



COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Jackson Police Department Aviation Unit

November 5, 2024

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury



DIVISION OF INVESTIGATIONS



JASON E. MUMPOWER
Comptroller

November 5, 2024

City of Jackson Mayor
and City Council
101 East Main Street
Jackson, TN 38301

City of Jackson Officials:

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury conducted an investigation of selected records of the Jackson Police Department Aviation Unit, and the results are presented herein.

Copies of this report are being forwarded to Governor Bill Lee, the State Attorney General, the District Attorney General of the 26th Judicial District, certain state legislators, and various other interested parties. A copy of the report is available for public inspection in our Office and may be viewed at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason E. Mumpower", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury

JEM/MLC

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Jackson Police Department Aviation Unit

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury investigated allegations of malfeasance related to the Jackson Police Department Aviation Unit. The investigation was initiated after Jackson Police Department officials reported questionable payroll transactions. The investigation was limited to selected records for the period May 1, 2019, through November 16, 2022. The results of the investigation were communicated with the Office of the District Attorney General of the 26th Judicial District.

BACKGROUND



The Jackson Police Department (department) is the primary law enforcement agency serving Jackson, Tennessee. The department consists of multiple units that work together toward the mission of reducing the problems associated with crime. The aviation unit provides air support for department operations by conducting routine flight patrols, performing air surveillance, and aiding search operations. In addition to supporting the operations of the department, the aviation unit assists other law enforcement districts and agencies within West Tennessee.

Terry Hopper began his employment with the department in April 2008 as an officer. In September 2013, Hopper was assigned to the aviation unit as a helicopter pilot. Hopper was promoted to the rank of sergeant and given the title of chief pilot in October 2014. As chief pilot, Hopper's primary responsibility was piloting missions. Hopper was also responsible for administrative tasks such as completing flight paperwork, purchasing parts and supplies, and approving timesheets for the aviation unit. In April 2018, Hopper received his aviation mechanic license and began assisting the aviation unit with aircraft maintenance. Hopper retired from the department on November 16, 2022.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

- 1. FORMER AVIATION UNIT CHIEF PILOT TERRY HOPPER IMPROPERLY RECEIVED AT LEAST \$29,499.07 IN UNEARNED WAGES AND EMPLOYER-PAID BENEFITS FROM THE JACKSON POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Between May 1, 2021, and August 31, 2022, Terry Hopper improperly received at least \$29,499.07 in unearned wages and employer-paid benefits from the department as follows:

A. Hopper improperly received at least \$23,146.89 in unearned wages from the department

The aviation unit operates out of an aircraft hangar (hangar) located at a local airfield. Hopper was expected to be present at the hangar each day to oversee the operations of the aviation unit. In early 2020, Hopper was allowed to occasionally travel to a neighboring law enforcement agency under the pretense that he was training for an advanced aviation certification. However, in August 2022, department officials discovered that Hopper was not present at the hangar each day nor training with the neighboring law enforcement agency; instead, he was traveling to Millington, Tennessee to perform work for a private business.

Investigators analyzed Hopper's department payroll records from May 1, 2021, to August 31, 2022. During this period, Hopper submitted timesheets for 362 days, claiming either to have worked each day or to be on an official leave status. Investigators compared Hopper's timesheets to aviation unit records documenting his absenteeism and found 101 days, consisting of 780.25 regular hours and 32 overtime hours, that Hopper claimed to be working for the department but was not physically present at his assigned work location at the aviation hangar. This resulted in Hopper receiving at least \$23,146.89 in unearned wages from the department.

Investigators also reviewed the aviation unit's flight logs to substantiate that Hopper was not fulfilling his primary responsibility as chief pilot of piloting missions. Investigators found that the aviation unit performed 561 flights during the time period analyzed. Hopper was listed as the pilot or observer for 74 of the flights, approximately 13% of the flights performed.

When questioned by department officials, Hopper claimed he performed the work for the private business in exchange for aircraft parts needed by the aviation unit. However, investigators determined Hopper only brought back air conditioning parts and seven LED lights with mounting systems (**Refer to Exhibit 1**). Investigators confirmed with the private business owner that Hopper was paid approximately \$400 a day for the work performed at the private business and any parts transported by Hopper to the aviation unit were donations from the private business.

Exhibit 1



Air conditioning part (left) and LED light (right) donated to the department's aviation unit by the private business owner

B. Hopper received unearned payroll benefits totaling at least \$6,352.18 for hours not worked

Hopper received payroll benefits totaling at least \$6,352.18 for the 812.25 total hours he claimed to be working but was not physically present at the hangar or neighboring law enforcement agency. This amount represents employer-paid benefits for Social Security, Medicare, and retirement contribution costs.

Summary of Terry Hopper's Misappropriation	
Description	Amount
A. Unearned Wages	\$23,146.89
B. Unearned Payroll Benefits	6,352.18
Total Misappropriation	\$29,499.07

2. FORMER AVIATION UNIT CHIEF PILOT TERRY HOPPER ABUSED HIS ASSIGNED CITY OF JACKSON-OWNED VEHICLE PRIVILEGE

The department vehicle usage policy states the acceptable use of city-owned vehicles is for official business only and strictly prohibits city-owned vehicles from being used for personal use. Investigators confirmed that Hopper used his city-owned vehicle multiple times to travel to Millington, Tennessee, to perform work for a private business.

Investigators reviewed the fuel logs for Hopper's assigned city-owned vehicle and noted 17 occurrences where Hopper fueled his city-owned vehicle on days he claimed to be working for the department but was not physically present at the hangar or neighboring law enforcement agency. Investigators also noted several occurrences where Hopper would fuel his vehicle prior to not

being present at work for one or more days and then refuel the vehicle upon his return. For example, Hopper obtained fuel on the morning of March 3, 2022. He was not physically present at work on March 3, 2022, or March 4, 2022. Upon his return to work on March 6, 2022, Hopper refueled his vehicle. The odometer showed a distance of over 300 miles driven during the two days Hopper claimed to work for the department but was not physically present at the hangar or neighboring law enforcement agency.

On October 28, 2024, the Madison County Grand Jury indicted Terry Hopper for one count of Theft of Property over \$10,000.

The charges and allegations contained in the indictment are merely accusations of criminal conduct, and not evidence. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt and convicted through due process of law.

[Investigation Exhibit](#)

INTERNAL CONTROL DEFICIENCY

Our investigation revealed a deficiency in internal control, which contributed to Hopper's ability to receive unearned compensation without prompt detection:

Deficiency 1: Department officials did not provide adequate oversight of Hopper's work location and attendance

Investigators confirmed Hopper misled at least one department official to believe he was training with a neighboring law enforcement agency when he was actually working in Millington, Tennessee, for a private business. However, officials did not verify what location Hopper was working from each day or that he was physically present at the hangar. Failure to verify that employees are present at their assigned work location each day increases the risk that errors or intentional misappropriations will occur and remain undetected.

Department officials indicated that they have corrected or intend to correct this deficiency.
