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Attack on newspaper shocks France

The Associated Press

PARIS — Masked gunmen stormed the Paris offices of a weekly newspaper that caricatured the Prophet Muhammad, methodically killing 12 people Wednesday, including the editor, before escaping in a car. It was France's deadliest terrorist attack since World War II.

Shouting "Allahu akbar!" as they fired, the men also spoke flawless, unaccented French in the military-style noon-time attack on the weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo, located near Paris' Bastille monument. The publication's depictions of Islam have drawn condemnation and threats before — it was firebombed in 2011 — although it also satirized other religions and political figures.

President Francois Hollande called the slayings "a terrorist attack without a doubt," and said several other attacks have been thwarted in France in recent weeks. Fears have been running high in France and elsewhere in Europe that jihadis returning from conflicts in Syria and Iraq will stage attacks at home.

France raised its security

alert to the highest level and reinforced protective measures at houses of worship, stores, media offices and transportation. Schools closed across Paris, although thousands of people jammed Republique Square near the site of the shooting to honor the victims, holding aloft pens and papers reading "Je suis Charlie" — "I am Charlie."

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which also left at least four people critically wounded, and was condemned by world leaders as an attack on freedom of expression, but praised by supporters of the militant Islamic State group.

Clad all in black with hoods and carrying assault rifles, the attackers forced one of the cartoonists arriving at the office building with her young daughter to open the door with a security code.

The staff was in an editorial meeting and the gunmen headed straight for the paper's editor, Stephane Charbonnier — widely known by his pen name Charb — killing him and his police bodyguard first, said Christophe Crepin, a police union

spokesman. Minutes later, two men strolled out to a black car waiting below, calmly firing on a police officer, with one gunman shooting him in the head as he writhed on the ground, according to video and a man who watched in fear from his home across the street.

The witness, who refused to allow his name to be used because he feared for his safety, said the attackers were so methodical he first mistook them for France's elite anti-terrorism forces. Then they fired on the officer.

"They knew exactly what they had to do and exactly where to shoot. While one kept watch ... the other one delivered the final coup de grace," he said. "They ran back to the car. The moment they got in, the car drove off almost casually."

The witness added: "I think they were extremely well-trained, and they knew exactly down to the centimeter and even to the second what they had to do."

Eight journalists, a guest and two police officers were killed, said Paris prosecutor Francois Molins, giving a par-

tial breakdown of the 12 dead. Among those killed were Bernard Maris, an economist who was a contributor to the newspaper and was heard regularly on French radio, and cartoonists Georges Wolinski and Bernard Verlhac, better known as Tignous.

"Hey! We avenged the Prophet Muhammad! We killed Charlie Hebdo," one of the men shouted in French, according to a video shot from a nearby building and broadcast on French TV. Other video showed two gunmen in black at a crossroads who appeared to fire down one of the streets. A cry of "Allahu akbar!" — Arabic for "God is great" — could be heard among the gunshots.

Corinne Rey, the cartoonist who said she was forced to let the gunmen in, said the men spoke fluent French and claimed to be from al-Qaida.

Both al-Qaida and the Islamic State group have repeatedly threatened to attack France. Just minutes before the attack, Charlie Hebdo had tweeted a satirical cartoon of the Islamic State's leader giving New Year's wishes.

FBI: Man shot doctor, self at VA clinic

The Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — A doctor was fatally shot at a West Texas veterans' clinic in an attack that also left the suspected gunman dead, the FBI said Wednesday.

Special Agent Mike Martinez declined to identify the doctor or the gunman who died Tuesday afternoon at the El Paso Veterans Affairs Health Care System clinic at Fort Bliss.

The FBI was questioning hundreds of patients, staffers and others who might have wit-

nessed the shooting. The agency is leading the investigation because the shooting occurred on federal property, Martinez said.

Investigators haven't said whether the gunman killed himself or was killed by someone else. They also have not indicated a motive for the shooting.

"We're trying to expeditiously get through those hundreds of witnesses to find out details about this incident," said Doug-

las Lindquist, FBI special agent in charge of the El Paso office.

Sutton Smith, a worker at the VA clinic, said Wednesday that a "code white" was issued over the intercom system indicating an active shooter and ordering people to seek shelter.

