or dissent would not be tolerated.^[17] Other senior leaders soon followed similar trajectories.^[18] Major Chris Hawkins, recognized for his experience within the agency, was reassigned to a less influential administrative role after raising concerns about certain policy changes.

The personnel issues extended beyond the executive level, particularly with the emergence of the Flint Post promotion controversy. Beginning in 2019 and continuing through 2023, allegations surfaced that certain candidates had received advanced access to interview questions and promotional materials, undermining the integrity of the process. In response, the department initiated disciplinary actions against multiple officers, including suspensions, demotions, and terminations.^[19] Many within MSP perceived these actions as inconsistent or retaliatory, fueling broader concerns about fairness and transparency. In April 2025, five troopers filed a civil suit alleging they had been passed over for promotions due to preselected favoritism at the Flint Post. Two additional sergeants filed related suits later that October, asserting that manipulation and retaliation persisted despite prior scrutiny and internal reforms.

The cumulative effect of these personnel changes under Grady has been a significant loss of experience and institutional knowledge within the Michigan State Police.^[20] The demotion or reassignment of senior leaders, along with retirements and terminations tied to the Flint Post controversy, removed decades of combined command expertise.

Taken together, these promotions and demotions illustrate a broader pattern of instability within the Michigan State Police since Grady's elevation to colonel. The rapid turnover of senior command staff, coupled with ongoing litigation and internal mistrust, has contributed to declining morale and widening divisions between headquarters and field posts. As several witnesses summarized, the department's most pressing challenge may no longer be external oversight or funding, but the restoration of internal confidence in its own leadership structure.

^[12] Krumm, p 19.

^[13] Krumm, p 21.

^[14] Krumm, p 21.

^[15] Pennell, p 45; Horton, p 36-37; Deasy, p 80-81.

^[16] Hinz, p 13.

^[17] Horton, p 20-22.

^[18] Horton, p 61-62.

^[19] Krebs, p 34.

^[20] Gee-Cram, p 19-20.

B. Aimee Brimacombe

Based on the testimony taken by House legal counsel, there was one meaningful exception to Grady's tendency to shut others out of his decision-making processes. Lt. Col. Aimee Brimacombe has been, by all accounts, Grady's closest advisor since even before her appointment as Chief Deputy Director.

Brimacombe, like Grady, never served in a leadership capacity prior to her appointment to a senior leadership position. Before serving as Chief Deputy Director, she was a First Lieutenant in the Training and Accountability Division, where she was responsible for risk management. Thus, she was promoted from a middling rank in which she supervised "one person at most" to supervising the entire department as its second-in-command.^[21] As with Grady, Gasper, and Lt. Col. Amy Dehner, who preceded Brimacombe as Chief Deputy Director, Brimacombe's relative lack of experience was noted by others in the department and is believed by many of them to have contributed to her failings as a leader. But inexperience is far from the only trait that has led to concern around Brimacombe's fitness to serve at such a high level within the MSP.

Brimacombe's ability to lead the department is in serious doubt based on the available evidence. As will be discussed throughout this report, Brimacombe has created tension with many other members of the department since assuming the role of chief deputy director. As those events contribute to the culture of fear of retaliation and insular decision-making within the command suite, they will be discussed in more detail later. But Brimacombe's history before being promoted should have given Grady all the data necessary to avoid what the evidence suggests is his biggest error as director — relying on Brimacombe as his top aide.

Brimacombe has been the subject of multiple Professional Standards Section (PSS) investigations in recent years. These investigations include allegations that she misused state property, that she failed to maintain her training records, and that she made false statements in a complaint against her then-supervisor, Tom Deasy. The allegations which prompted these investigations all contain an element of dishonesty, as Deasy, the complainant in each of them, alleged not only that Brimacombe had committed the underlying acts but that she was dishonest in other communications about the underlying acts.

i. Misuse of State Property

On July 25, 2021, Deasy complained that Brimacombe "had used a department vehicle for personal business."^[22] Moreover, Deasy alleged that "Brimacombe was untruthful with him when he questioned her about the excessive mileage"^[23] she had put on the state-owned 2015 Buick Regal that was assigned to her by MSP.^[24] Deasy had noticed that Brimacombe had put significant mileage — "nearly 10,000 miles" — on the Buick during a timeframe in which she was working remotely.^[25] According to Deasy, when he asked Brimacombe about mileage on the vehicle, she told him she drove the vehicle around her neighborhood "to keep the battery from dying."^[26] When he pointed out that the mileage did not correspond to merely tooling around her neighborhood, Brimacombe reiterated that she only drove the vehicle locally.^[27]

After this discussion, which occurred in April 2021, Deasy directed Brimacombe to return the vehicle to MSP headquarters.^[28] However, she did not return the Buick to headquarters until August 2021, when then-Chief Deputy Director Lt. Col. Amy Dehner emailed Brimacombe directing her to return the vehicle by close of business the following day.^[29]

^[21] Deasy, p 42.

