

Texas Actress Accused Of Sending Ricin Letters

TEXARKANA, Texas (AP) — A pregnant Texas actress who told FBI agents her husband had sent ricin-tainted letters to President Barack Obama and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg was charged Friday with threatening the president.

Shannon Guess Richardson made an initial appearance in a Texarkana courtroom after being charged with mailing a threatening communication to the president. She could face up to 10 years in prison if convicted, U.S. attorney's office spokeswoman Davilyn Walston said.

Richardson, 35, was arrested earlier in the day for allegedly mailing the ricin-laced letters last month. It wasn't immediately clear if she had an attorney.

FBI agents wearing hazardous material suits were seen going in and out of Richardson's house on Wednesday in nearby New Boston, about 150 miles northeast of Dallas near the Arkansas and Oklahoma borders. Officials have said the search was initiated after Richardson contacted the FBI and implicated her husband, Nathaniel Richardson.

John Delk, who represents Nathaniel Richardson, told the AP on Thursday that his client had filed for divorce and may have been set up by his wife. He said his client was cooperating with authorities investigating the letters, which were sent last month to Bloomberg, his Washington gun-control group and the White House threatening violence against gun-control advocates.

2 Dead In Burned Home Near Calif. Shooting

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) — Two people were found dead Friday in a burned home near Santa Monica College, where someone sprayed a street corner with gunfire, wounding at least four people, authorities said.

Police and witnesses said the gunfire began adjacent to the campus and about 3 miles from where President Barack Obama was attending a fundraising luncheon, just before noon.

They said a shooter was in custody and the campus was being searched after unconfirmed reports that there was a second shooter.

A man dressed entirely in black, with the words "Life is a Gamble" on the back of his sweatshirt, was seen being taken into custody by law enforcement officers.

Four shooting victims were admitted to Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, hospital spokesman Mark Wheeler said. Two were in critical condition, one was in serious condition, and one was in good condition, he said.

Gov't Recommends 4 Year Sentence For Jackson

WASHINGTON (AP) — Prosecutors Friday recommended four years in prison for former Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., following his guilty plea this year on criminal charges that he engaged in a scheme to spend \$750,000 in campaign funds on personal items.

The government suggested an 18-month sentence for Jackson's wife, Sandra, who pleaded guilty to filing false joint federal income tax returns that understated the couple's income.

The government is also recommending that Jackson pay \$750,000 in restitution to the campaign, and that Sandra Jackson makes a restitution payment of \$168,000.

Because the couple has two children, prosecutors proposed that the sentences be staggered, with Sandra Jackson going first. According to the government, Sandra Jackson could be out of prison in little over a year with credit for satisfactory behavior and required pre-release custody.

Both Jacksons are scheduled to be sentenced on July 3.

Calif. Utility Will Close San Onofre Nuclear Plant

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a jolt to the nation's nuclear power industry, the owners of Southern California's San Onofre plant announced Friday they are shutting it down for good after the discovery of damaged equipment led critics to charge it could never operate safely again.

The twin reactors — situated along the Pacific Coast in the densely populated corridor of millions of people between San Diego and Los Angeles — would be the largest to shut down permanently in the U.S. in the past 50 years, federal officials said.

Southern California Edison's decision brings to a sudden end a dispute that began in January 2012, when a small radiation leak led to the discovery of unusual damage to hundreds of virtually new tubes that carry radioactive water. The plant hasn't produced electricity since then.

Edison has already spent more than \$500 million on repairs and replacement power and had hoped to restart one reactor this year and run it at reduced power to eliminate the vibrations that had damaged the tubing. But the utility was facing a snarl of regulatory hurdles, investigations and mounting political opposition, and it finally gave up.

Ted Craver, chairman of the utility's corporate parent, Edison International, said in a statement that the company concluded that "continuing uncertainty about when or if (the plant) might return to service was not good for our customers, our investors or the need to plan for our region's long-term electricity needs."

Judge In Zimmerman Case To Allow Voice Experts

SANFORD, Fla. (AP) — An expert hired by an Orlando newspaper testified Friday that screams for help on 911 calls don't match neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman's voice.

Tom Owen testified on the second day of a hearing that will determine whether voice identification experts can be used at Zimmerman's second-degree trial for fatally shooting 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. The trial starts Monday and Zimmerman is pleading not guilty, claiming self-defense.

Testimony for the hearing was to continue Saturday before Circuit Judge Debra Nelson makes a decision.

Owen was hired by the Orlando Sentinel last year to compare a voice sample of Zimmerman with screams for help captured on 911 calls made by neighbors. He said Zimmerman's voice doesn't match the screams. He only compared Zimmerman's voice to the 911 calls because he didn't have a voice sample for Martin at the time.

