

# Georgia veteran shot dead by police needed more help from VA, partner says

Bridget Anderson says Anthony Hill, who was shot dead by police in Atlanta in March, did not receive proper medical care for bipolar disorder

Hill was shot dead when police responded to a 911 call at his apartment complex outside Atlanta. Photograph: David Goldman/AP

## [Max Blau in Atlanta](#)

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Navy veteran [who was killed by police](#) last month did not receive enough medical support from the US Department of Veteran Affairs for his bipolar disorder and was forced to self-medicate with marijuana, his girlfriend said.

Anthony Hill, a 27-year-old US air force veteran, was shot dead on 9 March at his apartment complex outside Atlanta. Police officers had been responding to a 911 call for an episode during which Hill was not wearing clothes, crawling on the ground and banging on his neighbors' doors.

His death, one of a growing number of fatal shootings of unarmed black men by white police officers, has prompted further questions about the mental health treatment available to him from the VA prior to his death.

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Bridget Anderson, Hill's girlfriend, who was driving to celebrate their three-year anniversary on the day he died, said Hill had bipolar disorder and social anxiety after returning from Afghanistan in 2012. Hill had faced difficulties finding regular work, performing daily activities and getting his life back on track, Anderson said.

"Anthony was applying for jobs but still not getting anything," Anderson said. "He decided he needed the VA's help to stabilize his mood. To get help, he had to get on medicine. Prior to that, he had a lot of social anxiety."

Hill had already endured negative experiences with the VA, Anderson said, including an assigned caseworker who was absent and a two-day résumé class that proved to be ineffective in his job search.

When he decided to get medical treatment last winter, Anderson said he encountered wait times on the phone that lasted hours, VA staffers who attempted to schedule appointments in other states, and poor customer service at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. He smoked marijuana to help his mood in the interim.

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"The runaround was a setback to him," said Anderson, who added that marijuana helped motivate her boyfriend to get out of bed when he had depressive episodes that accompanied his bipolar disorder. "It got to the point where he participated in using marijuana from time to time when he was in a manic state from the bipolar [disorder]. It helped to relax him, it helped slow down his speech, and helped him to sleep, because he did suffer from a lot of severe insomnia at times."

After receiving medication in January, Hill, a musician with dreams of signing a record deal, started experiencing side-effects that included a locked jaw and swollen tongue. He also feared that those side-effects could impair his ability to breathe, Anderson said.

"He's a singer and you can't really do much with that if you have a locked jaw and a swollen tongue," she said. "It really bugged him."

Hill stopped taking his medication about 10 days before his death, and he began smoking multiple times per week to offset the side-effects, according to Anderson, who also said that Hill had scheduled a follow-up appointment on 18 March to switch his medications.

But before that could happen, Hill was shot and killed by DeKalb County police officer Robert Olsen, who has since been placed on administrative leave as the [Georgia](#) bureau of investigation looks into the shooting.

In a written statement, Greg Kendal, the public affairs officer with the Atlanta VA Medical Center, expressed the hospital's condolences for the Hill family but declined to comment on specific details about Hill's medical care, citing patient privacy.

Kendall also said the center offers veterans 24-hour access to both a psychiatric emergency department, plus a crisis hotline that puts veterans, families, or friends in touch with mental health professionals.

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