^[22] PSS-332-21, p 1.

^[23] PSS-332-21, p 1.

^[24] PSS-332-21, p 1.

^[25] PSS-332-21, p 1.

^[26] PSS-332-21, p 3.

^[27] PSS-332-21, p 3.

^[28] PSS-332-21, p 4.

^[29] PSS-332-21, p 6.

The PSS investigation which followed the return of the vehicle determined that Brimacombe's explanation that she drove the vehicle to work and around the neighborhood to keep the battery from dying could not account for the nearly 10,000 miles she put on the vehicle. Based on her appearances at headquarters, trips between headquarters and her home could only account for around 1,300 miles.^[30] Eventually, Brimacombe admitted to also taking the vehicle to her second home in Traverse City.^[31]

In the copy of the report generated by this PSS investigation, which was made available to the House upon a records request by Chair Mueller, Brimacombe's statements are redacted, presumably in order to preserve Brimacombe's rights under *Garrity v. State of New Jersey*,^[32] which held that a law enforcement officer cannot be prosecuted for acts admitted to in the course of compulsory disciplinary proceedings. Based on the reports available to the House, there is no reasonable interpretation of the available facts that would lead to a conclusion other than that Brimacombe both misused her assigned vehicle and was untruthful and insubordinate about the situation when she was confronted. PSS found the allegations in this complaint sustained.^[33]

ii. Failure to Maintain Training Records

At the same time Deasy made a complaint about Brimacombe's misuse of state property, he also filed a complaint alleging that Brimacombe had not maintained her training records and was dishonest when confronted on that topic, too. In March 2021, Deasy discussed with Brimacombe her failure to have a current pistol qualification.^[34] She reported that she was exempt from any such requirement because she was on light duty the previous year due to a shoulder injury.^[35] She later claimed that she was exempt due to the COVID-19 pandemic and "re-created" administrative records to that effect.^[36]

Based on the PSS investigation on this topic, Brimacombe gave different answers to the same question and was less than diligent with complying with document requests regarding her medical status during 2019-21. PSS found the allegations in this complaint sustained.^[37]

iii. False Reporting

The most serious allegation against Brimacombe is that she filed a false complaint with PSS, wherein she alleged that Tom Deasy and Stephanie Horton discriminated against her and other MSP personnel based upon protected characteristics.^[38]

In PSS-349-21, Brimacombe alleged that Deasy and Horton had "harassed" her.^[39] That report was "closed as unfounded."^[40] Deasy then filed a complaint PSS-499-21 alleging that "Brimacombe used the administrative complaint process to bully, harass, and intimidate him."^[41] Deasy noted that Brimacombe's complaint against him (and Horton) was filed shortly after he filed PSS-332-21 and PSS-333-21 – the incidents involving the misuse of the vehicle and the failure to maintain training records – and that part of the behavioral issues involved in those

^[30] PSS-332-21, p 8.

^[31] PSS-499-2, p 12.

^[32] *Garrity v. State of N.J.*, 385 U.S. 493; 87 S. Ct. 616 (1967). MCL 15.393 provides similar protection to law enforcement officers in Michigan statute. Neither of these shields apply to an investigation for legislative purposes, but MSP has not complied with requests by Representative Mueller for unredacted copies.

^[33] Gee-Cram, p 99-100.

^[34] PSS-333-21, p 1.

^[35] PSS-333-21, p 1.

^[36] PSS-333-21, p 1.

^[37] Gee-Cram, p 99-100.

^[38] PSS-499-21, p 1.

^[39] PSS-499-21, p 1.

^[40] PSS-499-21, p 1.

