

US Navy intelligence chiefs suspended as bribery scandal spreads

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Two US Navy admirals were suspended last week in a spreading bribery scandal involving a Singapore-based defense contractor that services US Navy vessels in the Pacific Ocean.

Director of Naval Intelligence Vice Admiral Ted Branch and Navy Director of Intelligence Operations Rear Admiral Bruce Loveless were placed on leave Friday and their access to classified material suspended. They are under investigation for their ties to defense contractor Glenn Defense Marine Asia, whose CEO Leonard Glenn “Fat Leonard” Francis was arrested in September in a sting operation in San Diego. Francis was charged with bribing Navy officers into giving him classified information with cash, favors, and prostitutes.

Francis reportedly asked US officers to steer US warships towards ports with lax oversight, where Glenn Defense Marine Asia could overcharge the Navy for services such as providing tugboats, fuel, sewage disposal, and portside security—netting millions of dollars. He also obtained inside information on the US Navy’s initial investigations into Glenn Defense Marine Asia, which started in 2005, helping him evade charges.

The suspension of Branch and Loveless comes amid deep turmoil in the top ranks of the American military. Only a month ago, the Obama administration announced the sacking of high-ranking Air Force and Navy officials inside the US nuclear command, in what military officials acknowledged was an unprecedented crisis of the US nuclear forces. (See: “Shakeup continues in US nuclear command”)

Now, the top ranks of the US Navy and a broad layer of high-ranking officers in the US Pacific Fleet—the force at the heart of the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia,” aimed at containing China—are being roiled by another scandal.

US Navy sources said they believed more Navy officers would come under suspicion in the affair. Yesterday, US Navy spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby said: “We are going to let the facts take us where they may. We certainly expect that other naval officers, and perhaps even some Navy civilians, will be implicated.”

Glenn Defense Marine Asia has long-standing ties to the US Navy, having serviced US warships in the Pacific for a quarter century. It did \$200 million in business with the US Navy in 2011.

As such, Leonard Francis developed contacts among a broad swathe of commanders, captains, and admirals who could now be under suspicion. The *Washington Post* noted that “Francis and his company were familiar faces to Navy brass, including the commanders of most vessels in the Pacific.”

Several such high-ranking officers are already facing charges. Two US officers, Commander Michael Vannak Khem Misiewicz and Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) Supervisory Special Agent John Bertrand Beliveau, were arrested at the same time as Francis. They allegedly provided classified information in exchange for free travel, luxury accommodations, and prostitutes. All three face five years in prison.

Misiewicz, a former destroyer commander who was directing operations of the Japan-based US Seventh Fleet, reportedly e-mailed Francis classified schedules of US warship movements. Misiewicz helped “work Francis’ business plan,” according to the Singapore *Straits Times*, in exchange for prostitutes and free travel around Asia.

In one case, he helped divert the aircraft carrier USS George Washington from Singapore to Port Klang, Malaysia, where Leonard had arranged to prepare fake

invoices to submit to the US Navy.

Beliveau faces charges of tipping off Leonard about the US Navy's investigation of him, having downloaded documents from NCIS internal databases about investigations into Glenn Defense Marine Asia that he was not working on.

Another senior logistics officer for the Seventh Fleet, Commander Jose Sanchez, was charged last week with accepting prostitutes, luxury travel, and over \$100,000 in cash from Francis in exchanged for classified information about US warship movements.



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