

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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How 'Fat Leonard' infiltrated Navy ship

The Washington Post

As the flagship for the Navy's 7th Fleet, the USS Blue Ridge plays a critical role in national security by overseeing all U.S. maritime operations in Asia and the western Pacific. The venerable warship is the Navy's second-oldest active-duty vessel and has survived the Vietnam War, the Cold War and tensions with China and North Korea.

But there is one foreign threat against which the Blue Ridge proved utterly defenseless for many years: a 6-foot-3, 350-pound tugboat owner known as "Fat Leonard."

In a case that ranks as the worst corruption scandal in Navy history, the Justice Department has charged 15 officers and one enlisted sailor who served on the Blue Ridge with taking bribes from or lying about their ties to Leonard Glenn Francis, a Singapore-based tycoon who held lucrative contracts to service Navy ships and submarines in Asian ports.

For the better part of a decade, as part of a massive scam to defraud the Navy, Francis systematically infiltrated the Blue Ridge to a degree that is only now coming into focus, more than four years after the defense contractor's arrest, according to the documents from federal court and the Navy, as well as interviews with Navy officials and associates of Francis.

Prosecutors say nine sailors from the 7th Fleet flagship leaked classified information about ship movements and other secrets to Francis, a Malaysian citizen, making the Blue Ridge perhaps the most widely compromised U.S. military headquarters of the modern era.

The Navy is investigating dozens of others who served on the ship, which is based in Japan, for possible violations of military law or ethics rules, according to

documents and interviews.

Between 2006 and 2013, Francis doled out illicit gifts, hosted epicurean feasts and sponsored sex parties for Blue Ridge personnel on at least 45 occasions, according to federal court records and Navy documents obtained by The Washington Post under the Freedom of Information Act.

Officers from the Blue Ridge consumed or pocketed about \$1 million in gourmet meals, liquor, cash, vacations, airline tickets, tailored suits, Cuban cigars, luxury watches, cases of beef, designer handbags, antique furniture and concert tickets — and reveled in the attention of an armada of prostitutes, records show.

Blue Ridge targeted

Although Francis offered bribes and freebies to hundreds of Navy personnel assigned to other U.S. warships, bases and embassies in Asia starting in the early 1990s, the Blue Ridge was his primary target.

Staff officers on the Blue Ridge had the clout to intervene on behalf of Francis' company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, because they managed operations, logistics and intelligence for the entire 7th Fleet. Of paramount importance to Francis was the officers' access to the classified itineraries of all U.S. ships and submarines transiting the region.

A master recruiter, Francis methodically assembled a network of informants to feed him the secret itineraries, court documents show. Wielding remarkable influence for a foreigner, he then prodded his moles on the Blue Ridge to reroute aircraft carriers and other vessels to ports controlled by his firm so he could more easily overcharge the Navy for fuel, other supplies and services.

Francis, 53, has pleaded

guilty to bribery and defrauding the military of \$35 million, although some officials think the monetary losses sustained by the Navy are far greater. He has been in jail in San Diego since his arrest in 2013 and is cooperating with authorities as he awaits sentencing. One of his attorneys, Ethan Posner, declined to comment.

The case has snowballed into an epic embarrassment for the Navy, which has struggled to explain how so many officers on the Blue Ridge succumbed so easily to the prostitutes, extravagant meals and expensive gifts that Francis dangled as temptations.

It also has raised questions about the extent to which admirals in the 7th Fleet and the rest of the Navy knew about what was happening under their command but did not intervene.

More than 60 admirals have come under investigation by the Justice Department and the Navy for their interactions with Francis and his company. Two admirals have been charged in federal court and six others have been censured or disciplined by the Navy. Authorities have publicly identified only a handful of the others so far.

'Leonard the Legend'

The 7th Fleet is led by a three-star admiral supported by a command staff of about 200 personnel assigned to the Blue Ridge. The ship itself is skippered by a captain with a separate crew. It spends about half the year docked at its homeport in Yokosuka, Japan, and the rest making the rounds in Asia.

For years, when it arrived in a port, the Blue Ridge would be welcomed by a familiar sight on the pier: a beaming Leonard Francis, flanked by a black sport-utility vehicle or limousine and an entourage of comely young women. His company,

Glenn Defense, held Navy contracts to provide everything the crew might need while in port, including fuel, food, fresh water, tugboats, security guards and ground transportation. But Francis, also known within Navy circles as "Leonard the Legend," was renowned for the perks that he provided off the books.

Besides paying for meals at Asia's fanciest restaurants, he was famed within the Navy for the prostitutes and strippers he had on call from China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Organizing the sex workers into what he dubbed "elite SEAL teams," he would fly them from their countries to whatever port the Blue Ridge might be visiting.

Blue Ridge officers were repeatedly instructed that none of this was permissible. The Navy, like other federal agencies, has strict rules against accepting anything of monetary value from people seeking to do business with the government.

Gifts are prohibited unless they are worth \$20 or less. There is also a \$50 annual limit on accepting gifts from a single source.

Yet officers on the Blue Ridge routinely conspired with Francis to undermine the regulations, according to federal prosecutors.

In February 2006, as the Blue Ridge prepared to visit Hong Kong, a military lawyer sent an ethics alert to senior officers on the ship: Beware defense contractors who might try to bribe you.

Instead of complying, Capt. David Newland, the 7th Fleet chief of staff, immediately leaked the message to Francis so that Francis could cover his tracks, according to an indictment filed last year in federal court in San Diego.