^[41] PSS-499-21, p 1.

two complaints were that Brimacombe had been untruthful when confronted with the underlying issues.^[42] Both Deasy and Horton thought that Brimacombe had “weaponize[ed] the system” in a retaliatory fashion because of her own failures to follow MSP policies.^[43]

Brimacombe’s complaint alleged, in part, that Deasy had not recommended her for performance pay because of her gender.^[44] Similarly, Brimacombe alleged that Horton had raised the pay of a non-uniformed attorney who reported to Brimacombe with an intent to discriminate against Brimacombe because of her gender.^[45]

Brimacombe’s complaint also alleged poor work performance by Horton. Specifically, Brimacombe stated that Horton’s poor performance when testifying in court created a risk management problem for the department.^[46] Brimacombe argued that the department treating Horton’s weakness in providing testimony as a training issue for Horton to work on was a double standard that disadvantaged Brimacombe, since her misuse of her police vehicle was treated as misconduct.^[47] Brimacombe told the investigator no one should have to feel sick about going to work.^[48]

As with PSS-332-21 and PSS-333-21, the complaint against Brimacombe in PSS-499-21 was sustained, bringing the total number of sustained PSS investigations into Brimacombe’s conduct in 2021 to three.^[49] As a result, Brimacombe was ineligible for promotion for at least two years from the date of the last sustained PSS investigation’s closing, which was December 2021.^[50] Incredibly, as soon as she was eligible Brimacombe was promoted as high as possible, as though the two year waiting period were a test she passed rather than a penalty due to her serious missteps and dishonesty.^[51] Brimacombe’s immediate promotion to chief deputy director appears to have contradicted the intent of the mandatory waiting period, which is to ensure behavioral corrections are made before a disciplined officer is given new responsibilities.^[52]

C. Demotions and Reassignments of Senior Personnel

Lt. Col. Ryan Pennell provided clear insight into Grady’s interview process – and at least some of the factors Grady deemed to be important – prior to the promotions and demotions that followed. Grady conducted both of Pennell’s interviews with a panel of two: Grady and Brimacombe.^[53] Grady made clear to Pennell that his mission is to “diversify” leadership.^[54] According to Pennell, Grady forewarned Pennell that Grady “didn’t expect” Pennell to remain in the leadership team because Grady wanted to “diversify the leadership team.”^[55] Still, while a major, Pennell was given the chance to interview for a lieutenant colonel position in Field Services.^[56] During that interview, he was asked for his views on diversity in the MSP. In response, according to Pennell, he said that diversity is more than just race and includes socioeconomic status, upbringing, education, family life, and where one is from.^[57] Grady then told Pennell in the interview that “diversity is race,” and that “[i]t’s black and

^[42] PSS-499-21, p 2.

^[43] PSS-499-21, p 2.

^[44] PSS-499-21, p 5.

^[45] PSS-499-21, p 5. Horton and Brimacombe are both white women. Brimacombe also alleged that Horton had acted in a racially discriminatory manner regarding former MSP officer Twana Bradley.

^[46] PSS-499-21, p 12.

^[47] PSS-499-21, p 12.

^[48] PSS-499-21, p 14.

^[49] Horton, p 74; Gee-Cram, p 80.

^[50] Horton, p 74; Gee-Cram, p 101.

^[51] Horton, p 91.

^[52] Horton, p 74.

^[53] Pennell, p 55-56.

^[54] Pennell, p 28.

^[55] Pennell, p 89.

^[56] Pennell, p 90.

^[57] Pennell, p 91.

white, and we've had a race problem in the nation and MSP forever."^[58] The inescapable conclusion drawn from Pennell's description of this set of exchanges is that Pennell's ability to remain in leadership depended greatly on whether he would bring diversity to the organization rather than job performance. According to Grady's framing of the issue, Pennell – who is white – could not bring diversity.

In addition to the racial context, which Pennell testified Grady inserted into personnel decisions at the department, Pennell also experienced a haphazard decision-making process that, as discussed later, has characterized Grady's leadership. When Grady took over command of the department, Pennell was a major. After interviewing to become a lieutenant colonel in Field Services, Pennell was told by Grady and Brimacombe that he would be demoted to sergeant – six ranks below his then-rank of major – and placed at an assignment that Grady had picked out for him but would not tell him at the time.^[59] Eventually, Pennell was offered a sergeant's position at headquarters in Transparency and Accountability. Given his lack of experience in that area, Pennell asked if there might be another option.^[60] Pennell was then offered a lieutenant's position in Lapeer, but was also told in order to take that position he had to accept it on the spot.^[61] After asking for more time to think about it, later that day Pennell was eventually allowed to accept a lieutenant position in Mount Pleasant.^[62]

In the midst of the confusing move from major to lieutenant, with a threatened stop at sergeant in between, Pennell was also up for promotion to lieutenant colonel.^[63] After interviewing, Pennell eventually received a promotion to lieutenant colonel. But he never received an explanation for the chaotic route he had to take to get there.^[64]

Other senior officers who were demoted include former Lt. Col. Dale Hinz and former Captain Tom Deasy.

