

Deadly shootings over Christmas holidays in the US

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A series of deadly shootings over the Christmas holiday period highlights the mounting tensions affecting individuals and families as the economic and social crisis deepens in America. Although details of some of the incidents remain sketchy, it is evident that stresses of everyday life are being magnified for increasing numbers of people. These pressures prompt some to lash out at family members or erupt in what appear to be random acts of violence.

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On Christmas morning, the bodies of seven people were found in an apartment in Grapevine, Texas, near Fort Worth, the apparent victims of a murder-suicide. Although police have not yet released the victims' identities, the *Star-Telegram* reports that online property records and questioning of neighbors identify three of them as Aziz Yazdanpanah, his estranged wife Fatemeh Rahmati, and their daughter Nona Yazdanpanah.

The bodies of four women and three men were found around newly opened presents and a Christmas tree in the Grapevine apartment. Police believe one of the dead, a middle-aged man dressed as Santa Claus, shot the others before turning a weapon on himself. The victims were "related either by blood or marriage," Grapevine police Lt. Todd Dearing told the media.

According to property records, a bank had foreclosed on Yazdanpanah's home in nearby Colleyville, but he was still living there. Fatemeh Rahmati had moved earlier this year with her son and daughter to the apartment complex in Grapevine.

Allison Baum, who described herself as a close friend of Nona Yazdanpanah, told the *Star-Telegram* that her friend had complained about her parents fighting before they separated. The family, originally from Iran, was Muslim, but celebrated Christmas as a cultural holiday,

Baum said.

Neighbors Carrie Stewart and Fred Ditmars said that Aziz Yazdanpanah told them about a year ago that his daughter was being harassed due to her ethnicity and the father mentioned that he had a gun.

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A soldier returning from Afghanistan was shot and critically wounded at his homecoming party last Friday night in Southern California. Ruben Ray Jurado, 19, was arrested after he turned himself in to police in Chino Hills, about 35 miles east of Los Angeles. He is suspected of shooting Christopher Sullivan, 22, at the party in San Bernardino after getting into a fight with the soldier's brother.

Authorities believe Jurado began arguing about football teams with Sullivan's brother, 16-year-old Brandon, and then punched him. When Christopher Sullivan intervened, Jurado pulled a gun and fired multiple shots, hitting the older brother in the neck and shattering his spine. He remains in the hospital, paralyzed from the neck down and on a breathing machine.

Christopher Sullivan was wounded in a suicide attack in Kandahar province, suffering a cracked collarbone and brain damage. He had been recovering in Kentucky, where he is stationed with the 101st Infantry Division.

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Bonnie Marrow was shot and killed as she drove through the Church Hill district of Richmond, Virginia on the morning of December 22. Marrow, a nurse at VCU Medical Center, was apparently shot not long after leaving her son's gravesite at Oakwood Cemetery.

Two-and-a-half years ago Marrow's son, Robert Lee Cox Jr., 22, was found fatally shot behind the wheel of his car in a nearby residential area. That case has yet to

be solved.

Authorities have no leads on the cause or circumstances surrounding Bonnie Marrow's shooting. She leaves behind a husband and young daughter.

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On December 21, Penelope Luddy used a shotgun to kill her 10-year-old daughter Alexandra, her disabled father Harold Bertram, 79, and herself in the finished basement of her home on Red Fox Run in Perinton, upstate New York. The killings shocked residents of this wooded neighborhood in suburban Rochester.

Penny, as she was known to friends, had sent her husband, Michael Luddy, 57, to check on a sick relative at about 8:30 that morning. He returned home a little more than an hour later to find his slain wife, daughter and father-in-law.

A next-door neighbor said that the Penny Luddy had recently confided to him that she had a "very debilitating" illness, but that she had not elaborated on her condition. "She was worried but she didn't give me the impression it was going to be life-threatening," Tony Henderson said. He described her in general as cheerful and outgoing.

Neighbor Melinda, Tony Henderson's wife, told the Associated Press, "She was a great mom ... I think some type of depression just overtook her because there's no way she would have harmed her baby. She had to have just snapped."

The weapon used in the shootings belonged to Luddy's husband, a maintenance worker at a Johnson & Johnson plant.



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