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Gerard "Bo" Dollis, Jr. and Angelle Dollis Wedding

Data Zone Page 4

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

TRAGEDY

AND A STORY OF HEALING,
RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY



Jason Williams
New Orleans District Attorney



Bishop Tom Watson
Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries



Oliver Thomas
New Orleans City Councilmember District E



Royce Duplessis
Louisiana State Senator District 5

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General's Investigation



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Tragedy

and a Story of Healing, Resilience and Recovery



New Orleans District Attorney Jason Williams at the scene of the tragic terror attack that killed 14 and injured 35, speaking to local CBS affiliate WVL-TV. He thanked law enforcement and voiced the importance of people uniting in these perilous times.



Louisiana State Senator Royce Duplessis at UMC Hospital where many of the injured victims from the terror attack spoke to local NBC affiliate WSDU-TV.

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief Data News Weekly

Tragedy Strikes on Bourbon Street
As revelers brought in the New Year in New Orleans during the early hours of January 1, 2025, a trag-

ic terrorist attack unfolded in New Orleans' French Quarter. Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old former U.S. Army Staff Sergeant from Texas, drove a rented pickup truck into crowds on Bourbon Street during New Year's Eve celebrations, resulting in 14 fatalities and injuring at least 35 others.
During this despicable act, Jabbar exited the rented

vehicle opening fire on responding officers, who fatally shot him. During the investigation, it was later discovered that explosive devices (IEDs) were present in coolers near the scene, containing a rare explosive compound not previously used in terrorist attacks in the U.S. or Europe. With many theories surfacing in the ongoing investigation, it left City leaders, who are

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Bishop Tom Watson gives the closing prayer at the Mayor's Prayer Vigil on Bourbon Street on January 2, 2025. Several elected, business and faith leaders, along with law enforcement and supporters of the victims were present.

working with state and federal leaders regarding how to prevent future terror attacks in the French Quarter and in the City of New Orleans.

President Biden Visits New Orleans

On Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, U.S. President Joe Biden and First Lady



New Orleans City Councilman Oliver Thomas appeared on ABC Network's Good Morning America to speak of the tragic event that took place in New Orleans, echoing other leaders offering condolences and prayers to those whose lives were lost and for those injured. Also, he spoke of the resilience of New Orleans as the City heals and recovers from this tragedy.

Dr. Jill Biden visited New Orleans in the wake of the tragedy, visiting with families and attending an Interfaith Prayer Service remembering the 14 victims killed.

Providing words of comfort, he said, "We stand with and grieve with you. New Orleans, you are not

alone. I am paying homage to those who lost their lives. I am directing my team to every local, state, and national resource available. I support all the people as they heal New Orleans. I define strength and resilience. People get back up; that is the spirit of America as well."

Local Leaders Speak Out Against Hate and Violence

Many local, state, and faith leaders have spoken out. "At a time when we should be celebrating life and hope as we welcome the New Year, we are mourning an unthinkable tragedy. This act of terrorism, taking 14 innocent lives, is beyond devastating. My prayers are with the victim's families and all those impacted," State Senator Royce Duplessis told Data News Weekly.

"President Biden's visit to New Orleans serves as an important reminder that the nation mourns with us, and we must honor those innocent lives lost by demanding meaningful change. During this time of grief, we must remain proactive, vigilant, and united against hate

Cover Story, Continued on page 7.

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Gerard "Bo" Dollis, Jr. and Angelle Dollis Wedding

Photos by Del Rio Cole

It was love in the air during the holiday season. Wild Magnolias Big Chief Gerard "Bo" Dollis, Jr. and Angelle Dollis held an intimate wedding ceremony attended by family, friends, and loved ones.



Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events.



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Saints End Season at 5-12

What's Next for the Black and Gold?

Fleur De Lis
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The New Orleans Saints concluded their disappointing 2024 NFL season with a 5-12 record, marking their fourth consecutive year missing the playoffs. The season began promisingly with two decisive victories, but a subsequent seven-game losing streak led to the dismissal of Head Coach Dennis Allen after a 2-7 start. Special Team's Coordinator Darren Rizzi was appointed as Interim



Head Coach for the remainder of the season.

Injuries significantly impacted the team's performance. Key players such as Quarterback Derek Carr, Running Back Alvin Kamara, Wide Receiver Chris Olave, and Utility Player Taysom Hill missed substantial time, contributing to the team's struggles on both offense and defense.