Revised nuclear strategy raises concerns

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration outlined sweeping changes in U.S. nuclear strategy Friday, calling for two new types of nuclear weapons and warning for the first time that in “extreme circumstances” the U.S. could use nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear attacks on infrastructure and civilians.

The strategy, described in a 75-page review released by the Pentagon, constitutes one of the most significant revisions of U.S. nuclear strategy since the Cold War, one aimed at aggressively countering nuclear-armed Russia and North Korea as well as terrorist groups seeking to acquire nuclear arms.

By clarifying potential scenarios when the president might authorize a nuclear attack, officials said, the U.S. was seeking to deter adversaries from conducting large-scale cyberwarfare and other non-nuclear but potentially devastating attacks on the U.S. and its allies, a controversial idea that critics said could make nuclear war more likely.

“We must look reality in the eye and see the world as it is, not as we wish it to be,” Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said in a statement accompanying the report. “Given the range of po-

tential adversaries, their capabilities and strategic objectives, this review calls for a flexible, tailored nuclear deterrent strategy.

“In no way does this approach lower the nuclear threshold,” Mattis wrote. “Rather, by convincing adversaries that even limited use of nuclear weapons will be more costly than they can tolerate, it in fact raises that threshold.”

But Joseph Cirincione, a non-proliferation expert at the Ploughshares Fund, a Washington-based advocacy group that seeks reductions in the nuclear arsenal, said the new strategy — combined with President Donald Trump’s volatile approach to international threats — could lower the threshold for employing nuclear weapons.

“This strategy gives him a massive rebuild of the current Cold War arsenal, complete with new missions and new weapons, to include responding to a cyberattack with a nuclear bomb,” Cirincione said. “This plan, coupled with this president, greatly increases the risk of nuclear war.”

The Obama administration sought to shrink the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense strategy. It declared in 2010 that it would consider using nuclear weapons only in extreme cir-

cumstances, such as a massive conventional attack by a nuclear-armed state or in the event of a mass-casualty chemical or biological attack.

Trump’s strategy likewise calls for using nuclear weapons only “in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies and partners.” But it specifies that extreme circumstances also could include “non-nuclear strategic attacks” including those on the “U.S., allied or partner civilian population or infrastructure,” as well as “on U.S. or allied nuclear forces, their command and control, or warning and attack assessment capabilities.”

Jon B. Wolfsthal, director of the Nuclear Crisis Group and a National Security Council official in the Obama administration, said the new strategy opened the door to first use of nuclear weapons by the U.S. in more scenarios than before.

“The U.S. is expanding the circumstances under which it might use nuclear weapons first, even against non-nuclear states,” he said.

The review recommends modifying “a small number” of existing nuclear warheads on Trident missiles carried on U.S. submarines to reduce the weapons’ explosive power.

In addition, a new nuclear-armed cruise missile launched from naval vessels would be developed.

Both steps, the report says, are aimed at deterring “regional aggression,” including a decision by Russia, North Korea or other adversaries to carry out a limited nuclear strike in the belief that the U.S. would not respond because it did not want to risk large-scale nuclear war.

Current and former Pentagon officials said that Russian military doctrine increasingly envisions using a limited nuclear strike to win a conflict in Europe, believing the U.S. and its allies might not want to risk large-scale nuclear war under those circumstances. “We need to figure out how to deter a Russia military, which evidently believes it can use nuclear weapons to end and win a conventional conflict,” said Franklin Miller, a National Security Council official during President George W. Bush’s administration.

The lower-yield warhead for Trident missiles would “ensure a prompt response option” and would help counter any “mistaken perception” by Russia, North Korea or other adversaries that the U.S. might hesitate to respond with nuclear weapons to a limited nuclear strike by one of them, the report said.

Soldier sentenced for punching police officers

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY

Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — A 173rd Airborne Brigade soldier who assaulted two Italian police officers, breaking one officer’s teeth, was given a suspended one-year jail sentence just hours after he was arrested.

The soldier, identified by Italian media as Keshawn T. Ross, 21, was released to the brigade after he pleaded guilty Thursday and was sentenced in the Vicenza court.

Brigade officials confirmed

the soldier’s sentence and status but declined to provide his rank, confirm his name or discuss whether the incident spelled the end of his military service.

“This incident does not reflect the values of the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, its leadership or its soldiers,” Lt. Col. John Hall, a brigade spokesman said in an email. “The 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team strives to be an organization whose members are respectful of the Vicenza community.”

According to local media, Ross was at a local strip club

early Thursday morning when he “totally flipped out,” according to *Il Giornale di Vicenza*. Strip club security called police, hoping that Ross would calm down when he saw the police vehicle’s flashing lights, the *Giornale* reported.

“Instead, all hell broke loose. As soon as Ross saw one of the policemen exiting the vehicle, he assaulted him and punched him in the face, breaking one of his teeth.

“The soldier seemed possessed,” the newspaper continued. “Not even the pepper spray

could stop him. Only after a hand-to-hand fight, the policemen succeeded in handcuffing him and putting him in their vehicle. But not even the vehicle escaped the soldier’s violence. He heavily kicked and whacked it,” the *Giornale* said.

Ross, represented by a local lawyer, pleaded guilty later Thursday morning to injury, insult and resistance to public officials.

He was sentenced to a year in jail, which the judge suspended on condition that Ross commit no further crimes.

SC train crash kills 2 people

Associated Press

CAYCE, S.C. — An Amtrak passenger train slammed into a freight train parked on a side track in South Carolina Sunday, killing two Amtrak crewmembers and injuring more than 110 people, authorities said. It was the third deadly wreck involving Amtrak in less than two months.