Hinz testified that he “was not given a reason for his demotion” and had absolutely zero disciplinary material in his file.^[65] Hinz says that he requested an explanation for why he was demoted five ranks, but he never received one.^[66] At the time of his deposition, Hinz was serving as assistant post commander at the same post he had previously commanded before moving further up the ranks within MSP, and the only conjecture he could offer was that the colonel didn't think Hinz shared the colonel's unstated priorities for the department.^[67]

Deasy, with whom Brimacombe repeatedly clashed when he was her supervisor, was demoted from captain to first lieutenant. While a captain, Deasy was in charge of the Transparency and Accountability Division, where he oversaw legal services, accreditation, and professional standards among other items, and managed several dozen personnel.^[68] As a first lieutenant, Deasy was managing no one other than himself and handling Planning, Research, and Accreditation as a one-man office.^[69] The only explanation Deasy received for his demotion was that it was the colonel's choice.^[70] As will be discussed in the next section, Grady's habit for keeping his own counsel and refusing to explain decisions with regard to promotions and demotions follows a pattern with his decision making in other areas of command.

^[58] Pennell, p 91.

^[59] Pennell, p 32-34.

^[60] Pennell p 34.

^[61] Pennell p 34.

^[62] Pennell, p 35.

^[63] Pennell, p 37.

^[64] Pennell, p 37-38.

^[65] Hinz, p 17-18.

^[66] Hinz, p 18.

^[67] Hinz, p 18-19.

^[68] Deasy, p 17-18.

^[69] Deasy, p 17-19.

^[70] Deasy, p 19.

II

INSULAR DECISION MAKING

Promotions and demotions within the MSP are not the only decisions which have demonstrated questionable judgment and a reluctance to take and act on the advice of actual subject matter experts.

Depositions of senior officers and civilians reveal a deeply insular leadership culture at MSP that shuts down communication, ignores the expertise of seasoned personnel, and fosters uncertainty, frustration, and low morale throughout the department.

Lt. Col. Michael Krumm, a senior member of MSP leadership, explained that personnel displaced under Grady were reassigned without consideration for their service or skills, stating that “they were sent back to the lowest positions that they could be. And then that was it.”^[71] Krumm contrasted this with prior administrations, where displaced members were reassigned to roles reflecting their experience, and described the current approach as “very surprising” and “a horrible process to see lifelong servants that have done nothing but give their heart and soul to an agency then be undercut.”^[72] He further testified that objections to personnel decisions were discouraged, noting that he “didn’t think anyone was given a reason” for demotions, which were justified internally only by the assertion that Colonel Grady “has his reasons.”^[73]

This lack of transparency extended to contract renewals, creating fear among command staff. Even after being told that his contract would be renewed, Krumm recalled Grady asking, “Well, are you relieved?”^[74] He emphasized that simple communication, such as “a five-minute phone call” to reassure captains of their standing, could have significantly improved morale and trust.^[75]

Krumm’s concerns were echoed by Stephanie Horton, former Human Resources Director, who stated that longstanding norms of consultation with HR leadership were abandoned under Grady. Horton recounted, “I asked several times to meet with him... I wanted to help him be successful... He finally did find time for me, where I had a list of things I wanted to go through with him.”^[76] Nevertheless, at that meeting, Horton said Grady “looked at [Horton] and said that he was a pretty smart guy and he thought he could figure it out on his own, but thank you.”^[77] Horton described repeated attempts to offer guidance on personnel reorganization, contract renewals, and Civil Service compliance, all of which were disregarded, stating that “he did not seem to value my experience or my input and often went around me to Civil Service to get answers to his questions.”^[78] Grady then proceeded to run the department into issues on each of the topics Horton offered to walk him through before she was rebuffed.

Horton also testified about Grady’s decision to move responsibility for the department’s recruiting from Human Resources to the Training Division.^[79] She reported telling Grady that she believed that decision was a mistake.^[80] According to Horton, after hearing Horton’s reasons for believing that, Grady told her that she might have been right, but that he had already made his decision without speaking to her and it would not change.^[81]

Among Horton’s reasons for concern with Grady’s decision to take recruiting from HR and place it in the training division is the legal difficulty one can encounter in consciously attempting to “diversify” a state agency without

^[71] Krumm, p 24.

^[72] Krumm, p 24.

^[73] Krumm, p 25.