A notable low point occurred in Week 16 when the Saints suffered a 34-0 loss

to the Green Bay Packers, marking the first shutout of the 2024 NFL Season.

Looking ahead, the Saints face a pivotal offseason. The search for a new head coach is underway, with reports indicating the team's plans to interview Detroit Lions Defensive Coordinator Aaron Glenn, a former Saints Assistant Coach.

Additionally, the team must address salary cap challenges and make critical decisions regarding player contracts and potential roster moves to rebound in the 2025 Season.

State & Local News

Councilmembers Respond to Attorney General's Bourbon Street Investigation Announcement

New Orleans City Council

NEW ORLEANS — Members of the New Orleans City Council have issued the following statements in response to Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill's announcement that her office would be conducting an investigation into the Bourbon Street Terror Attack that took place on New Year's Eve:

"I have been in communication with Attorney General Murrill regarding her investigation, and I have assured her that the City Council will be a supportive partner throughout this process," said Council President Helena Moreno. "She has also agreed to provide essential updates on the investigation to Councilmember King and either Councilmember Morrell or me as we move forward. The Attorney General says her intent is to review the tactical preparations for New Year's Eve and the immediate response. I have consistently emphasized the need for a comprehensive review to identify any gaps and prevent future mistakes."

"This investigation must involve reviewing important factors such as intelligence, including those who received intelligence reports, along with the pre-planning for New Year's Eve, and the



New Orleans City Council
President Helena Moreno

overall deployment of the tactical plan," Council President Moreno continued. "It will require collaboration across multiple levels of government — local, state and federal — to gather necessary information. The results of this investigation must be fully transparent. The public deserves to have all the answers. Attorney General Murrill's tactical inquiry into the New Year's Day events will not hinder the City Council's examination of other significant issues, such as the recent revelations about the Subpar Bollard System.



New Orleans District C
Councilmember Freddie King

Instead, it will enable the Council to focus fully on identifying solutions and proactive measures for enhanced security initiatives for Mardi Gras, the Super Bowl and beyond."

"The bifurcation of this investigation is in the best interest of the city," said Council Vice President JP Morrell. "Having the Attorney General focus on the tactical preparation and execution of assets on New Year's will lead to an unbiased review of city, state and outside agencies to uncover the facts, as an internal investigation would be con-

sidered untrustworthy at best."

"The horrific attack last week amplifies the need for effective and immediate security measures in downtown New Orleans," said District 'B' Councilmember Lesli Harris. "We are aggressively working to determine the next steps that will best serve residents and visitors alike. That assessment includes the bollards that were being installed on Bourbon Street in time for the Super Bowl - which we now understand to be ineffective. The Council and our partners are committed to implementing more suitable protections at Bourbon Street and beyond to ensure we are keeping New Orleans safe."

"The attack on Bourbon Street highlights the urgent need for accountability and collaboration to protect our city from future threats," said District 'C' Councilmember Freddie King. "The state's tactical inquiry will complement the City Council's broader review, allowing us to address critical issues like pre-planning, intelligence sharing, and the bollard system. Together, we will ensure that every gap is identified, every question answered, and every necessary step taken to safeguard New Orleans during major events."

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Earvin "Magic Johnson, Denzel Washington and Other Notable Figures Receive Presidential Medal of Freedom

Data News Staff Edited Report

President Joe Biden awarded 19 recipients the nation's highest civilian honor on Jan. 4, 2025, recognizing their significant contributions across various fields.

Honorees included former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, controversial Philanthropist George Soros, Rock Star Bono, Actors Michael J. Fox and Denzel Washington, Chef José Andrés and Bill Nye the Science Guy. Sports Legends Lionel Messi and Magic Johnson were also among the recipients, though Messi was unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts.

"You all literally embody the nation's creed, e pluribus unum – out of many, one," Biden told the recipients during the ceremony in the White House East Room. "You feed the hungry. You give hope to those who are hurting, and you craft the signs and sounds our movements and our memories."



President Joe Biden giving Presidential Medal of Freedom to sports legend, entrepreneur and humanitarian Earvin "Magic" Johnson. He was one of 19 recipients of the nation's highest civilian honor that took place on Jan. 4, 2025.