"The screams don't match at all," Owen said. "That's what tells me the screams aren't George Zimmerman."

2 Charged In Bolivia Highland Lynching

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Authorities have filed murder charges against two men suspected of leading a mob that buried alive a teenager they believed raped and killed a woman in their indigenous community in Bolivia's southern highlands.

Milton Jara, a prosecutor in the remote rural area southeast of La Paz, says Casiano Sandi and Felicia Vargas have also been charged with inciting a mob and criminal association. He spoke Friday to Erbol radio station.

Jose Luis Barrios, chief prosecutor in Potosi province where the community is located, said police earlier identified 17-year-old Santos Ramos as the possible culprit in the attack on 35-year-old Leandra Arias Janco Sunday in a Quechua community near the municipality of Colquechaca.

He said about 200 community members seized Ramos and buried him alive alongside his alleged victim Wednesday night.

Operator To Be Charged In Collapse

BY MICHAEL RUBINKAM, KATHY MATHESON AND MARYCLAIRE DALE
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — A 42-year-old man who was allegedly high while operating demolition equipment when a downtown building collapsed and killed six people will be charged with involuntary manslaughter, a top city official said Friday.

Sean Benschop faces six counts on that charge, six counts of risking catastrophe and other charges, said Deputy Mayor Everett Gillison.

Authorities have said Benschop had been using an excavator Wednesday when what was left of the four-story building gave way and fell on top of a neighboring Salvation Army thrift store.



CHARLES FOX/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER/MCT
An unidentified woman kneels by a memorial for Kimberly Finnegan, Thursday, June 6, who is believed to have died when the building of a Salvation Army Thrift Store collapsed in Philadelphia.

A toxicology report, witness statements and other evidence shows Benschop was high on marijuana that day, Gillison said.

Benschop, who also goes by the name Kary Roberts, has been arrested at least 11 times since 1994 on charges ranging from drugs to theft to weapons possession, according to court records. He was twice sentenced to prison in the 1990s after being convicted on drug trafficking charges. Benschop's last arrest, for aggravated assault, came in January 2012, but the case was dismissed for lack of evidence.

Police have raided Benschop's home but have not found him, Gillison added. Benschop did not return phone messages left at numbers listed in his name, though he told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on Thursday that he couldn't comment because of the investigation.

Among those killed was a woman who was working her first day at the store. Thirteen people were hurt.

Video shot of the scene shortly before the fatal collapse show bricks falling onto a sidewalk, which remained open to pedestrians, as a worker used heavy equipment to take out a front wall.

Some accusations of responsibility were lobbed at demolition contractor Griffin Campbell.

Campbell violated several federal safety regulations, while building owner Richard Basciano should have picked a more qualified and competent contractor to do the work, said Robert Mongeluzzi, another of White's attorneys.

"This is the most egregious construction accident I think I've ever been involved in," said Mongeluzzi, who has represented hundreds of plaintiffs in construction accidents and is considered a top lawyer in the field.

The lawyers received permission Friday from a judge to bring in experts to videotape and photograph the continuing demolition work by the city from a safe distance. Common Pleas Court Judge Ellen Ceisler ruled that once the site is deemed safe, experts for all parties can inspect the remaining debris.

Campbell has previously been arrested on charges involving drugs, assault and insurance fraud and has had two bankruptcy filings. His daughter, Dominique Lee, who answered the door at his home, said Thursday that he wasn't there but was "mourning the loss of those people just like everyone else."

"From what we can understand, given (Campbell's) checkered past, and what appears to be a total lack of experience and know-how, we believe that was a grossly negligent selection," Mongeluzzi said Thursday.

The city does check the condition of buildings to be torn down before demolition can begin — and inspects them again after the tear-down is finished — but does not require an inspection during demolition. A pre-demolition inspection at the site on May 14 turned up no issues, said Carlton Williams, head of the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections.

Pennsylvania does not license demolition contractors, nor does the city. Williams said the city code does not require demolition contractors to show any proficiency in tearing down buildings.

"Buildings get demolished all the time in the city of Philadelphia with active buildings right next to them. ... They're done safely in this city all the time," Nutter said Thursday. "Something obviously went wrong here yesterday and possibly in the days leading up to it. That's what the investigation is for."

Nutter said he was unaware of any complaints about the demolition work done by Campbell in the days before the tragedy. But the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration said it had gotten a complaint May 15 that workers at the site were at risk of falling. The complaint was still open at the time of the disaster, U.S. Labor Department spokeswoman Leni Uddyback-Fortson said.

OSHA regulates the demolition industry and enforces standards meant to ensure worker safety. Among other things, its regulations forbid any wall section exceeding one story to stand alone without bracing, unless the wall was designed that way. Witnesses have said they saw a 30-foot section of unbraced wall before the collapse.

