

# Editorial: Mental illness shouldn't be a death sentence

**Publisher's note:** *This editorial is from the Jan. 3, 2015, Sacramento Bee.*

Parminder Singh Shergill offered his life in service to his adopted country. As an infantryman in Iraq during the Gulf War, the India-born veteran served on the front lines.

By the time he got home to Lodi, he was suffering from severe post-traumatic stress and mental illness. And by the time, almost a year ago, that two Lodi police officers pumped 14 bullets into the 43-year-old man in a raving standoff mere steps from his mother's doorstep, his delusional run-ins with the authorities included 10 calls, mostly from his relatives, asking for help during his psychotic breaks.

His death is a tragedy, and far too familiar to the families of people who suffer from serious mental illness. It's a tragedy, too, for the experienced police officers who killed him, and who, despite being cleared this week of criminal conduct, surely will be haunted forever by what they did.

And what makes it especially awful is that it's a kind of tragedy we could prevent, if we wanted. A report released last year by the Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs' Association estimates that half of the people fatally shot by law enforcement officers in the U.S. suffer from mental illness.

A smaller survey, done by the *Sacramento Bee* in August, found that of 30 fatal police shootings since 2012 in Sacramento, Placer, Yolo and El Dorado counties, seven listed the victim's mental illness as a contributing factor.

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