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Iraq war veteran with PTSD gets a lighter sentence for armed robbery

Fargo, ND (WDAY TV) - It's a disorder that affects nearly seven percent of the general public at least once in their lives: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but it's more commonly seen in military veterans. Just yesterday, Iraq war veteran Denver Tergesen was sentenced to just over 3 years in prison for robbing a Fargo Credit Union at gunpoint.

By: [Christina Vaughn](#), WDAY

Fargo, ND (WDAY TV) - It's a disorder that affects nearly seven percent of the general public at least once in their lives: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but it's more commonly seen in military veterans. Just yesterday, Iraq war veteran Denver Tergesen was sentenced to just over 3 years in prison for robbing a Fargo Credit Union at gunpoint. He also suffers from PTSD. Some argued it was too light a punishment while others say he deserves leniency because of the mental illness.

Denver Lee Tergesen's tour of duty in Iraq left invisible scars, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, known as PTSD and last December, it became too much when at gun point, Tergesen took nearly 10 thousand dollars from the First Community Credit Union.

"And I tell my vets, look, the brain wasn't made for this kind of trauma."

Psychologists say Tergesen's actions are the direct result of PTSD, because the disorder fuels the symptoms of flashbacks or nightmares.

"Their past is their present, and they're experiencing those feelings as if they were happening today in some way. And that's where that's impairing."

Military organizations like the VA offer counseling services, but Jim Deremo, who has helped form the American Legion Group Courage Carries On, says there's still a stigma associated with PTSD and veterans shy away from getting help.

"Warriors, we're warriors, we're tough, we're trained. So, I don't have a problem."

Deremo and Sternhagen both agree PTSD is a very serious illness, it's also manageable.

"Look it's OK, make the call and get the help, get it squared away."

It's a call that could save their life, and one Deremo says Tergesen probably wishes he had made because he could have been treated and leading a normal life, instead of behind bars.

The VA is seeing a spike in PTSD for young veterans, but also in those who served in the Gulf Wars. They say the men and women's symptoms are triggered by seeing the current war images on TV.

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