

MORE TO COME IN ALASKA

TrooperGate is not done in Alaska.

First, Walt Monegan is a little bit tired of being called "rogue" by Sarah Palin.

Gov. Sarah Palin's former public safety commissioner says the governor smeared him and he wants a hearing to clear his name.

Walt Monegan on Monday asked the state personnel board to allow him a chance to disprove the vice presidential nominee's assertion he was a "rogue" and insubordinate commissioner. The board is investigating Palin's July dismissal of Monegan.

"Governor Palin's public statements accusing Mr. Monegan of serious misconduct were untrue and they have stigmatized his good name, severely damaged – and continue to damage – his reputation, and impaired his ability to pursue future professional employment in law enforcement and related fields," said the hearing request filed by Monegan's lawyer, Jeff Feldman.

And, at the same time, that same personnel board seems to be using an expansive scope for its investigation of Sarah's abuses of power.

The state Personnel Board investigation of Gov. Sarah Palin's firing of Walt Monegan has broadened to include other ethics complaints against the governor and examination of actions by other state employees, according to the independent counsel handling the case.

The investigator, Tim Petumenos, did not say who else is under scrutiny. But in

two recent letters describing his inquiry, he cited the consolidation of complaints and the involvement of other officials as a reason for not going along with Palin's request to make the examination of her activities more public.

Two other ethics complaints involving Palin are known. One, by activist Andree McLeod, alleges that state hiring practices were circumvented for a Palin supporter. The case is not related to Monegan's firing. The other, by the Public Safety Employees Association, alleges that trooper Mike Wooten's personnel file was illegally breached by state officials.

John Cyr, the PSEA executive director, said Monday the union plans to amend its complaint to be sure the board investigates "harassment" of Wooten as well.

Petumenos has not spoken to the press, in keeping with the secrecy of the state process. But he gave a rough description of the investigation's course in two letters to an Anchorage attorney threatening a lawsuit over Palin's effort to waive confidentiality.

This expansive scope may stem from the fact that—against all of Sarah's hopes—the personnel board appointed a tough, independent investigator for their investigation.

Some weeks ago, the McCain team devised a plan to have Palin file an ethics complaint against herself with the State Personnel Board, arguing that it alone was capable of conducting a fair, nonpartisan inquiry into whether she fired Monegan because he refused to fire Wooten, who had been involved in a messy custody battle with her sister. Some

Democrats ridiculed the move, noting that the personnel board answered to Palin. But the board ended up hiring an aggressive Anchorage trial lawyer, Timothy Petumenos, as an independent counsel. McCain aides were chagrined to discover that Petumenos was a Democrat who had contributed to Palin's 2006 opponent for governor, Tony Knowles. Palin is now scheduled to be questioned next week, and the counsel's report could be released soon after.

Now, it's unclear whether these other shoes will drop before the election. Isikoff says Petumenos will release the report shortly after questioning Palin this week. Also this week, the legislative council will vote whether or not to release the Branchflower—along with its confidential back-up—to Petumenos. And then there's a personnel board meeting on Monday.

I'm guessing, if this is not completed and released before the election, Sarah will fire the board members, accusing the three Republican appointees of being rabid partisans. But there is a chance more will come out (though perhaps only in limited form, publicly) before the election.