

# Fort Hood Officials Focus on Shooting Suspect's Mental Health

## Accused Shooter Ivan Lopez's Medical History Showed 'Unstable Psychiatric or Psychological Condition'

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Ivan Lopez in a photo provided by the Puerto Rico National Guard. *Puerto Rico National Guard/Handout via Reuters*

The soldier accused of Wednesday's deadly shooting rampage at Fort Hood in Texas was undergoing treatment for a combination of depression, anxiety and insomnia, but no evidence has emerged linking his mental condition to his deployments overseas, military officials said Thursday.

Army Spc. Ivan A. Lopez, who is suspected of killing three and wounding 16 before delivering a fatal shot to his own head, saw no combat during a short stint as a truck driver in Iraq or in a 13-month tour as an observer in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, according to military records and officials.

The revelations suggest that the soldier's alleged violent outburst on home soil wasn't rooted in psychological or physical trauma induced by combat abroad. Instead, investigators are left with the possibility that the motive for Spc. Lopez's alleged murder spree was no more intelligible than the reasons behind school shootings or workplace killings.

"We have very strong evidence that he had a medical history that indicates an unstable psychiatric or psychological condition," Lt. Gen. Mark Milley, commander of Fort Hood, told reporters Thursday afternoon. "We believe that to be the fundamental underlying causal factor."

Investigators have found neither links to political extremists nor evidence that Spc. Lopez, 34 years old, was targeting certain individuals on the base, senior military officials said. Military investigators believe the shooting began after a verbal altercation between Spc. Lopez and other soldiers.

Scott & White Memorial Hospital in Temple, Texas, and Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Fort Hood said Thursday evening that seven people remained hospitalized and nine have been released.

The suspect, who was born in Guayanilla, Puerto Rico, met with Army medical staff about a month ago, and at that time conveyed neither suicidal nor homicidal intentions, Army Secretary John McHugh told a Senate hearing Thursday.

Spc. Lopez was taking medications, including the sedative Ambien, for mental-health conditions "ranging from depression to anxiety to some sleep disturbance," but had a military record free of major disciplinary blemishes, Mr. McHugh said.

The military has released the names of neither the dead nor the wounded. But Mary Muntean, of Effingham, Ill., identified one of the fallen as her son, Timothy Wayne Owens, 37, a military counselor.

"I want people to remember him as a brave young man, and as a loving man," Ms. Muntean said in a telephone interview. "To me, it's just a dream. It's hard to believe that he's gone. I'm 77, and I can't take much of him being gone."

Neighbors said Spc. Lopez had expressed disgruntlement with how the Army treated its troops. Friends in his native Puerto Rico recalled him as a good soldier, disciplined and introverted. The eldest of four children, he was devastated by his mother's death this fall from a heart attack, friends said.

Janice Matos, a high-school classmate, said Spc. Lopez's grief was compounded by the difficulty he had securing permission from the Army to return to Puerto Rico for the funeral, Ms. Matos said.

"He had to fight to get it," but he managed to make the trip, she said.

Gen. Milley said the Army is investigating reports that Spc. Lopez was given limited leave to attend the funeral.

In Killeen, Texas, Spc. Lopez, his wife and their young daughter moved into a unit in a three-story apartment complex about a month ago, according to Ilesha Bradley, an 18-year-old high-school student who lived in the complex.

Ms. Bradley said she saw Spc. Lopez on Wednesday, hours before the murders, as he got into his car and drove off. They exchanged greetings, she said, but there was nothing unusual about his appearance.

Another neighbor, 21-year-old college student Mahogany Jones, said she had been interested in the military and had asked Spc. Lopez about it. "He said, 'Don't go. The military is not treating people fairly who protected and served,'" said Ms. Jones. She said he complained that he didn't have as much time as he wanted to spend with his young daughter. He told her he was scheduled to get out of the Army in a year. He seemed to have a loving family, Ms. Jones said.

On Wednesday night, Spc. Lopez's wife emerged from their apartment after hearing of the shooting at the base, said Xanderia Morris, a neighbor.

"She couldn't reach her husband and she was concerned," said Ms. Morris, who lives one floor below the Lopez family. Later, when she heard Spc. Lopez had been identified as the suspected shooter, "she broke down," Ms. Morris recalled. "She said, 'Oh my God, it's him.'"

Ms. Morris said she comforted the woman for about 15 minutes until law enforcement arrived and took her away.

Spc. Lopez's wife couldn't be reached for comment.

On his Facebook page, Spc. Lopez went by "Ivan Slipknot," a reference to a metal band he liked, a friend said. His posted pictures show him in fatigues, brandishing a weapon, or smiling at the camera as he posed with children at what appears to be an amusement park.



President Barack Obama pauses as he speaks about the shooting at Fort Hood on Wednesday. *Associated Press*

On March 15, his last recorded activity, he changed his profile picture to an image featuring a Puerto Rican flag, the words "Stay Calm" and a profane Spanish phrase essentially meaning, "Don't mess with me."

Pentagon officials described Spc. Lopez as having an unremarkable military career. Because much of his time was in the National Guard, he remained at a junior rank despite his relatively long service in the military.

Spc. Lopez joined the Puerto Rico National Guard in 1999. A drummer in high school, he enlisted primarily as a percussionist in the band, with a second specialty as an infantryman, according to his service records.

In late 2006, Spc. Lopez and other Puerto Rico guardsmen spent three months training at Fort Hood, the site of this week's killings, and then, in early 2007, embarked on a 13-month tour as observers to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Nelson Bigas, command sergeant major of the Puerto Rico National Guard, said the Sinai mission was peaceful and that nothing happened to Spc. Lopez that the sergeant major thought could have induced post-traumatic stress or a traumatic brain injury.

"He never showed any sign of any mental illness," said Sgt. Maj. Bigas, who described Spc. Lopez as "an outstanding and disciplined soldier" during the deployment.

The men lost contact, he said, after Spc. Lopez joined the regular Army in 2010 and transferred to the 1st Armored Division in Fort Bliss, Texas.

For four months in 2011, Spc. Lopez deployed to Iraq, where he drove trucks as the U.S. pulled war supplies out in anticipation of its complete withdrawal at year's end.

It was a relatively peaceful time in the country. Although Spc. Lopez told Ms. Jones, his neighbor, that he had seen a "lot of blowups" in Iraq, military officials say they have found no record of him coming under attack or suffering any injuries.

—Ana Campoy, Arian Campo-Flores, Devlin Barrett, Kris Hudson, Ben Kesling, Lisa Schwartz and Erica E. Phillips contributed to this article.