Four Presidential Medal of Freedom honorees were recognized posthumously: former Defense Secretary Ash Carter, Civil Rights Activist Fannie Lou Hamer, former U.S. Attorney General and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, and former Michigan Gov. George W. Romney.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom was established by Robert F. Kennedy's brother, the late President John F. Kennedy, in 1963.

According to the White House, the award is "presented to individuals who have made exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values,

or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavors."

"For the final time as President, I have the honor of restoring the Medal of Freedom, our nation's Highest Civilian Honor, on a group of extraordinary, truly extraordinary people who gave up their sacred air ... to shape the culture and the cause of America," Biden said Saturday, ABC News reports. "So let me just say to each of you, thank you, thank you, thank you for all you've done to help."

The White House noted that President Biden "believes great leaders keep the faith, give everyone a fair shot and put decency above all else."

"These 19 individuals are great leaders who have made America and the world a better place," the statement added. "They are great leaders because they are good people who have made extraordinary contributions to their country and the world."

Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.

and violence. Rest assured, this terrorist attack will not define our new year and will not define New Orleans."

Thanking Law Enforcement and the Importance of Unity Moving Forward

Crediting the efforts of various law enforcement agencies and making a call for unity New Orleans District Attorney told Data News Weekly, "The only reason there wasn't a greater loss of life was because of the quick work of the New Orleans Police Department. The responding officers are heroes and saved countless lives."

"But not only was it an attack on our home, it was an attack on our country and our way of life. The attacker didn't just go after Democrats or Republicans. They preyed on Americans and our freedom. Our President's visit today makes that abundantly clear. This country has become divided and polarized in recent years. I pray we seize this moment to

strengthen our union. This is a job for us all. All people of this country, of all faiths and creeds, must be part of that effort."

Questions of Safety in the City of New Orleans

This tragic event has left many considering safety surrounding the large-scale events in the City of New Orleans. Pastor Thomas Watson of Watson Memorial, who took part in a Prayer Vigil with leading pastors across the City says this is important but noted that it is also important to consider safety for all citizens in neighborhoods across the City.

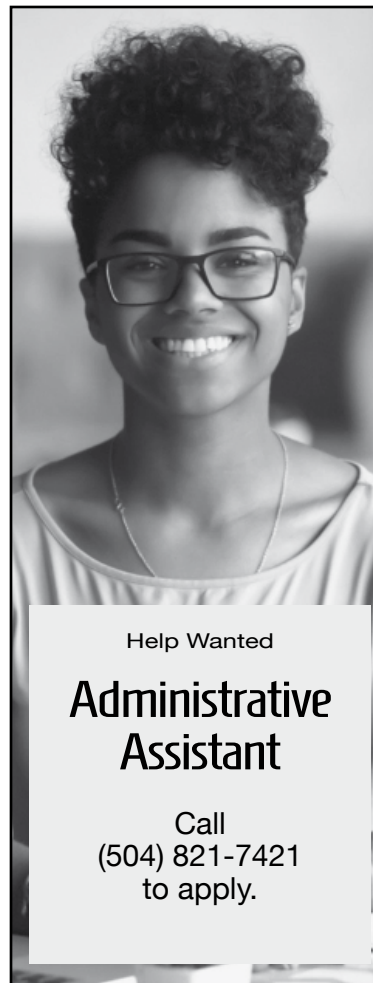
"It is important to know that we must be strategic about safety in our entire City. Yes, the French Quarter is important as the economic engine for our City and state, but some of the people who work there go to unsafe neighborhoods on a daily basis. Let's broaden our view and planning for safety against terrorist and violent activity throughout our

entire beloved communities. I personally pray for the families who have lost loved ones and those who have been injured and hospitalized."

New Orleans Resilience, Solutions, and Moving Forward Together

New Orleans City Councilman of District E Oliver Thomas echoed the well wishes and prayers of other City leaders. Speaking to Data News Weekly, he stated with an eye to the future an optimistic and holistic view of solutions that will need all stakeholders' involvement to be successful.

"Moving forward we need to review whatever weaknesses we had; how do we fill in the gaps and whatever mistakes we made will never happen again. That we will ensure one of the best special event cities in the world is one of the safest possible. Yes, in New Orleans, we are strong, honor our traditions, and be a gateway for the world most unique cities we will continue to be the place that will welcome people from around the world."



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