The Silver Star was on its way from New York to Miami with nearly 150 people aboard around 2:45 a.m. when it plowed into the CSX train at an estimated 59 mph, Gov. Henry McMaster said. The crash happened around a switchyard near Columbia.

The governor said investigators have yet to determine how the Amtrak train ended up on that stretch of track.

"The CSX was on the track it was supposed to be on," McMaster said.

The National Transportation Safety Board sent investigators.

The conductor and engineer aboard the Amtrak train were killed, the coroner's office said. And 116 people were taken to four hospitals, the governor said.

The main trauma hospital in the area had three patients in critical or serious condition, with the rest treated for minor injuries such as cuts, bruises and

whiplash, said Dr. Steve Shelton, Palmetto Health director of emergency preparedness.

The locomotives of both trains were left crumpled, the Amtrak engine on its side. One car in the middle of the Amtrak train was snapped in half, forming a V off to one side of the tracks.

Amtrak officials gathered up luggage and other belongings, and within hours put passengers aboard buses to their destinations.

The dead were identified as engineer Michael Kempf, 54, of Savannah, Ga., and conductor Michael Cella, 36, of Orange Park, Fla.

5 fishermen are rescued after marlin sinks boat

Sun Sentinel

Five men were pulled from the choppy ocean off Boynton Beach, Fla., after their fishing boat sank about 4 miles offshore Saturday.

A marlin, which yanked on the boat until it started taking on water, was blamed for the sinking.

The captain and crew of a passing 55-foot charter catamaran spotted the five men bobbing in the water and plucked them from the sea before handing them over to the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard said it received a call about 9:24 a.m. that a 31-foot pleasure craft with five aboard was rapidly taking on water.

Palm Breeze charter Capt. Charles Mount, Elena Markel and her daughter, Stefania, 13, were returning to Boca Raton from a charter trip when they overheard the Coast Guard talking to one of the distressed men on the radio.

"One of the guys said they were sinking and it happened by the Breakers (hotel)," Elena Markel said. "We had just passed there, then suddenly the captain started screaming, 'Elena, drop the sails down.'"

The men were clinging to the sinking boat. The catamaran moved closer and life jackets were thrown to the men, who swam to the catamaran and climbed aboard. By then, their boat was completely submerged.

Once on the Palm Breeze, one of the men said they had been fishing and hooked a blue marlin that pulled their boat backward, and it took on water and sank.

The men were taken to the Lake Worth Inlet Coast Guard station. Their identities were not immediately available, but there were no reports of injuries. They were in the water for more than 30 minutes, Markel said.

Man sorry for lunging at Nassar

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, Mich. — A distraught father seething over sexual abuse suffered by three daughters tried to attack former sports doctor Larry Nassar in a Michigan courtroom after a judge rejected his request to confront the "demon" in a locked room.

Randall Margraves was blocked by an attorney, tackled by sheriff's deputies and hauled out of court Friday. He later apologized, saying he had lost control. Eaton County Judge Janice Cunningham said there was "no way" she would fine him or send him to jail.

Nonetheless, she added, it is "not acceptable that we combat assault with assault."

The incident occurred during the third and final sentencing hearing for Nassar, who has admitted to sexually assaulting girls under the guise of medical treatment. This case focuses on his work at Twistars, an elite gymnastics club southwest of Lansing.

Nassar, 54, already will spend the rest of his life in prison. He was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison for assaults at Michigan State University and at his home, and was ordered in December to spend 60 years in a federal prison for child pornography crimes.

Worker devastated about false alert

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A former Hawaii state worker who sent a false missile alert last month said Friday he's devastated about causing panic but was "100 percent sure" at the time that the attack was real.

The man spoke to reporters on the condition that he not be identified because he fears for his safety after receiving threats. He said an on-duty call that came in on Jan. 13 didn't sound like a drill. However, state officials say other workers clearly heard the word "exercise" repeated several times.

"Immediately afterward, we find out it was a drill. ... "I felt

sick afterward. It was like a body blow."

The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency fired him after the incident. The man's superiors said they knew for years that he had problems performing his job. The worker had mistakenly believed drills for tsunami and fire warnings were actual events, and colleagues were not comfortable working with him, the state said.

While starting a Saturday shift at the emergency operations center in a former bunker in Honolulu's Diamond Head crater on Jan. 13, the man said, a co-worker took a phone call over the U.S. Pacific Command

secure line that sounded like a real warning, he said.

He said he didn't hear the beginning of the message that said "exercise, exercise, exercise."

Federal and state reports say the agency had a vague checklist for missile alerts, allowing workers to interpret the steps they should follow differently. Managers didn't require a second person to sign off on alerts before they were sent, and the agency lacked preparation on how to correct a false warning.

Those details emerged Tuesday in reports on investigations about how the agency mistakenly blasted cellphones and broadcast stations with the missile warning.

Former CIA director says Nunes 'abused' his committee power

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The former director of the CIA on Sunday blasted a Republican memo alleging abuses of power by the FBI and the Justice Department.

John Brennan accused Rep. Devin Nunes, R.-Calif., the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, of selectively releasing information to accuse law enforcement officials of improperly obtaining a warrant to monitor the communications of a Trump campaign adviser.

"It's just appalling and clearly underscores how partisan Mr. Nunes has been," Brennan said in an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"He has abused the chairmanship of [the Intelligence Committee]," Brennan said.

Brennan headed the CIA during a sprawling investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 election and the Trump campaign's connections to Russia. He said that from his perspective, the FBI was "very forthcoming" with information presented to a court that authorized surveillance on the campaign aide, Carter Page. That surveillance was first authorized in October 2016.