^[74] Krumm, p 35.

^[75] Krumm, p 35.

^[76] Horton, p 35.

^[77] Horton, p 35.

^[78] Horton, p 41.

^[79] Horton, p 121.

^[80] Horton, p 117-18.

^[81] Horton, p 118.

running afoul of the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, Article I Section 26 of the Michigan Constitution.^[82] That constitutional provision prohibits state agencies from discriminating on the basis of race, among other things, meaning that conscious efforts to diversify the department must do so in a race-neutral way.

Sarah Krebs also discussed Grady's approach to diversifying the department in her deposition. Krebs was the department's chief diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) officer, and she testified that she told Grady he could not "diversify the agency overnight" without breaking the law.^[83] Krebs also said that when she confronted Grady about this problem the "conversation did not go well."^[84] According to Krebs, Grady did not speak to her for six months after that conversation, even though she remained in her role as the department's DEI chief.^[85]

Dale Hinz recalled that when Col. Grady assumed command, his approach to leadership was characterized by exclusion and disregard for collaboration within the existing command team. Hinz recounted that the senior officers whose contracts came due were not renewed and that the decision was made without any discussion or evaluation. When asked about the Colonel's rationale, Hinz said "[h]e indicated to us several times that a head coach picks his team."^[86] Hinz went on to say "I shared with him that I didn't think that was helpful for the team. We were trying to give our best guidance to him at the time, and when comments like that are being made, people start thinking about self-preservation... It's certainly not a healthy relationship for a leadership team that needs to gel together."^[87] Hinz's account further reinforces that leadership prioritized personal loyalty over professional judgment, which fostered an insular culture that undermined senior staff confidence.

III

RETALIATION AND LACK OF COMMUNICATION

The drastic reorganization itself is an example of poor communication with how Grady executed the plan. Some viewed the entire plan as retaliation by Brimacombe and took issue with the fact that no prior communication was given of the abrupt reorganization plan.^[88] As outlined in other portions of this report, the poor communication is intertwined with the insular decision-making and largely led to the low morale following the string of haphazard promotions and demotions once Grady took charge.

The fact that Grady has enabled Brimacombe to run the department with an iron fist and unfettered discretion is another theme common to the descriptions of life working at MSP. Stephanie Horton described Brimacombe as lacking competence to lead; and being a "terrible" leader who "leads through fear" with "vindictive" tactics and a "belittling" communication style.^[89]

Horton explained that she had participated in a prior interview panel that denied a promotion for Brimacombe due to a lack of supervisory experience.^[90] Brimacombe was then given an opportunity to build that supervisory experience for two years with a new team, but the team members all sought alternative positions to avoid working for Brimacombe.^[91] After being appointed by Grady, Brimacombe called the entire HR team into a meeting to tell them that "the grim reaper was coming," in response to hearing a rumor that an HR member said they did not believe Brimacombe had HR's best interests in mind.^[92]

^[82] Horton, p 117.

^[83] Krebs, p 40.

^[84] Krebs, p 41.

^[85] Krebs, p 41.

^[86] Hinz, p 24.

^[87] Hinz, p 25.

^[88] Krebs, p 26.

^[89] Horton, p 44-45; 82-83.

^[90] Horton, p 45.

^[91] Horton, p 45.

^[92] Horton, p 84.

Grady's enablement of Brimacombe's poor communication does not stop in HR. Civilian employee Heather Luebs described a virtual meeting that took place the Monday after the troopers' union announced its vote of 'no confidence.'^[93] At the time of the meeting, Luebs was working as an executive assistant in the command suite of MSP.

The invited attendees at the meeting were members of the governor's communications team, the MSP communications team, Grady, and MSP Chief of Staff Major Chris Hawkins.^[94] However, shortly before the beginning of the meeting, Brimacombe entered Grady's office and sat in a place which, in Luebs' estimation, would not be seen by the camera during the virtual meeting.^[95] Luebs sent Hawkins a text message to tell him that Brimacombe was in the room but may not be identified to the other meeting attendees.^[96] When Luebs sent Hawkins that message, she accidentally included Brimacombe in the text thread.^[97] Upon seeing that Luebs had sent a message to Hawkins stating that she was in the room, Brimacombe stormed out of Grady's office and "slammed the door."^[98] With Grady present, Brimacombe "yelled" at Luebs and asked her why she texted Hawkins.^[99] Luebs explained that she wanted to make sure Hawkins knew who else was in the room in case that influenced what he wanted to say.^[100] Brimacombe expressed her anger to Luebs, stating "I thought we were friends," adding "I let you braid my hair. I don't understand why you would do this to me."^[101] Grady also told Luebs she had broken his trust by sharing information she was supposedly not allowed to share and asked her whether she had been sharing information with Chair Mueller.^[102] Luebs told Grady she had not been talking with Chair Mueller, but did not think that Grady believed her.^[103]

