

# Deputies cleared in Massey shooting

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## FULL TEXT

Four deputies involved in the shooting death of 35-year-old Jermaine Massey have been cleared through an internal investigation.

The four, whose names have not been disclosed, were placed on paid administrative leave immediately following the March 19 shooting on 3rd Avenue in the Poe Mill community. Massey had called 911 seeking help during a mental health crisis.

Authorities have said deputies responded to Massey's home for a reported disturbance and found him in his back yard with a knife. After about 10 minutes of negotiations, authorities said Massey charged at them with the knife at which point deputies fired shots, striking and killing him.

A 911 call previously obtained by The Greenville News through a Freedom of Information Act request, revealed that Massey had called 911 on himself, telling a dispatcher that he needed someone to take him away from his home, where his longtime girlfriend and children were at the time. He told the dispatcher he suffers from bipolar disorder and made remarks that he felt like killing his family.

The four deputies put on leave were cleared of any wrongdoing based on an internal investigation through Greenville County's Office of Professional Standards.

They were put back in full service after the investigation finished, Sgt. Ryan Flood, a spokesman for the Sheriff's Office, said Wednesday. Flood said he did not know the date of when the investigation closed, and declined to comment further.

"They have been cleared internally," he said.

A State Law Enforcement Division investigation into the shooting is ongoing.

The Sheriff's Office has denied requests for the names of the deputies specifically involved in the shooting of Massey.

A redacted incident report and supplemental report from the Sheriff's Office was released Tuesday. The report lists out the last names of every deputy and officer who responded to the scene that day, but does not identify the officers who were involved in the shooting.

"We're not going to release that right now. That's still under SLED's investigation," said Wes Smith, a legal investigator with the Sheriff's Office.

"You asked for the names of the officers involved. That's got everybody that responded out there. We've answered that FOIA and are not going to release the specific names of who was involved."

The report's narrative offers little insight into how the events unfolded, focusing primarily on summarizing the 911 call, which was already made public, and describing the efforts made to secure the scene.

Massey's family, alongside several community activists, have pushed for answers, most recently calling for the release of the names of the deputies who were specifically involved in shooting Massey.

They have said they believe the shooting was unwarranted, and that Massey was only asking for help and instead was met with force.

Activists have said finding out the deputies' names would help the public understand the deputies' backgrounds and whether they have a history of using force.

"We have to have transparency," U.A. Thompson, a community activist representing the family, said during a recent

news conference outside the Greenville County Law Enforcement Center. "Release those names so that this family can get help with closure."

On Wednesday, community activist Traci Fant released a statement on behalf of the family and representatives to express displeasure in the Sheriff's Office to place the deputies involved back into service.

"It is especially surprising to us that these officers have been internally cleared and released back to the streets of Greenville County without having had proper crisis intervention training nor de-escalation techniques," Fant said in the statement. "We would hope that these trigger sensitive officers will not be involved in any other deaths of this nature while on patrol."

The Sheriff's Office has also not responded to a request for statistics on how many deputies have undergone crisis intervention team training.

CAPTION:

Tiffany Copeland speaks about her husband, Jermaine Massey.

JOSH MORGAN/Staff

## DETAILS

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