Brennan said he first became aware in the summer of 2016 of a dossier of information about

Trump and his Russian connections that had been compiled by a former British intelligence officer. Nunes' memo portrays that dossier as "essential" to obtaining the warrant, but it doesn't specify which portions were used, and Democrats have disputed the claims.

Brennan said he didn't see the memo until September 2016, although he knew that journalists were inquiring about it.

"I do think it was up to the FBI to see whether they could verify any of it," Brennan said, but he emphasized that the dossier played "no role whatsoever" in an assessment by all U.S. intelligence agencies that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election. He added that intelligence agencies were also developing their own information on Russia's interference "on multiple fronts" and that the FBI had its own sources of information.

The release of the memo has raised concerns that Trump will use it as grounds for firing the deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein, who oversees the special counsel probe investigating Trump's ties to Russia and potential obstruction of justice by the president and his aides. Trump sought last June to fire the special counsel, Robert Mueller III, but backed off after White House counsel Donald McGahn threatened to resign.

Temporary funding legislation could prevent shutdown

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers on both sides of a bitter partisan aisle on Capitol Hill haven't ruled out a temporary funding bill to head off a crucial deadline Thursday.

The talks could signal that Congress is headed for a new stopgap budget plan rather than a repeat of last month's government shutdown.

Some say a vote will need to be in the works by Tuesday with Republicans gone much of last week for a party retreat and their Democratic counterparts headed to theirs Wednesday.

The military, along with the rest of the government, is operating on its fourth short-term funding bill since the 2018 fiscal year started Oct. 1. It's become common practice for Congress to rely on the continuing resolutions, or CRs, until a full budget is approved.

Several are betting against a Feb. 8 shutdown, especially if House Republican fiscal hawks and Senate Democrats are on board with a funding deal.

"I think another CR is much more likely than another shut-

down," said Molly Reynolds, a governance studies fellow at the liberal-leaning Brookings Institution in Washington. "The only way I see another shutdown happening is if the group of House Republicans who have threatened to vote against another CR ... actually do so and enough House Democrats follow through on their commitment to oppose a CR" without an immigration fix.

Even temporary budget bills have been a challenging feat in recent weeks. For the first time in nearly five years, a three-day government shutdown was triggered Jan. 20.

There are talks about a two-year plan that could surpass statutory budget caps for defense and nondefense spending. A 2018 military budget of \$700 billion awaits funding, and last month, reports revealed that President Donald Trump's White House will ask for \$716 billion for 2019.

Republicans will need votes from Senate Democrats, who have been holding out for an extension to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program, which faces a March 5 deadline.

Italian police: No remorse from shooting suspect

Associated Press

MILAN — The suspect in a shooting rampage that wounded six African migrants in Italy has demonstrated no remorse for his actions and was "lucid and determined, aware of what he had done," an Italian law enforcement official said Sunday.

Luca Traini, 28, was being held in jail as police investigate him on multiple counts of attempted murder in Saturday's shooting rampage in the central Italian city of Macerata, with the aggravating circumstance of "racial hatred."

Traini was an unsuccessful candidate last

year in a local election for the anti-migrant Northern League party, and friends have been quoted by ANSA as saying he previously had ties with the neo-fascist Forza Nuova and the CasaPound political parties.

Col. Michele Roberti, the Carabinieri commander in Macerata, told Sky TG24 that "it's likely that he carried out this crazy gesture as a sort of retaliation, a sort of vendetta" after a Nigerian man was arrested in the gruesome slaying of an Italian teenager a few days previously in the same city.

The dismembered remains of Pamela Mastropietro, 18, were found days after she

walked away from a drug rehab community. Police arrested the Nigerian suspect after finding the victim's bloody clothes in his apartment, along with a receipt from a pharmacy where she bought a syringe, and knives that are consistent with the crime.

Police photos showed the shooting suspect with a neo-Nazi tattoo on his forehead and an Italian flag tied around his neck.

One of Traini's victims, a 29-year-old woman identified only as Jennifer, told the daily La Stampa from her hospital bed that she no longer feels free to walk around the city "with peace of mind" after the attack.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man accused of biting cop pleads insanity

OH LORAIN — An attorney for a man facing charges for biting off part of an Ohio State Highway Patrol trooper's ear has entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity.

The Elyria Chronicle-Telegram reported Cornelius Carey Jr., 44, is charged in Lorain County with felonious assault, resisting arrest and kidnapping. The insanity plea was filed Tuesday.

Authorities allege that Carey became confrontational, hit Trooper Lance Deshuk in the face and then bit him during a struggle before Deshuk managed to subdue Carey and handcuff him. The confrontation occurred after Deshuk spotted Carey walking in the middle of road near the village of LaGrange.

Carey is being held on a \$1 million bond.

Annual sled dog race canceled over weather

ME GREENVILLE — The 100-mile Wilderness Sled Dog Race in Maine's Moosehead Lake region is kaput for this season.

Officials said Jan. 29 that recent warmer weather and rain have created trail conditions that are not safe for mushers or dogs.

Amy Dugan, one of the race organizers, said canceling the 12th annual event was "heartbreaking."

DUI suspect pins baby in stroller against wall

CA GLENDALE — Southern California authorities said a suspected drunken driver was arrested

after his car jumped a sidewalk and pinned a stroller carrying an 11-month-old baby against a building.

Police said the child was not hurt in the Jan. 27 crash in Glendale. An adult and a 7-year-old suffered minor injuries when they jumped out of the way as the Camaro careened toward them.

Sgt. Dan Suttles said the Camaro was involved in a hit-and-run incident nearby earlier in the evening.