After this incident, which Luebs described as her only truly negative interaction with Grady, she was ordered to attend a meeting with Grady, Brimacombe, and Juli Liebler, the department's deputy director for professional development.^[104] At that meeting, she was told by Grady that she could either accept a transfer to an analyst position elsewhere within MSP, or there would be a PSS investigation opened against her in which Grady would "speak negatively" about [Luebs].^[105] Faced with that choice, Luebs elected to accept the analyst position.^[106]

The type of retaliation Luebs faced for innocently warning a colleague that there was an unidentified and hidden attendee at a meeting he was a part of is not an isolated incident. Luebs herself testified that, while there has always been an undercurrent of fear of retaliation within the department, it is exacerbated now by actual instances of retaliation like the one she faced.^[107] Luebs specifically pointed to Inspector Sarah Krebs' experience within the department as an example of the "miserable" work environment created by Grady's tendency to isolate and retaliate against people who push back on his decisions.^[108]

Luebs related that Krebs had been having regular virtual meetings with Grady, but after Krebs gave feedback and asked questions that Grady did not think he should have to face "as the director," he canceled all of his meetings with Krebs, took away her departmental vehicle, and removed her access to important computer tools, despite not actually removing her from her post as the department's diversity officer.^[109]

^[93] Luebs, p 17-18.

^[94] Luebs, p 17-18.

^[95] Luebs, p 17-18.

^[96] Luebs, p 17-18.

^[97] Luebs, p 17-18.

^[98] Luebs, p 37-38.

^[99] Luebs, p 37-38.

^[100] Luebs, p 40-41.

^[101] Luebs, p 37.

^[102] Luebs, p 40-41.

^[103] Luebs, p 40-41.

^[104] Luebs, p 35-37.

^[105] Luebs, p 18.

^[106] Luebs, p 18.

^[107] Luebs, p 61.

^[108] Luebs, p 66-68.

^[109] Luebs, p 66-69; Krebs, p 65.

Krebs herself confronted both Brimacombe and Grady regarding acts that she perceived to be retaliation for her being firm in her convictions regarding departmental policies and decision-making. Krebs' recollection is that after she told Brimacombe that she was retaliated against for doing her job, Brimacombe told her they were looking into her activity because she had improperly accessed information in the IA database.^[110] However, Krebs explained to Brimacombe that the information was related to an Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) complaint that Krebs was responsible for working on.^[111] By the time of Krebs' interview with the House's investigatory team in the summer of 2025, she feared that Brimacombe and Grady would "find a reason not to let [her] be able to retire."^[112]

The toxic environment created by Grady and Brimacombe is obvious when speaking to current members of MSP leadership. Inspector Lisa Gee-Cram, who was in charge of labor relations at the time of her deposition, cited the "Keely" incident "and how the Colonel handled that" as the start of dysfunctional communication at the MSP.^[113] Gee-Cram also said she did not believe the no confidence vote results were "organic," and was, in general, less critical of Grady and Brimacombe than other deponents.^[114] Gee-Cram's testimony was, overall, more equivocal about Grady and Brimacombe's leadership, saying she has "tried to stay Switzerland" in the midst of disagreement between the troops on the road and leadership.^[115] She also referred to the vote of 'no confidence' by the troopers union as part of a "hate campaign" which lacked a "tangible reason."^[116] However, even Gee-Cram said she could not think of anyone who had been promoted to the level that Brimacombe had with a disciplinary record, and that she had recommended Brimacombe for demotion after the series of PSS findings against her.^[117]

Deasy and Horton also faced retaliation for attempting to communicate frankly with Grady or Brimacombe.

Deasy said that prior to Grady assuming the directorship of the department they had a "pretty good relationship."^[118] He also said that he and Brimacombe had been "friends before [they] started to work directly together."^[119] Obviously, Deasy's opinion about Brimacombe changed due to the behavior that resulted in multiple PSS findings against Brimacombe, including one in which she falsely accused Deasy of discriminating against her, but it was also informed by her lack of success in supervising others.^[120] When he heard about Brimacombe's coming promotion to deputy director, Deasy told Grady "this means I'm done. When my contract ends in October '24, you're going to call me in and tell me you're not going to renew."^[121] When Deasy's prediction came true, he turned to gallows humor, reminding Grady he had "predicted this a year ago."^[122]

Deasy's confidence that his contract would not be renewed arose from his belief that Brimacombe would give Grady a distorted view of their previous interactions.^[123] That prediction also ended up applying to Stephanie Horton, who had also been involved in the incidents leading to Brimacombe's discipline in the past.^[124] The

^[110] Krebs, p 78-79.

