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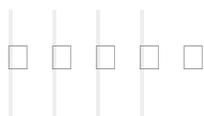
At least \$7 million of Philly police overtime costs may be avoidable, state board says

by [Sean Collins Walsh](#), Updated: September 17, 2019- 12:45 PM

At least \$7 million of Philly police overtime costs may be avoidable, state board says



PENNSYLVANIA INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION AUTHORITY



Philadelphia could save at least \$7 million a year in police overtime costs if it altered procedures for officers who have to appear in criminal trials and invested in new technology to better coordinate officers' regular shifts with the time they spend at courthouses, according to a new study commissioned by a state board that oversees the city's finances.

Court appearances, in which officers are subpoenaed to testify as witnesses to crimes [but often spend hours waiting for hearings to begin](#), are a primary driver of the department's chronic overtime problems.

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The report by the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority analyzed the \$20.7 million the city spent on police overtime from July 2017 through June 2018 and found that at least \$7 million of it and possibly more than \$10 million could have been avoided.

For instance, up to \$6.5 million could have been saved by limiting the number of officers subpoenaed to those who are essential to the success of the cases, the report said. The biggest cost-saver, at \$7.5 million, would have been had the city bought new technology and made better use of its current systems to coordinate between officers' shifts and when they need to be in court.

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(The total amount the city could save from the policy recommendations listed in the report is lower than the sum of the savings from each because there are overlapping costs involved in the recommendations.)

PICA, a Harrisburg-appointed board that must annually approve the city's long-term fiscal plans and also makes policy recommendations, has been prodding the city on overtime spending for years.

"PICA has been at the forefront of recent efforts to reduce the City's overtime costs," said Kevin Vaughan, who chairs the PICA board.

The report, which was produced by the Chicago-based accounting and consulting firm Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, noted that implementing the reforms would require buy-in from several autonomous agencies.

"The Police Department, District Attorney's Office, and First Judicial District should work collaboratively and implement these recommendations in a timely manner in order to maximize cost savings," Vaughan said.

Controlling overtime costs has been [a struggle for many city agencies](#) in recent years. In July, PICA noted that overtime spending was expected to be about \$181.9 million for the year — \$27.1 million over budget.

A vast majority of that overspending occurred in the Fire Department. Mayor Jim Kenney's administration has said the spike was driven in part by the department's ongoing expansion — it is adding seven new companies — and training for new firefighters.

For thousands of nonuniformed city employees, overtime has a ripple effect on spending because it is used to calculate pensions.

About two-thirds of 401 municipal workers who started collecting pensions in 2017 saw their retirement checks boosted by overtime pay in their final years, according to an [analysis by The Inquirer this year](#). Those increases resulted in an extra \$17 million in costs to the already-depleted pension fund.

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Each the U.S. and Saudi Arabia stopped short of blaming Tehran for the strike on a Saudi facility

By Hans Bartsch, Eric Lipton, and Kenneth Feltus

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday stopped short of direct blame for the attack on a major oil facility in Saudi Arabia, while the U.S. and Saudi Arabia stopped short of blaming Tehran for the strike on a Saudi facility.

Officials in Washington and Riyadh spent the day scuffling over the phone and after it indicated that Iranian weapons were used in the attack on the Saudi Aramco facilities. But they promised to have information that would conclusively show Iran did not launch the attack, which Saudi officials said was...

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