

3 undercover officers on leave pending probe of improprieties

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PORTLAND — Three Maine State Police undercover drug officers were taken off the job Tuesday pending the outcome of an internal investigation into "alleged improprieties during drug investigations," state police said.

Sgt. Dennis R. Hayden, Sgt. Michael C. Pratt and Detective John V. Scheid were placed on administrative leave with pay, said Public Safety Commissioner John W. Atwood in a prepared statement.

He emphasized that administrative leave "is not a disciplinary measure, does not imply guilt nor is it punitive in nature.

"When allegations are made against a state employee, it's common practice to place the employee on administrative leave until the facts are made known and the

internal investigation is completed," the statement said.

Hayden, of East Vassalboro, Pratt, of East Winthrop, and Scheid, of New Sweden, could not be reached for comment at their homes Tuesday night.

The internal investigation was ordered after a meeting Monday among Atwood, FBI agents, members of the U.S. Attorney's office and Col. Allan A. Weeks, who retires soon as chief of the state police.

In the meeting the FBI discussed "their investigation into allegations of improprieties during drug investigations," the statement said.

The state police internal affairs officer, Capt. Edward P. Wilson, will conduct his own investigation parallel to the FBI investigation, Atwood said.

Wilson was not at home Tuesday night and could not be reached for comment.

Atwood, who became public safety commissioner last week, declined to comment further on the allegations and referred questions in an interview to the FBI.

The FBI and U.S. Attorney's office have also declined to comment on the case, except to say that the investigation is ongoing.

Attorney General James E. Tierney has said the allegations "arose out of a federal prosecution . . . state police officers were working on the case."

Hayden is currently assigned to Troop D in Thomaston and Pratt and Scheid are members of the Organized Crime Unit, which handles drug investigations, Atwood said in an interview.

Although he said he was unfamiliar with all the details of the FBI probe, Atwood said he believed the three state police officers are the only law enforcement officers under investigation.