^[111] Krebs, p 78-79.

^[112] Krebs, p 80.

^[113] Gee-Cram, p 42-44. The "Keely" incident refers to the striking of an escaping suspect with a car by an MSP trooper. The incident resulted in charges against the officer which were later dismissed. However, it remains relevant to Grady's tenure as director because, the day after the incident, Grady released a statement which, according to multiple interviewees in this investigation, was seen as insufficiently supportive of a trooper.

^[114] Gee-Cram, p 42-44.

^[115] Gee-Cram, p 40.

^[116] Gee-Cram, p 41.

^[117] Gee-Cram, p 96; 99.

^[118] Deasy, p 42.

^[119] Deasy, p 42.

^[120] Deasy, p 42.

^[121] Deasy, p 43.

^[122] Deasy, p 44.

^[123] Deasy, p 43-44.

^[124] Gee-Cram, p 88.

end of Deasy's tenure directly supporting the leadership team featured a similar "Hobson's choice" to the one Luebs faced.^[125] Deasy was told he could remain a captain, but he would neither be on a senior executive service (SES) contract nor in a "classified" role, meaning he could be terminated without the civil service protections he would enjoy if he accepted a demotion to first lieutenant.^[126]

Like Deasy, Horton had extensive experience working with Brimacombe but was not consulted about the possibility of her becoming chief deputy director prior to Grady making that decision.^[127] At the time of her interview, Horton said that people she knew at the department were now "afraid to be associated with [Horton] ... because there is retaliation" for being friendly with her.^[128] According to Horton, fear of retaliation among those who knew her arose because she frankly observed Brimacombe's flaws, including that Brimacombe is "not a competent leader," had committed misconduct, lacked relevant experience, and the previous recommendation that she be demoted.^[129] As discussed earlier, Horton's offers to help Grady were rebuffed, even to the point that "he often went around [Horton] to Civil Service," meaning the state personnel director.^[130]

Career troopers at MSP frequently highlighted how different Grady's communication style had been than prior administrations. When DEI Officer Krebs asked Grady why he was holding positions open without filling them, Grady responded by saying "I don't need to tell you," and "Troopers don't need to know why I'm filling spots or not filling spots," and he dodged questions about the lack of transparency in his hiring process.^[131] Krebs explained when she once saw Horton break down in the hallway after Grady took over and went so far as stating that anyone who has worked at the MSP under Grady would call it a "hostile" work environment.^[132] Troopers who have known Grady his whole career, like Lt. Col. Michael Krumm, described that a "switch flipped" when he was promoted to Colonel, and stated that Grady became distant and non-communicative.^[133] The dysfunction currently seen at the MSP can be directly attributed to Grady's poor communication, lack of transparency in decision making, and his enabling of Brimacombe's bad behavior. Looking back to Pennell's demotion cited earlier, Pennell was demoted multiple ranks despite having over two decades of experience at MSP and requesting a different open assignment in the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division. Grady's only explanation for the sergeant assignment was that "I've already decided you'll be a sergeant."^[134]

IV

DISREGARD FOR BEST PRACTICE AND POLICY

At certain points in the investigation, deponents indicated that when a decision made by Col. Grady was questioned in any way, his initial response was to remind those present that he is the director and makes the final decisions, even when no one involved questioned his authority but rather his judgment about a matter. Grady's defensive responses to those who have questioned the wisdom of his choices gives the distinct impression that he is so preoccupied with whether or not he can make a decision that he does not stop to think if he should.

^[125] Deasy, p 19.

^[126] Deasy, p 19.

^[127] Horton, p 44.

^[128] Horton, p 52.

^[129] Horton, p 93.

^[130] Horton, p 41.

^[131] Krebs, p 38-40.

^[132] Krebs, p 69-70.

^[133] Krumm, p 18.

^[134] Pennell, p 57.