Smith said he hid with about a dozen people in a locked room with the lights off for some two hours. Apart from the initial alert and some communication among managers via cellphone, no official updates were

provided during the lockdown, he said.

The El Paso clinic came under scrutiny last year after a federal audit showed it had some of the nation's longest wait times for veterans trying to see a doctor for the first time.

The VA said in a statement that it "is deeply saddened by the tragic situation that has occurred in El Paso, and we are actively working with our partners at Fort Bliss to investigate this matter."

Former Yokosuka officer pleads guilty in Navy bribery scheme

BY ERIK SLAVIN
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A former Yokosuka naval officer pleaded guilty to bribery charges in San Diego federal court Tuesday, making him the fifth person to cut a deal in a wide-ranging scheme that prosecutors allege traded luxury travel, cash and prostitutes for confidential information.

Cmdr. Jose Luis Sanchez, 42, confirmed the accuracy of a 24-page plea agreement Tuesday that detailed his dealings with a Singapore-based military contractor that provided services to ships in ports, according to The Associated Press.

Sanchez served as the executive officer for Fleet Logistics Center Yokosuka until April 2013. He accepted more than \$100,000, along with travel expenses and services from prostitutes, in exchange for providing internal Navy infor-

mation to contractor Glenn Defense Marine Asia, according to the federal court complaint.

Robert Huie, an assistant U.S. attorney, told reporters that Sanchez admitted to taking the bribes for more than four years, according to the AP.

U.S. Magistrate Judge David Bartick agreed to let Sanchez remove a GPS monitor while free on bond and allowed him to back the bond with assets held by his mother and sister instead of his own property, according to the AP.

Sanchez began sending classified ship schedules to GDMA in 2009 to Leonard Glenn Francis, known alternately as “Fat Leonard” and the “Lion King” in email traffic between the two, according to court documents.

Francis, a Malaysian national who was arrested in 2013, has pleaded not guilty to bribery and conspiracy charges.

Sanchez was working as director of operations at Navy

Fleet Logistics Center Singapore when he first began accepting bribes from GDMA, according to court documents.

GDMA and Navy officials conspired to steer 7th Fleet ships to ports where GDMA could overcharge the Navy for refueling, water, electricity and other pierside services. Department of Justice officials estimate the scheme cost the Navy more than \$20 million.

Sanchez also sent messages in 2009 alerting Francis to Navy concerns that GDMA overcharged an aircraft carrier for a visit to Port Klang, Malaysia.

The concerns apparently had no effect. In 2011, Naval Supply Systems Command awarded GDMA three regional contracts to support ships throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The Southeast Asia contract alone was valued at \$25 million annually, with an option to extend for four years.

Kauffman is final frigate to deploy

The Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. — The USS Kauffman is about to become the last of its breed.

When the ship leaves Naval Station Norfolk on Thursday for a six-month deployment to the waters off Central America, it will mark the final deployment of a Navy frigate. The Kauffman will be part of a multinational, counternarcotics operation known as Operation Martillo.

When the warship returns, it will be the last frigate in the Navy's inventory to be decommissioned later this fall. The Navy built 51 of the ships, with the first going into service in 1977. Several frigates — vessels smaller than a destroyer, used chiefly for escort duty — were recently decommissioned and designated for sale to foreign militaries.

“A lot of sailors have served on this platform, so it's very (humbling) to be the last sitting CO of the last frigate that's going to be in commission,” said Cmdr. Michael Concannon, the Kauffman's commanding officer. “The crew's very proud.”

The Oliver Hazard Perry-class of frigates were designed during the Cold War to protect ships at sea and conduct anti-submarine warfare. Over time, their mission evolved to include mine warfare, counterpiracy and counternarcotics operations.

Naval Surface Atlantic said it has five East Coast-based frigates awaiting decommissioning ceremonies, which begin this month. Figures were not immediately available Tuesday for West Coast-based frigates.

The Navy plans to use littoral combat ships, joint high-speed vessels and afloat forward staging bases to replace some of the frigate's capabilities. Littoral combat ships are designed to travel in the shallow, littoral area close to shore.

The Navy is also designing a new small surface combatant ship after problems arose with the littoral combat ship.

