

UPDATE: Suspect in police shooting likely died of - Rockdale Citizen, The (Conyers, GA) - September 4, 2018

September 4, 2018 | Rockdale Citizen, The (Conyers, GA) | From Staff Reportsnews@rockdalecitizen.com

COVINGTON — A Covington Police officer responding to a shoplifting call at the Walmart on Industrial Boulevard was shot and seriously wounded Monday afternoon. The suspect in the shooting was killed. According to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, early indications are that the suspect died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Officer Matt Cooper, 34, a six-year veteran of the department and a military veteran, was taken by air ambulance to Atlanta Medical Center where he was remained in serious condition Tuesday. According to Capt. Ken Malcom, officers responded to a shoplifting call at 12:24 p.m. where three male suspects were encountered in the shopping center parking lot. Two were apprehended, but a third fled across Industrial Boulevard and ran behind the Little Phillies shopping center that is adjacent to a wooded area. Two officers pursued him, with one going around the rear of the shopping center from the east and the other from the west. Malcom said the officer approaching from the east side heard a gunshot and found his fellow officer wounded and unconscious. The body of the suspect, identified as **Aaron Demonta Fleming**, 21, was found in the wooded area a short time later. He was armed with a .38 revolver. According to police, several gunshots were fired in the incident, but it was not clear if either officer had fired his weapon. The investigation has been turned over to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Malcom said this is the first time an officer has been wounded in the line of duty since he joined the force 33 years ago. "Please pray for the police and pray for our officer who is fighting for his life," said Malcom. The names of the suspects have not been released. Malcom described all three as young males. "There is no such thing as a routine call," said Malcom. "As officers we are trained to believe that." The shootings shattered what was otherwise a quiet Labor Day afternoon. The stores in the shopping center where the shootings occurred were closed, and Malcom said he did not believe the public had been placed at risk. A large contingent of law enforcement officers gathered in the Walmart parking lot as the investigation continued. A man driving through the area about two hours after the incident asked what happened. "This sort of thing didn't use to happen around Covington," he said. "This is crazy." Cooper joined the Covington Police Department in 2012 and was named Rookie of the Year in 2013. Cooper was in the Army for eight years and was his battalion's senior sniper with two deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan. When he returned home, he worked for two years as an emergency medical technician with Newton Medical Center. "When I came back, I just wanted to help people out," Cooper said in a 2013 interview. As a result of his work as an EMT, he got to know several members of the Police Department, who suggested he join the force. "I wanted to be in law enforcement because I simply wanted to help people who were in need," Cooper said. "In EMT and the Police Academy, we were taught to be a servant of the public, and I try to be that." Law enforcement is part of Cooper's heritage. Cooper's father retired from law enforcement with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and later worked with the Newton County Sheriff's Office at the courthouse. Cooper said joining the Police Department was "an homage to his (father's) service in law enforcement." The Citizen will continue to update this story as more news becomes available.