A video of the demolition taken the Sunday before the collapse showed bricks raining down on the sidewalk as a worker used a backhoe and claw to remove a second-story front wall.

The sidewalk and the staircase leading up from a subway stop appeared open to pedestrians despite the falling bricks. Cars and trucks could also be seen going past, just a few feet away.

A man who answered the phone Friday at Campbell's home said he was not home, and Campbell's cellphone voicemail box was full. Peter Greiner, attorney for Basciano, was in a meeting Friday and did not immediately return a call.

The collapse has brought swift and mounting fallout in a city where demolition contractors are lightly regulated. Officials have begun inspecting hundreds of demolition sites city-wide, and a city councilman charged that dangerous, under-the-radar tear-downs are taking place throughout Philadelphia.

The city is also preparing to implement sweeping changes in its regulations of building demolition, Mayor Michael Nutter said Friday, adding that every active demolition site is being inspected for safety.

"We will not accept the status quo in the face of this tragedy," Nutter said.

Councilman James Kenney, among others, called for a review of the demolition application and inspection process and demanded a stricter process for demolition companies.

"This is happening all over the city," he said. "I need to know who the workers are who are there, what they know, what they don't know, how they've been trained."

US Officials Long Denied Massive Data Trawling

BY STEPHEN BRAUN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Top officials of the Bush and Obama administrations have repeatedly denied in recent years that the National Security Agency collected massive caches of phone and Internet data taken from millions of Americans.

Pressed during sworn testimony in congressional hearings and in other public settings, senior national security officials have said the government's cutting-edge electronic monitoring is narrowly focused and preserves the civil liberties of ordinary Americans.

On Friday, Obama himself acknowledged the existence of the programs even as he gave the government's standard rationale to ease fears that Americans' privacy rights are being violated.

"By sifting through this so-called metadata, they might identify potential leads of people who might engage in terrorism," Obama said during an exchange with reporters at a health care event in San Jose, Calif.

Obama's comments marked the first time a U.S. president publicly acknowledged the government's electronic sleuthing on U.S. citizens. They came in response to media revelations and published classified documents that detailed the government's secret mass collection of phone and Internet communications.

When top officials in the

Obama and Bush administrations have been asked in recent years whether U.S. citizens' communications were swept up as part of government surveillance, they've often responded with swift, flat denials. Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, sidestepped what he described as a kerfuffle about his administration's secret electronic intelligence-gathering efforts.

During a March 2006 appearance at the City Club of Cleveland, Bush described the NSA effort only as "a program that will enable us to listen from a known al-Qaida person and/or affiliate from making a phone call outside the United States in or inside the United States out, with the idea of being able to pick up quickly information for which to be able to respond in the environment we're in." He added: "I believe what I'm doing is constitutional, and I know it's necessary. And so we're going to keep doing it."

His vice president, Dick Cheney, was blunter during a radio appearance that January, denying the government was engaging in domestic surveillance.

"This is not a domestic surveillance program," Cheney told radio host Hugh Hewitt, adding that "what we're interested in are intercepting communications, one end of which are outside the United States, and one end of which we have reason to believe is al-Qaida-related."

Technically, Cheney's descrip-

tion of the program's aim was accurate. His insistence that the Bush administration was not engaged in domestic surveillance is more debatable.

Reports that first appeared in the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post* indicate that the NSA pulls in phone records, though not the actual content of the calls, from its secret warrants allowing it to collect data from major telecom companies. The program's aimed at detecting the calling patterns of terrorist suspects. A separate government program also collects massive amounts of data from at least nine Internet and electronic firms, pulling in everything from emails to photographs. Obama said Friday that the electronic data mining is not aimed at American citizens or inside the U.S.

Several top Bush administration officials who paraded before congressional hearings in 2006 adamantly insisted that the government was not engaged in mass data-trawling as part of its secret NSA programs.

After a controversial *New York Times* expose raised concerns about NSA targeting Americans' phone records, the agency's then-director, Michael Hayden, told a National Press

Club audience in January 2006 that there was no effort to cast a wide net over communications data.

"This is targeted and focused," Hayden said. "This is not about intercepting conversations between people in the United States. This is hot pursuit of communications entering or leaving America involving someone we believe is associated with al-Qaida."

In an appearance that July before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Hayden again denied a mass data-collection effort. "So we do not vacuum up the contents of communications under the president's program and then use some sort of magic after the intercept to determine which of those we want to listen to, deal with or report on."

Bush's attorney general, Alberto Gonzales, also minimized the reach of the NSA data-gathering, telling a Senate Judiciary hearing in February 2006 that "this surveillance is narrowly focused and fully consistent with the traditional forms of enemy surveillance found to be necessary in all previous armed conflicts."

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