US has custody of man claiming to be a top Lord's Resistance Army commander

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

U.S. forces in Africa have taken custody of a man calling himself a top rebel commander in the notorious Lord's Resistance Army, a small but resilient group that has terrorized parts of central Africa for two decades.

U.S. officials on Tuesday said a man calling himself Dominic Ongwen — widely believed to be a top deputy to LRA leader Joseph Kony — turned himself in to U.S. troops stationed in the Central African Republic.

“Efforts to establish full and positive identification continue, so I don't have confirmation of that at this point,” Jen Psaki, State Department spokeswom-

an, told reporters. “If the individual proves to be Ongwen, his defection would represent a historic blow to the LRA's command structure.”

On Wednesday, Ugandan officials said a positive identification had been made.

“I can confirm that he is the one,” Lt. Col. Paddy Ankunda, a spokesman for the Ugandan army, told The Associated Press. “We have duly identified him. There is no doubt about his identity.”

In 2011, President Barack Obama ordered 100 U.S. special operations forces into central Africa to work alongside African Union troops who are leading the hunt for Kony and other LRA members. Much of the

support has focused on intelligence, training and logistical support.

However, another key part of the effort also has centered on encouraging members of the rebel group to abandon Kony and turn themselves over to international authorities. The U.S. military, along with nongovernmental groups such as Invisible Children, have engaged in various campaigns, including mass leaflet drops, to encourage defections in the LRA ranks.

In 2012 there were 33 defectors, many of whom cited the leaflets and loudspeaker messages as influencing their decision, U.S. Special Operations Command Africa officials said in early 2013.

Pistons win 6th straight on late shot

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The San Antonio Spurs kept giving the Detroit Pistons hope, and Brandon Jennings made the most of one last chance.

With just eight seconds left, Jennings collected an errant inbound pass by Tim Duncan and drove the length of the court for the winning basket with 0.1 seconds remaining, lifting Detroit to its sixth straight victory, 105-104 on Tuesday night.

His bucket backed up double-doubles from Andre Drummond and Greg Monroe and the Pistons rallied from 18 points down in the first half.

Drummond had 20 points and 17 rebounds and Monroe added 17 points and 11 boards, as the Pistons snapped a four-game skid in San Antonio (21-15). D.J. Augustin added 19 points for Detroit (11-23), which has not lost since waiving Josh Smith on Dec. 22.

San Antonio point guard Tony Parker played just 13 minutes in his return from a five-game absence due to a strained left hamstring.

Suns 102, Bucks 96: At Milwaukee, Markieff Morris scored 26 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead Phoenix.

Isaiah Thomas added 19 and Goran Dragic 16 for the Suns, who have scored 100 or more points for nine straight games.

Brandon Knight scored 26 and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 16 for the Bucks, who lost their fourth straight at home.

The Suns have won nine of the last 11 and opened the four-game road trip with their third consecutive victory. They also topped their record to 8-1 over Eastern Conference opponents.

Ky. survives Ole Miss upset bid

The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Dominant almost all season and facing expectations of going unbeaten, top-ranked Kentucky looked vulnerable and very beatable against a Mississippi team intent on pulling off a seismic upset.

Wildcats guard Aaron Harrison thwarted the Rebels' quest by scoring 26 points, including two big free throws with 1:29 remaining in overtime to put Kentucky ahead to stay. Kentucky then withstood three final Mississippi attempts to rally before escaping with an 89-86 victory Tuesday night to win its Southeastern Conference opener and keep its hopes for a perfect season alive.

"We knew they were going to fight," Harrison said after beating the Rebels with 9-of-10 shooting from the line and five three-pointers. "The SEC is tougher than what people think and we knew they weren't going to lay down."

Crunch-time heroics weren't expected from Kentucky (14-0, 1-0 SEC), which entered as overwhelming favorites against a Mississippi squad it had beaten 102 times in 115 previous meetings. The Wildcats instead got a back-and-forth battle with the determined Rebels, who didn't flinch and seemed to have momentum and opportunities in their favor.

Especially in OT, as missed free throws down the stretch gave the Rebels chances to either go ahead or tie the game. Mississippi just couldn't take advantage as LaDarius White missed on one possession and the Rebels (9-5, 0-1) lost the ball out of bounds on the next.

The Rebels had one last opportunity after Trey Lyles missed two free throws with 15.4 seconds left, but Martavious Newby's three-point shot bounced high and was grabbed by Willie Cauley-Stein.