Naked thief not guilty by reason of insanity

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A federal judge said a Florida man who robbed a bank, stripped naked and ran down the street, throwing stolen money, is severely mentally ill and can't be held responsible for the crime.

Chief U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore found Alexander Sperber, 26, not guilty by reason of insanity following a 25-minute trial Wednesday. Sperber will remain in jail while receiving mental health treatment.

Prosecutors said a dye pack exploded as Sperber ran from a Regions Bank branch in Fort Lauderdale in July. Covered in red dye, he shed his clothes and tossed money into the air.

The Sun Sentinel reported that Sperber told investigators a chip in head compelled him to rob the bank so that he could pursue his career as a comedian.

Paper hits back at other paper's editorial

RI PROVIDENCE — The biggest newspapers in Connecticut and Rhode Island are feuding over which state is worse.

The Hartford Courant in

Connecticut wrote a scathing editorial after The Providence Journal in Rhode Island published an editorial calling its New England neighbor struggling, and blasting its business climate as enormously difficult.

The Journal's Jan. 24 piece ends by calling on Rhode Island Democratic Gov. Gina Raimondo to try to attract jobs from Connecticut to Rhode Island, calling it "certainly less risky" than Connecticut.

In a Friday editorial headlined "Why, Rhode Island, Why?" the Courant responded by detailing a long list of its neighbor's woes. Those included pension problems, economic issues and "a legacy of corruption that not even Connecticut can match." It closes by encouraging the states to work together.

Man rescued after sand tunnel collapses

FL CRESCENT BEACH — Rescue crews aided a man who became trapped when a sand tunnel collapsed on him on a Florida beach.

St. Johns County Fire Rescue Sgt. Lucas Smith told the Florida Times-Union crews found the man under almost 3 feet of sand in a dug-out hole next to the dunes on Jan. 28 near Crescent Beach.

Lucas said the man, whose name hasn't been released, appeared to be middle-aged. Crews had to remove the sand to reach him, and he was in cardiac arrest.

Girl, 8, remains calm despite knife to chest

CA LOS ANGELES — An 8-year-old girl says she was afraid she'd die but remained calm as a man grabbed her and held a butcher knife to her chest in the doorway of a Los Angeles store.

Natanyah Garcia told KABC-

TV she thought it was "the end of the world" when he grabbed her from behind and held the knife inches from her chest Friday evening at the Echo Park Walgreen's.

Bystanders urged the man to drop the knife and to run away. He finally did, then was arrested quickly on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon and possessing methamphetamine.

Arts venue invites dogs to canine films

NY GENEVA — A New York arts venue is inviting people to bring their dogs to the movies.

WHEC said the Smith Opera House in Geneva will be showing four canine-inspired films Feb. 11-17. Dogs will be admitted for free — and will even get treats.

The movies are "Best in Show," "The Artist," "Bolt" and "Must Love Dogs."

Samaritan's truck stolen after accident

MO WEST ALTON — A man stopped to help victims of a car crash in eastern Missouri, only to have two men involved in the crash carjack the good Samaritan's truck.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported a Toyota Avalon sped through a red light in West Alton on Tuesday and struck a car. The Avalon turned out to be stolen.

Several motorists stopped to help and the men in the Avalon reportedly offered some of them money to help them flee. Police said the men eventually confronted one man and threatened to kill him if he didn't hand over his 2016 Dodge Ram pickup.

The truck was found about 6 miles away.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Lewis, Owens, Urlacher, Moss lead class

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Ray Lewis and Brian Urlacher terrorized opposing offenses from the middle of the field. Randy Moss and Terrell Owens did the same to defenses on the outside.

The two hard-hitting linebackers and two big-play receivers highlighted an eight-person class voted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Saturday. Safety Brian Dawkins also received at least 80 percent support from the 47 Hall of Fame voters, along with contributor Bobby Beathard and senior nominees Jerry Kramer and Robert Brazile.

But the biggest stars of the class are the two linebackers that made it on their first tries, and the pair of lightning-rod receiver who sometimes caused as many problems for their own teams as for the opposition. Moss also made it on his first try, while Owens needed to wait for his third year on the ballot to get enough support.

"I've been going a long time. And now I can finally rest," Lewis said. "I want to go fishing with a cigar now and just sit back. I don't want to work out every day now."

Moss and Owens each played for five teams in their careers as they often wore out their welcome with their inability to get along with teammates and coaches at times.

But at their best, there were few players ever able to strike fear in defenses as much as Moss and Owens, who were both all-decade selections for the 2000s.

"The door knocked and I started getting excited," Moss said of Hall of Fame President David Baker alerting him he has been elected. "All the emotions caught the best of me because it's been a long journey and it ends in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Tears of joy."

Moss burst on the scene as a rookie in Minnesota in 1998 when he caught a league-leading 17 TD catches and helped lead the Vikings to the NFC title game. His combination of

Pats' Brady named NFL MVP for third time

MINNEAPOLIS — For the third time, Tom Brady is the NFL's Most Valuable Player.

Now he goes for his sixth Super Bowl title, and perhaps with it a fifth MVP trophy for the NFL championship.

Brady added The Associated Press 2017 NFL MVP award Saturday night at NFL Honors to his wins in 2007 and 2010. The New England Patriots quarterback was joined as an honoree by three Los Angeles Rams: Coach of the Year Sean McVay, Offensive Player of the Year running back Todd Gurley and Defensive Player of the Year tackle Aaron Donald.

