Beat: News

Navy Yard gunman sought help for insomnia in weeks before attack

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USPA News - Aaron Alexis, the civilian contractor and former Naval reservist who killed twelve people when he opened fire at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. on Monday, was suffering from insomnia in recent weeks but denied struggling with anxiety or depression. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) said Alexis visited the emergency room at the VA Medical Center in Providence, Rhode Island, on August 23 and complained of insomnia.

"After a medical examination, he was given a small amount of medication to help him sleep and was instructed to follow up with a primary care provider," the department said in a statement issued on Thursday. Several days later, on August 28, Alexis went to the emergency room at the VA Medical Center in Washington, D.C. to request a medication refill and attributed his insomnia to his work schedule. He was given a small refill and was instructed to follow up with a primary care provider. "On both occasions, Mr. Alexis was alert and oriented, and was asked by VA doctors if he was struggling with anxiety or depression, or had thoughts about harming himself or others, all of which he denied," the department said, adding that Alexis never sought an appointment from a mental health specialist since enrolling in VA health care in February 2011. Alexis previously filed a disability compensation claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs and was granted a 20 percent disability rating for orthopedic issues in December 2011. His rating was increased to 30 percent in December 2012 when he was awarded an additional 10 percent for tinnitus. Alexis received $395 in monthly benefits. Earlier this week, police reports emerged which suggested Alexis was hearing voices and said there were people sending vibrations through the ceiling to prevent him from sleeping. Police in Rhode Island were called to his hotel room in early August when he reported being followed and feared for his safety. On Monday, Cathleen Alexis apologized to the victims and said she did not know why her son carried out the shooting rampage. "I don`t know why he did what he did and I`ll never be able to ask him why," she said. "Aaron is now in a place where he can no longer do harm to anyone, and for that I am glad." Monday`s massacre at the Navy Yard resulted in the deaths of thirteen people - including Alexis - and injured eight others, making it the deadliest incident in Washington, D.C. since a 1982 plane crash. The incident briefly put the U.S. Senate and other buildings on lockdown as authorities were investigating whether more gunmen were involved.

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