Stefan Moody scored 25 points and Jarvis Summers 23 for the Rebels, who beat Kentucky 30-26 in the paint and controlled the boards for much of the game.

Summers even had a chance to win it at the end of regulation, but his three-point attempt with 4 seconds left bounced high off the rim with the game tied at 77. The Rebels fell short of pulling off a huge upset, but they succeeded in giving Kentucky the scare that few expected the Wildcats to face in the SEC.

No. 22 Ohio State 74, Minnesota 72 (OT): In Minneapolis, Marc Loving's jump shot from the lane with 5.6 seconds left in overtime lifted the Buckeyes, who escaped after blowing a 12-point second-half lead.

D'Angelo Russell had 25 of his 27 points in the first half, missing all seven of his field-goal attempts after the break, but he made two critical free throws for Ohio State (13-3, 2-1 Big Ten) in the closing minutes. Loving added 13 points and seven rebounds.

Mo Walker had 18 points and nine rebounds, DeAndre Mathieu scored 17 points and Andre Hollins had all 12 of his points in the second half, but the Gophers (11-5, 0-3) weren't able to turn their comeback into a win.

No. 8 Villanova 90, No. 24 St. John's 72: Darrun Hilliard scored 21 points and Villanova rebounded nicely from its first defeat of the season, pulling away from host St. John's in the second half for a victory.

Dylan Ennis added 15 points and nine rebounds for the Wildcats (14-1, 2-1 Big East). Daniel Ochefu had 13 points and 13 boards to help coach Jay Wright earn his 300th win at Villanova.

No. 17 Iowa State 63, Oklahoma State 61: Dustin Hogue blocked a three-point try with under a second left to help host Iowa State hold off Oklahoma State in the Big 12 opener for both teams.

No. 23 Arkansas 79, Georgia 75: Bobby Portis scored 21 points,

Michael Qualls added 15 and Arkansas rallied from a first-half deficit of 13 points to beat host Georgia in the Southeastern Conference opener for each team.

In other college games:

UConn 58, South Florida 44: Rebounding from losing its American Athletic Conference opener at home, defending national champion Connecticut completed a successful road swing through the Sunshine State with a victory over South Florida.

Amida Brimah scored 13 points and Ryan Boatright added 10 for UConn (8-5, 1-1).

Providence 66, Butler 62: Kris Dunn scored 20 of his career-high 25 points in the second half — including a free throw with 8 seconds to go to answer a Butler threat — and Providence fended off the Bulldogs for its first road win of the season.

George Washington 75, Saint Louis 72: Yuta Watanabe blocked Mike Crawford's corner three-point attempt at the buzzer to preserve George Washington's victory over visiting Saint Louis.

San Diego St. 56, New Mexico 42: Winston Shepard scored 16 of his 20 points in the second half and San Diego State beat visiting New Mexico.

Angelo Chol added 10 points for the Aztecs (12-4, 2-1 Mountain West Conference)

Georgetown 65, Marquette 59: Joshua Smith had 12 points and 10 rebounds, and host Georgetown survived a 12-minute field goal drought in the second half in a win over Marquette.

Smith had seven offensive boards, and D'Vauntes Smith-Rivera added 15 points and Jabril Trawick 13 points for the Hoyas (10-4, 2-1 Big East) in their first game since dropping out of the AP Top 25.

Elias makes his point as Devils down struggling Sabres

The Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Patrik Elias had a goal and two assists to reach 1,000 NHL points, and the New Jersey Devils beat the struggling Buffalo Sabres 4-1 on Tuesday night.

The goal was the 399th for Elias. Travis Zajac and Michael Cammalleri each had a goal and an assist, and Jordan Tootoo also scored as the Devils won consecutive games for the first time since Nov. 14.

Cory Schneider made 20 saves. Mikhail Grigorenko netted his first goal of the season for the Sabres, who have lost five straight and are 1-8-1 in their last 10 games.

Lightning 4, Canadiens 2: Tyler Johnson scored twice in Tampa Bay's four-goal second period, and the Lightning won the matchup for the top spot in the Eastern Conference by beat-

ing host Montreal.