Other winners in voting by a nationwide panel of 50 media members who regularly cover the league were Los Angeles Chargers receiver Keenan Allen as Comeback Player; New Orleans running back Alvin Kamara and cornerback Marshon Lattimore as top offensive and defensive rookies, respectively; and former Minnesota Vikings offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur, now head coach of the New York Giants, as Assistant Coach of the Year.

Brady is the second player in the four major professional sports to win MVP at age 40; Barry Bonds won baseball's award in 2004.

Brady competed 385 of 581 passes (66.2 percent) for 4,577 yards and 32 touchdowns with eight interceptions as New England went 13-3 for the AFC's best record.

— Associated Press

speed and athleticism made him the game's most dangerous big-play threat and led to the phrase "You got Mossed" for embarrassed defensive backs.

He led the NFL in TD catches five times, including his record 23 for New England in 2007, and earned four All-Pro selections. He finished his career with 982 catches for 15,292 yards and ranks second all-time with 156 TD receptions.

Owens, who didn't attend the announcement, entered the league as a third-round pick by San Francisco in 1996 but developed into a star known for some memorable playoff appearances, including his winning 25-yard TD catch to beat Green Bay in 1999; his 177 yards in a comeback win against the Giants in 2003; and his nine catches for 122 yards in the 2004 Super Bowl against New England just seven weeks after breaking his leg.

Owens ranks second to Jerry Rice with 15,934 yards receiving and is third on the all-time touchdowns receiving list with 153.

Lewis is widely considered one of the greatest middle linebackers, winning two AP

Defensive Player of the Year awards and earning eight All-Pro selections. He anchored a dominant defense for the 2000 Baltimore Ravens in a season that ended with him winning Super Bowl MVP, then retired as a champion after Baltimore closed his last season with a title win over San Francisco in February 2013.

"Growing up as a child, I know what that looked like, Mike Singletary, Dick Butkus," Lewis said. "Who dreams of being in that category, sitting with those guys?"

Lewis joined tackle Jonathan Ogden as the only Ravens voted into the Hall of Fame as both of the team's first-round picks in its initial season of 1996 received the high honor.

Lewis' career was also marked by legal problems off the field. He pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of obstruction of justice after initially being charged with murder in connection with two killings following a Super Bowl party in Atlanta in January 2000. Lewis was also fined \$250,000 by the NFL.

Urlacher wasn't far behind Lewis with his play on the field

and is the latest in a line of great Chicago middle linebackers to make the Hall, joining Butkus, Singletary and Bill George. He was the Defensive Player of the Year of 2005 and joined Lewis on the 2000s all-decade team.

Dawkins spent most of his 16-year career in Philadelphia, earning five first-team All-Pro selections for his versatility that included 37 career interceptions and 26 career sacks. He became the first player in NFL history with a sack, interception, fumble recovery and touchdown catch in the same game against Houston in 2002.

Kramer got passed over 10 times previously as a finalist before finally getting enough votes as a senior to become the 14th member of the Vince Lombardi Packers to make the Hall. Kramer helped anchor the Green Bay line for 11 seasons, winning six NFL titles and making the block that cleared the way for Bart Starr's TD sneak in the "Ice Bowl" for the 1967 NFL championship.

Brazile was a finalist for the first time after a 10-year career for the Houston Oilers that included five straight All-Pro selections.

Beathard, also not on hand Saturday, helped build four Super Bowl champions in Miami and Washington and made seven trips to the title game during more than three decades as a personnel executive with a sharp eye for talent.

Five offensive linemen were among the 15 finalists, with tackle Joe Jacoby getting eliminated in voting that reduced the candidates to 10, and tackle Tony Boselli, guards Alan Faneca and Steve Hutchinson, and center Kevin Mawae getting cut in the next round of voting.

Cornerback Ty Law also made it to the final 10 in his second time on the ballot. Defensive backs John Lynch and Everson Walls, receiver Isaac Bruce and running back Edgerrin James were the other candidates eliminated in the first cuts.

"I'm glad I didn't have to vote for this class," Urlacher said. "It's a great class."

Watt chosen Man of Year

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Houston Texans star defensive end J.J. Watt won the NFL's Walter Payton Man of the Year Award on Saturday night.

The award recognizes a player's contribution in his community and to society in general. It was given out at NFL Honors, when The Associated Press announced its individual NFL awards.

Tight ends Benjamin Watson, of the Baltimore Ravens, and Greg Olsen, of the Carolina Panthers, also were finalists.

Watt, in his seventh NFL season and a three-time Defensive Player of the Year, had the goal of raising \$200,000 for Hurricane Harvey relief in Houston. His fundraising did a whole lot more, bringing in an incredible \$37 million in 19 days.

Watt has dedicated himself to finding organizations that will apply the funds in a fair and effective manner.

"I cannot express how humbled and honored that I am to be mentioned in the same sentence as Walter Payton, a man who did everything right not only on the field but off of it," Watt said in his acceptance speech. "And I'm going to continue to try to live that legacy and make that family proud."

"This award is called The Man of the Year Award, but I promise you it is so much bigger than that. This award is about the inherent good that lies within humanity. It is about the city of Houston and its ability to overcome adversity at a time when it all seemed lost. It is about the hundreds of thousands of people from all over the country and all over the world that donated to a city they may never have been to, to people they may never meet. But they donated simply because they saw their fellow human going through a difficult time and they wanted to help out."

Peyton Manning presented the award.

"I'm incredibly grateful, I'm incredibly thankful to receive this award and I will cherish it for the rest of my life," Watt added.

College basketball roundup

St. John's shocks No. 4 Duke

Associated Press

NEW YORK — That's two losses in three games for No. 4 Duke — and this one to a team that hadn't won since Christmas.