A. SES Contracts

At the heart of several of the issues related to the demotion of experienced officers is Grady's decision to disregard the reason that the department had begun to give certain captains senior executive service (SES) contracts for a term of years. According to Horton, who was serving as HR director, Gasper had decided to put captains on two year contracts because it allowed for greater flexibility with regard to compensation.^[135] Horton said that the captains who were given SES contracts were explicitly told that the intention was not to put them into a situation in which there was a risk of demotion or termination when their contracts were over but instead to reward them for their work and high level of responsibility.^[136]

After Grady became director, he asked Horton "if he could move . . . all [captains] into contract positions."^[137] He also asked Horton for "a list of everyone in an SES contract and their expiration dates."^[138] Horton discussed with Grady the intention behind Gasper's decision to put captains into SES roles, a decision he made at Horton's suggestion.^[139] Grady did not respond to Horton making that point, and did not seek to provide the "soft landing" for officers who were being demoted or given less responsibility as other directors had.^[140]

B. Performance Pay

Several deponents raised issues about departmental policies relating to performance pay. Gee-Cram suggested that the policy for performance pay was that a person was not eligible for such pay during the first six months of a new role, but that the policy had in some sense lapsed at the time Grady and Brimacombe were promoted to their current roles.^[141] However, she also made it clear that she did not have mastery over the topic and that Stephanie Horton would know more.^[142]

According to Horton, at the time she left the department in the spring of 2024, an officer was ineligible for a performance pay bonus during the first year after a promotion.^[143] Despite that policy, Grady decided to award a performance pay bonus to Brimacombe.^[144] Horton told Grady, both in conversation and by email, that Brimacombe was not eligible for performance pay, and Horton thought she could help protect Grady's integrity by helping him avoid breaking with past departmental policy on this point.^[145] However, Grady, without explaining why, rejected Horton's concerns and ordered her to process Brimacombe's bonus anyway.^[146]

This incident contrasts with Horton's previous experience in warning a director not to issue inappropriate performance pay. Under Gasper's leadership, Chris Hawkins was a newly promoted major and was recommended for performance pay. Horton alerted Gasper that such a bonus would violate policy, and Gasper agreed to withdraw the performance pay award.^[147] Horton was not able to recall another time when a director pushed through a performance pay award against policy.^[148]

Krebs also raised the issue of performance pay as further evidence of retaliation against her. She reports that her performance pay had been steadily awarded at 4% up until the time she began to clash with Grady, at which time it was reduced to 2.5% without any explanation.^[149]

^[135] Horton, p 23.

^[136] Horton, p 19-21.

^[137] Horton, p 33.

^[138] Horton, p 35.

^[139] Horton, p 39.

^[140] Horton, p 65.

^[141] Gee-Cram, p 108-109.

^[142] Gee-Cram, p 107-108.

^[143] Horton, p 75.

^[144] Horton, p 75-79.

^[145] Horton, p 77.

^[146] Horton, p 77.

^[147] Horton, p 79.

^[148] Horton, p 79-80.

^[149] Krebs, p 73-74.

C. Lack of Discipline

In Krebs' deposition, she expressed concern that there have been several incidents involving serious violations of law or policy that resulted in PSS findings of "unfounded."^[150] Krebs' concerns include that Brimacombe is able to insert herself into PSS proceedings, which may allow for biases she holds to influence those proceedings.^[151]

CONCLUSION

This investigation revealed a number of issues at MSP which have contributed to an environment of historically low morale in the department and unprecedented low trust between MSP personnel and MSP leadership. Colonel James Grady and Lt. Col. Aimee Brimacombe are prominent causative factors of the negative environment at the MSP. Based on all of the witness testimony and documentary evidence reviewed, it appears that Colonel Grady's over-reliance on Lt. Col. Brimacombe, her lack of leadership capacity, and her unprecedented retaliatory behavior against others in the workplace are significant causative factors in the current dysfunction within the department.

Furthermore, there is ample evidence the current dysfunction has resulted in an inability to staff a full team at the department, accelerated and unnecessary turnover in key staff, and a focus on self-preservation over performance that stretches across several sub-departments. The Michigan State Police is charged with performing a critical service for our state, and anything but the best threatens our public safety and the justice owed to Michigan residents. However, the results of this investigation show a disturbing disruption in that service and a series of systemic problems that threaten Michigan's security.

The House Oversight Committee and the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Michigan State Police will both be looking further into the issues raised in this investigation. The findings in this report show serious issues that have impacted the department's ability to perform its job, failing both rank and file officers and the public. Further investigation is warranted, as are policy and budget reforms to improve department operations.

^[150] Krebs, p 71-75.

^[151] Krebs, p 71-75.