Brett Connolly and J.T. Brown also scored for Tampa Bay (26-12-4), which moved two points ahead of Montreal atop both the Atlantic Division and the Eastern Conference.

Flyers 2, Senators 1 (SO): Wayne Simmonds scored the tying goal in regulation and had the winner in the shootout to lift host Philadelphia over Ottawa.

Ottawa's Mika Zibanejad and Philadelphia's Jake Voracek each scored on the opening shots of the tiebreaker.

Neither team scored in the next three rounds. Simmonds then punched in the winner against Craig Anderson.

Predators 3, Hurricanes 2: Roman Josi scored the tiebreaking goal late in the third period to give Nashville a victory over visiting Carolina.

Ryan Ellis and Mike Fisher also scored, and Pekka Rinne stopped 23 shots to help

Nashville win for the third time in four games. Viktor Stalberg had two assists.

Sharks 4, Wild 3 (OT): Marc-Edouard Vlasic scored his second winning goal in two nights 3:09 into overtime, and San Jose completed a come-from-behind victory over host Minnesota.

Avalanche 2, Blackhawks 0: Nathan MacKinnon scored and set up a goal by Maxime Talbot in the opening 1:17. Semyon Varlamov made 54 saves for his third shutout of the season and visiting Colorado blanked Chicago.

Blue Jackets 4, Stars 2: Sergei Bobrovsky made 11 of his 24 saves in the third period, and Columbus beat host Dallas.

Columbus scored the first three goals of the game, but the Stars pulled within one before Bobrovsky shut them out in the third.

Canucks 3, Islanders 2: Nick

Bonino and Linden Vey scored in the second period to snap long goal droughts, and host Vancouver beat the New York Islanders.

Ryan Stanton added his first goal in more than a year as Vancouver (23-12-3) improved to 5-1-1 in its last seven games.

Red Wings 4, Oilers 2: Pavel Datsyuk scored the tiebreaking goal with 34 seconds left, and Detroit topped host Edmonton for its fourth win in six games.

Datsyuk also had an assist, and Justin Abdelkader added a goal and assist for Detroit.

Blues 6, Coyotes 0: David Backes scored four goals to lead St. Louis' shutout rout of host Arizona.

Backes notched his 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th goals of the season over a 17-minute span between the second and third periods. It was the second time Backes has scored four goals in a game.



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QB Winston enters draft

The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston is going to the NFL.

The 2013 Heisman Trophy winner announced his decision to forgo his final two years of eligibility and enter the 2015 Draft in a statement released to ESPN by The Legacy Agency Wednesday.

Winston was the most successful quarterback in college football the last two seasons, but also faced lengthy sexual assault investigations. He was not charged by police and was cleared by the university.

However, the woman who says Winston assaulted her in 2012 is suing the university's board of trustees.

A civil lawsuit filed Wednesday in federal court in Orlando claims FSU had knowledge of her alleged sexual harassment and discrimination by Winston, and that it created a hostile educational environment for her.

Winston was cleared of wrongdoing by FSU following a two-day hearing last month to determine whether he violated sections of the student conduct code. A Florida prosecutor made a similar decision last year. The suit says the university had an unreasonable response to her allegations. It seeks a jury trial and unspecified damages.

The Seminoles went 26-1 with Winston starting and won the 2014 national championship.

Winston is expected to be one of the first quarterbacks selected, but faces questions about his off-the-field incidents.

Giants fire 2 assistants

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The New York Giants have fired defensive coordinator Perry Fewell and defensive backs coach Pete Giunta.

Giants coach Tom Coughlin announced the moves on Wednesday, a little more than a week after the Giants (6-10) missed the playoffs for the third straight season and the defense was ranked among the worst in the NFL.

Fewell had been the Giants defensive coordinator since 2010 and was at the helm when the Giants defense played a major role in their 2012 Super Bowl victory.

Above average Joe

In playoffs, Ravens QB Flacco stands out

The Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — In the afterglow of a playoff victory over Pittsburgh last weekend, Ravens coach John Harbaugh proclaimed Joe Flacco to be "the best quarterback in football."

Given time to reflect on his comment, Harbaugh didn't back down.

"I said it. I meant it," Harbaugh said after Tuesday's practice.

Flacco's numbers in the postseason support Harbaugh's lofty assessment.

