



# NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General  
**Catherine Leahy Scott**

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## **INVESTIGATION INTO STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION FINDS DEFICIENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES, LACK OF OVERSIGHT AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

*Lack of Emergency Plans And Proper Communications Results in Heavyweight Boxer Taking a Taxi to Hospital While Bleeding Into His Brain As Ambulances Stood Idling Nearby*

*Commission Executives and Staff Used Positions to Receive Improper Benefits and Gifts*

NEW YORK CITY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today released a [report](#) of an investigation into the New York State Athletic Commission (“NYSAC”), the entity that regulates professional boxing matches in the State, that found many critical practices, policies and procedures were either nonexistent or deficient; a lack of appropriate oversight by commissioners; and conflicts of interest involving the Commission’s top executives and staff.

The report culminates an investigation that began after a heavyweight title fight between Magomed Abdusalamov and Ismaïkel Perez at Madison Square Garden in which Abdusalamov sustained a life-threatening brain injury. The investigation began as a probe into the circumstances surrounding Abdusalamov’s injury and post-bout medical treatment at the arena, and subsequently included NYSAC’s operations as well as several alleged conflicts of interest involving NYSAC’s leadership and staff. Ultimately, the Inspector General made several recommendations in the report to reform NYSAC operations and referred her findings to both the New York State Department of State and the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics for any further action they deem appropriate.

“The Commission’s lack of appropriate emergency medical protocols and oversight procedures, as well as clear conflicts of interest among senior staff, reflect a systemic breakdown of its most basic operations,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott, “With the Commission’s critical oversight of boxing and, now, mixed-martial arts in New York State, it is imperative that all commissioners and staff adopt necessary reforms and adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct and professionalism.”

Inspector General Leahy Scott’s investigation found that on the night of the fight NYSAC’s policies and procedures relating to post-bout medical care, tactical emergency plans, communication, and training were either deficient or non-existent, and that NYSAC failed to carry out its responsibilities prior to, during and after the fight. Melvina Lathan, chair of the Athletic Commission at the time of the bout, failed to ensure appropriate and routine review of Athletic Commission policies and procedures, and failed to train staff on the proper response to medical issues that may arise after a fight. There was confusion regarding the medical diagnoses and recommendations from Abdusalamov’s post-fight medical examinations, and there was no complete post-fight emergency plan in place. Also, while Abdusalamov primarily speaks Russian, NYSAC failed to provide adequate written and verbal interpretation services as required by New York State’s Language Access Plan.

The deficiencies in the protocols and training were highlighted by the fact that when Abdusalamov showed signs of sickness and trauma outside the arena after routine post-fight examinations, his team remained unaware there were two ambulances at the arena to take fighters to the hospital. Matthew Farrago, the NYSAC inspector assigned to Abdusalamov, directed the fighter's team to take him in a taxi to the hospital despite the fact ambulances were waiting at the arena.

The investigation also found potential conflicts of interest by NYSAC leadership and staff. In one example, the investigation found that Farrago took unauthorized photographs of Abdusalamov after the fight and obtained his discarded hand wraps, as well as the autographed hand wraps of another boxer, to sell for a boxing charity he ran. Farrago's conduct violated the Athletic Commission Code of Conduct, created a conflict of interest with his position as Athletic Commission inspector, and may have distracted him from directing Abdusalamov to an ambulance or physician after finding blood in his urine.

During the pendency of the investigation, the Inspector General also determined that then NYSAC Chairperson Melvina Lathan and staff had received improper gifts from promoters, including wine and jewelry, violating NYSAC policy and potentially New York State ethics laws. Lathan served as chair through June 2015 when she resigned in the wake of the Inspector General's investigation.

The continuing investigation additionally found that Thomas Hoover, who replaced Lathan as chair of the Commission in June 2015, permitted friends and relatives to obtain "credentials" allowing them to attend boxing matches free of charge and recommended that a personal friend apply for an Athletic Commission position, knowing that he was unqualified. In doing so, Hoover may have violated the New York Public Officers Law.

The Inspector General made the following recommendations based on the findings of this investigation, all of which NYSAC has agreed to implement:

- Establish and staff a pre-designated room at events to centralize operations and emergency communications; provide all staff members at events with communications devices; and develop a tactical emergency plan so all staff are aware of emergency procedures and prepared to address medical issues at any time during a fight event through prompt and appropriate referrals;
- NYSAC commissioners and staff must undergo ethics training from the Inspector General and the Joint Commission on Public Ethics;
- Under the guidance of its chief medical officer, NYSAC should develop and implement procedures and forms to better document boxers' post-bout examinations and direct post-bout medical care;
- Develop standard pre-fight and post-fight physical and neurological examinations;
- Develop a regular training program to educate staff regarding how to appropriately address medical issues, and train staff to ensure that proper procedures are followed when completing forms, especially with regard to time-sensitive information such as the temperature of a urine sample when provided;
- Institute a policy to ensure that all procedural requirements have been met, including the provision of a post-bout urine sample, before a boxer is allowed to leave the arena;
- Provide interpreters for boxers as required by the New York State Language Access Plan. The forms provided to boxers must also be translated into the State's six most common languages, as required by the Language Access Plan.

An online copy of the report may be obtained by clicking [HERE](#)

