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Top trooper dodges questions about pay raise

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ALBANY - Colonel Thomas Fazio, a State Police Deputy Superintendent, wouldn't really tell us what he thinks about the big pay raise he got last month.

Reporter: "You're a top level manager do you have anything to say to the taxpayers about this?"

Fazio: "Again, I'll defer to the Governor."

The pay hikes went into effect December 9th, at the same time 900 state employees were being laid off, including 93 in his own department.

Reporter: "You don't have an opinion on whether it was appropriate or justified?"

Fazio: "Well, what I'm doing is deferring to the Governor because he's my boss and he said he's going to look into it so as a matter of rank I'll let him make the comments."

Fazio pulled down a more than \$20 thousand dollar raise effective December 9th, bringing his annual salary to nearly \$180 grand.

He's one of 28 top brass who got the pay hikes, after arguing that there were salary disparities in the agency that needed to be equalized.

NewsChannel 13 broke the story on Tuesday. The next day, Governor Andrew Cuomo said he was surprised and shocked, and felt the raises were insensitive during a time of fiscal austerity.

Assemblyman Bob Reilly called on the Governor to take swift action.

"First of all, he should undo these raises. And then secondly the people that are responsible should be called on the carpet and their competency to remain in office should be questioned," Reilly said.

Also on Thursday, one labor union representing people who lost jobs, said heads should roll.

"For them not to look in the mirror during these times has to be addressed and if people need to go, people need to go," said Donn Rowe, President of NYSCOPBA, that represented the nearly 50 security screeners who were let go.

Rowe said the timing of the raises was an insult. The screeners got their pink slips last December 10th, just one day after nearly \$600,000 in raises were given to the highest ranking State Police members.

Cuomo said he didn't know if the pay hikes could be turned back but would look into it.