After throwing two touchdown passes in a 30-17 win over the Steelers, Flacco improved to 5-0 in his last five playoff games. He has 13 TDs, no interceptions and a 116.6 quarterback rating during that span. He was Super Bowl MVP two years ago, is 10-4 in the postseason and has more road playoff wins (seven) than any quarterback in NFL history.

Flacco has twice as many playoff wins as peers Drew Brees, Aaron Rodgers and Ben Roethlisberger.

So, is this guy elite or what?

"At the end of the day it doesn't really matter what everybody wants to think," Flacco said. "It obviously means a lot for a head coach to stand up in front of everybody in the whole world and say those kind of things. Whether it really means anything, I don't know. But it definitely means a lot to me."

Harbaugh became Baltimore's coach in 2008, the same year the Ravens made Flacco their top draft pick out of Delaware. The two have been to the postseason in six of seven years.

"Joe has a great arm, is a very good athlete, a big, strong guy in the pocket, can make any throw in any kind of weather," Harbaugh said.

Especially in the playoffs.

"He's a good quarterback, period," said New England coach Bill Belichick, whose top-seeded Patriots (12-4) host the Ravens (11-6) on Saturday.

"I have a lot of respect for him," Belichick said. "He has a great arm, can throw the ball the length of the field with guys hanging all over him. He's mobile. He's athletic enough to extend plays, makes good decisions, uses all his weapons."

Flacco and the Ravens beat the Patriots 28-13 in the AFC championship game two

years ago to advance to the Super Bowl. Flacco joined Joe Montana as the only quarterbacks in NFL history to throw 11 touchdown passes without an interception in a single postseason.

"Big-time players show up when you need them most, and that's how he's been," Ravens fourth-year receiver Torrey Smith said. "He's as good as anyone, and maybe the best in the playoffs these past few years."

Soon after Baltimore beat San Francisco 34-31 in the Super Bowl, Flacco received a contract worth \$120.6 million that made him the highest-paid player in NFL history.

To this point, it's been a worthwhile investment. Although the Ravens went 8-8 and missed the playoffs last year, they've never had a losing record and are 82-44 (including the postseason) with Flacco as a starter. Oh, and he's started every game since the outset of his rookie year.

Flacco has thrown 166 passes in the playoffs since his last interception, in the 2011 AFC title game in New England.

Flacco is 6 feet 6 inches tall but surprisingly agile in the pocket. Against Pittsburgh, he scrambled to his left to elude the rush and threw off his back foot to connect with Smith for an 11-yard touchdown that made it 20-9.

"His athletic ability is underrated," Smith said. "He's been making plays like that for a long time."

In the playoffs, though, something special happens when Flacco is on the field.

"He's a franchise quarterback and has had a great career," Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said.

Brady is among a select few top-shelf quarterbacks considered to be the best in the game by those not named John Harbaugh.

"The cool thing about it is, Tom was playing for who knows how many years before I got in here," Flacco said. "I was in high school watching him win Super Bowls."

Flacco is 2-1 in the playoffs against the Patriots, but warns that those games — and this one — aren't about Brady vs. Flacco.

"It's not really me outdueling Tom or him outdueling me," he insisted. "We're not playing against each other."

Hall voters still punish PED-tainted

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Roger Clemens, Barry Bonds, Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire's chances to enter the Hall of Fame are dwindling.

Baseball writers so far overwhelmingly have decided the outsized statistics of the Steroids Era stars are tarnished by their connection to performance-enhancing drugs use.

Once again Tuesday, Cooperstown's doors remained shut.

"I did it the only way I knew how, and I wanted to do it clean," Pedro Martinez said Tuesday after he was elected along with Randy Johnson, John Smoltz and Craig Biggio. "And the integrity of the way I did it is probably the reason of me going to the Hall of Fame on the first ballot."

For emphasis during a news conference at Boston's Fenway Park, the Dominican right-hander held open his navy blazer to show off his wiry frame, a stark contrast to the bulked-up bodies that personified the years offense reigned.

Clemens, the only seven-time Cy Young Award winner, and Bonds, the home run king and only seven-time MVP, failed in their third turns on the ballot.

Smoltz voiced approval of drug testing in 2000, two years before players and owners reached a joint drug agreement for the first time since 1985.