No wonder coach Mike Krzyzewski called it a "disgusting" performance.

Shamorie Ponds scored 33 points and St. John's stunned the Blue Devils 81-77 at Madison Square Garden on Saturday, snapping an 11-game losing streak and handing a suddenly suspect Duke squad its second defeat in eight days.

"We got what we deserved," Krzyzewski said. "We weren't able to knock them out after we lost the first 12 rounds of a 15-round fight."

Bashir Ahmed added 19 points and Tariq Owens had 17 for the Red Storm (11-13), who overcame an early 10-point deficit and fought off Duke's heralded freshmen down the stretch in their biggest victory under third-year coach Chris Mullin.

It was the first win for St. John's since Dec. 20 against Saint Joseph's.

"We would have taken a win if it was in an empty gym," Mullin said. "Thank God January is over."

St. John's was playing the second of three straight games against top-6 opponents in a span of nine days. Next up, a visit to No. 1 Villanova on Wednesday night.

"We are happy but we can't stop here. We have to keep pushing," said Ponds, a sophomore guard. "This is big to get a win on the board. We can start fresh."

Gary Trent Jr. had 22 points for the Blue Devils (19-4), who perhaps got caught looking ahead to their first matchup of the season with bitter rival North Carolina on Thursday night.

Krzyzewski didn't think so. "Ponds was really as good a guard offensively as we've played against," Coach K said. "We came in prepared."

No. 2 Virginia 59, Syracuse 44: De'Andre Hunter scored 15 points, Kyle Guy added 14 and visiting Virginia smothered struggling Syracuse.

No. 3 Purdue 78, Rutgers 76: Vincent Edward had 18 points, seven rebounds and eight assists, and visiting Purdue held on for a school-record 19th straight win.

No. 5 Michigan State 63, Indiana 60: Matt McQuaid scored 12 points and made the decisive three-pointer with 1:08 to play for visiting Michigan State.

No. 6 Xavier 96, Georgetown 91: Trevon Bluiett had a season-high 31 points, including a four-point play that tied it late in regulation, and host Xavier never trailed in overtime.

Oklahoma State 84, No. 7 Kansas 79: Kendall Smith scored 24 points, including the clinching free throws in the final seconds, and visiting Oklahoma State held on for the upset.

No. 8 Cincinnati 65, UConn 57: Jacob Evans III scored 19 points to lead visiting Cincinnati past the struggling Huskies.

Washington 78, No. 9 Arizona 75: Dominic Green collected a loose ball in the final seconds and made a three-pointer at the buzzer to give host Washington the victory.

No. 10 Texas Tech 83, TCU 71: Jarrett Culver scored 20 points with four three-pointers, and Texas Tech got its fourth straight victory and a share of the Big 12 Conference lead.

No. 11 Auburn 93, Vanderbilt 81: Bryce Brown scored 25 points and Mustapha Heron had 23 to lead hot-shooting host Auburn.

Texas 79, No. 12 Oklahoma 74: Matt Coleman scored 22 points, leading a big second-half rally before his late free throws helped secure the win over visiting Oklahoma and freshman star Trae Young.

No. 13 Saint Mary's 65, San Diego 62: Jock Landale had 34 points and tied his season high with 18 rebounds — he had a double-double by halftime — and visiting Saint Mary's ex-

tended its school-record winning streak to 18.

No. 14 Gonzaga 68, BYU 60: Rui Hachimura scored 15 points, Josh Perkins added 14 and Gonzaga edged visiting BYU for its fifth win in a row.

No. 15 West Virginia 89, Kansas State 51: Sagaba Konate scored 19 points and host West Virginia ended a three-game losing streak.

No. 18 Tennessee 94, Mississippi 61: Grant Williams and Lamonte' Turner scored 17 points each to lead five Tennessee players in double figures as the host Volunteers won their fifth straight.

No. 19 North Carolina 96, Pittsburgh 65: Luke Maye scored 26 points to help host North Carolina end its first three-game losing streak in four years.

No. 20 Clemson 75, Wake Forest 67: Gabe DeVoe scored 24 points to lead visiting Clemson.

Missouri 69, No. 21 Kentucky 60: Host Missouri had never beaten Kentucky in 10 previous tries, but behind 16 points each from Jordan Barnett and Kassius Robertson, the Tigers finally cleared that Big Blue hurdle.

Alabama 68, No. 23 Florida 50: Collin Sexton scored 17 points, Donta Hall notched his fourth double-double of the season, and visiting Alabama rallied from a 10-point deficit for the upset.

No. 24 Michigan 76, Minnesota 73 (OT): Muhammad-Ali Abdur-Rahkman made a tie-breaking three-point play with 3.8 seconds left and finished with 17 points as host Michigan held on in overtime.

San Diego State 81, Air Force 50: Jalen McDaniels had 16 points, on 7-for-10 shooting, and 13 rebounds to help host San Diego State.

Army 82, American 70: Matthew Wilson scored 14 points and led five players in double-figure scoring and host Army beat American University, snapping a three-game slide.

NBA roundup

Rockets humiliate LeBron, Cavaliers

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Ashamed to show his face any longer, LeBron James stared at the floor as he headed toward the locker room before the final horn sounded.

An inglorious exit.

The Cavaliers have become an embarrassment.

“I’m lost for words,” James said after Cleveland was humiliated by the Houston Rockets, who rained down 19 three-pointers on the disconnected Cavaliers in a 120-88 blowout on Saturday night.

Chris Paul scored 22 points with 11 assists, Ryan Anderson added 21 points and the long-range Rockets became the latest team to manhandle the Cavaliers on national TV.

“They should take us off every nationally televised game for the rest of the season,” said James, who spoke softly with a baseball cap pulled over his eyes. “We haven’t played good at all and we get our butts kicked every time we play on national television, so I’m at a loss for words.”

James Harden only scored 16 — 15 below his league-leading average — but Houston rolled to its fourth straight win and improved to 11-2 since Jan. 8.

Meanwhile, the Cavs’ downward spiral accelerated.

Since losing at Golden State on Christmas, James and his teammates are 0-8 in network broadcasts and have been embarrassed in several matchups against quality teams. They lost by 28 at Minnesota, 34 in Toronto, 24 at home to Oklahoma City and 32 to the Rockets, who toyed with the defending Eastern Conference champs.

Following the game, Cavs coach Tyronn Lue was asked if his team tried.

“Don’t look like it,” Lue said. “We didn’t have no fight. I thought they took the game to

us on both ends.”

Nuggets 115, Warriors 108: Nikola Jokic scored 19 points, including a go-ahead three-pointer with 2:10 left, and added nine rebounds for host Denver.

Will Barton had 25 points and Gary Harris 16 for the Nuggets, who split the four games with Golden State this season. Denver rallied from 12 down in the second half to hand the Warriors their second loss in three games.

Pistons 111, Heat 107: Andre Drummond had 23 points and 20 rebounds, and Blake Griffin made a key three-pointer in the final minute to lift host Detroit over Miami.

Pacers 100, 76ers 92: Victor Oladipo and Bojan Bogdanovic each scored 19 points and host Indiana beat Philadelphia.

Wizards 115, Magic 98: Otto Porter scored 20 points and Tomas Satoransky had a career-high 19 to lift Washington over host Orlando.

Timberwolves 118, Pelicans 107: Jimmy Butler scored 30 points, Karl-Anthony Towns had 22 points and 16 rebounds for his league-leading 47th double-double, and host Minnesota beat New Orleans.

Jazz 120, Spurs 111: Ricky Rubio scored a season-high 34 points and added nine assists, and Utah upended host San Antonio for its fifth straight victory.

Mavericks 106, Kings 99: Yogi Ferrell made consecutive three-pointers to spark a big run at the start of the fourth quarter and Dallas beat host Sacramento to snap a five-game losing streak.

Clippers 113, Bulls 103: Tobias Harris scored 24 points in his Clippers debut, leading host Los Angeles over Chicago.

NHL roundup

Devils snap Pens’ four-game streak

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Just when it looked like the New Jersey Devils were coming back to the pack in the Eastern Conference after a surprising start, they have surprised everyone again.

This time it was the NHL’s hottest team.

Travis Zajac scored two goals and set up another as the Devils limited Pittsburgh to a season-low 16 shots in posting a 3-1 victory on Saturday night, ending the Penguins’ four-game winning streak.

The win was the Devils third straight after the All-Star break and it came against the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions, who had only lost twice in 11 games.

“These are big because you want to create as much separation as you can especially as the year goes on,” Zajac said after the Devils leapfrogged the Penguins and moved back into second place in the Metropolitan Division with three games in hand. “It’s nice to get these wins, keep improving and we’re going to have to win a lot more games. As long as we’re prepared and focused, we’ll get there.”

Blake Coleman also scored and Stefan Noesen had two assists for the Devils, who have missed the playoffs the past five seasons.

“You have goals you set out to achieve, every night won’t win, but I think our consistency through 60 minutes has been good,” center Brian Boyle said. “Sometimes you have to simplify and go to basics. We got a great group of character guys in this room.”

Lightning 4, Canucks 2: Yanni Gourde scored late in the second period to give visiting Tampa Bay a three-goal lead, and they went on to their fifth win in six games.

Kings 6, Coyotes 0: Darcy Kuemper made 27 saves for his 10th career shutout, Jake Muzz-

in and Trevor Lewis scored on special teams, and host Los Angeles won its second straight against the Pacific Division after five straight regulation losses.

Jets 3, Avalanche 0: Connor Hellebuyck stopped 25 shots for his fifth shutout of the season as host Winnipeg improved to 5-0-2 in its last seven games.

Ducks 5, Canadiens 2: Defenseman Jeff Petry scored two goals to help host Montreal end a three-game losing streak.

Senators 4, Flyers 3 (SO): Mike Hoffman scored the only shootout goal in the sixth round of the tiebreaker to lift Ottawa past host Philadelphia.

Blues 1, Sabres 0: Carter Hutton stopped 27 shots for his third shutout of the season and 11th of his career, and Carl Gunnarsson banked in a shot off the crossbar with 5:41 left to lead visiting St. Louis.

Bruins 4, Maple Leafs 1: Tuukka Rask made 23 stops and posted a point for a career-best 20th straight game, leading surging host Boston past Toronto.

Islanders 4, Blue Jackets 3: Jordan Eberle and Brock Nelson scored early in the third period and Jaroslav Halak made 46 saves as host New York rallied.

Panthers 3, Red Wings 2: Jonathan Huberdeau scored with 7.7 seconds left in the third period to lift host Florida past Detroit.

Stars 6, Wild 1: Jamie Benn had a goal and an assist during a four-goal second period, and host Dallas cruised past Minnesota.

Predators 5, Rangers 2: Kevin Fiala scored twice and Pekka Rinne stopped 20 shots as host Nashville improved to 8-1-1 in its last 10 games.

Flames 4, Blackhawks 3 (OT): Sean Monahan scored 59 seconds into overtime and host Calgary snapped a six-game losing streak.