"This great game and the game that I personally love has found a way to for the time being, to make it sure that it again has back the integrity and the legitimacy that it needs so that fans, the great fans of baseball, do not sit there and wonder what they're watching, is it legitimate or not?" Smoltz said.

Clemens received support on 37.5 percent of the ballots and Bonds 36.8 percent. The situations of McGwire and Sosa are more dire.

The duo, who electrified the nation with a dizzying home run chase in 1998, are on the verge of dropping out of contention altogether. Because of a rules change last summer that cuts a player's years of eligibility from 15 to 10, McGwire has one more chance at receiving the necessary 75 percent vote from the Baseball Writers' Association of America. This year he received his lowest vote total yet, 10 percent, and he never was named on more than 23.7 percent of the ballots since he's been eligible in 2007. Sosa survived being swept off the ballot by nine votes, receiving recognition by just 36 of 549 voters (6.6 percent) after just three years.

Gary Sheffield received little attention in his first year on the ballot, getting 11.7 percent. He hit 509 home runs and says he only accidentally took a PED.

Mike Piazza and Jeff Bagwell, two players who have fallen under suspicion of use but were never caught up in any investigation, fell short, too, though Piazza could gain admittance next year. He received 69.9 percent in his third year, a steady rise. Bagwell is up to 55.7 percent.

"I realize the cloud has covered a multitude of so many different people and I realize that the media and people have a hard time distinguishing and determining, and in time maybe it will become clearer for all parties involved," Smoltz said.

The future for players who've fallen under suspicion might be a bit brighter, though. The ballot could expand next year to 12 votes for each writer. Ken Griffey Jr. appears to be the only sure thing among a newcomer group that also includes Trevor Hoffman and Billy Wagner.

"It's actually sad, to be honest. It's sad," Martinez said. "People I admired are not going in with me."

Cowboys coach turns gambler in playoffs

The Associated Press

IRVING, Texas — Jason Garrett never hesitated with the biggest decision in his first playoff game as a head coach.

One might say the usually stoic, Princeton-educated leader of the Dallas Cowboys went all riverboat gambler — going for it on fourth-and-6 near midfield when the safer play would have been to punt and hope to get the ball back.

The Cowboys converted on Tony Romo's 21-yard pass to Jason Witten with 6 minutes remaining and later scored the go-ahead touchdown in a 24-20 wild-card win over Detroit. Perhaps this is the key — it was Dallas' first playoff game in five years.

"What kept going through my mind was, 'When you get a chance to go play at the Masters, you don't lay up. You go after it a little bit,'" Garrett said after a win that sent the Cowboys (13-4) to Green Bay (12-4) for a division game Sunday. "And again, a lot of confidence in the guys to go out

and execute it. They play football better than I swing a golf club."

There's another key. The tools Dallas has on offense are a lot more potent than a defense that is surviving mostly on low-budget free agents, castoffs and young, generally lower-round draft picks.

"I believe in our guys, our ability to control the line of scrimmage in some fourth-and-short situations, to win the line of scrimmage and to make those first downs," Garrett said. "The fourth-and-6 really as much as anything was just a matter of saying, 'Hey, who knows what happens if we punt this ball away.'"

For years, Romo has carried the reputation of a gambler who drew the ire of Dallas fans fed up with late-game interceptions that cost the Cowboys games. So yes, he's one to lobby Garrett in a lot of fourth-down situations. He didn't have to say a word Sunday.

"I give credit to coach Garrett for making that call and going to try to win the football game at that point," Romo said.

"It shows that he believes in us. I think that he thinks in that situation he wants us on the field to have a chance to win a playoff game."

And that's where the big gamble was the safest — Romo to Witten, the tight end who has caught more passes than anyone from the quarterback who has surpassed Troy Aikman as the franchise passing leader in touchdowns and yards.

Witten ran straight up the field, got open by faking to his right and turning back to his left. The ball was there in plenty of time for him to pick up another 10 yards after the catch. Romo put the Cowboys ahead with an 8-yard scoring toss to Terrance Williams.

"Tony and I have done that for a long time," said Witten. "It was a gutsy call by coach Garrett. He has the confidence to be able to go for it, and for Tony to give me that look and know that I was going to win, turn inside."

Kind of makes it sound like it wasn't a gamble at all.