



HOLIDAY FARE: BIG NAMES, BIG MOVIES

WEEKEND, 1G



HOMELESS THANKFUL FOR HAIRCUTS FROM VOLUNTEERS

LOCAL & STATE, 1B

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H1

SHOPPING

Gobbling up bargains



PEDRO PORTAL/EL NUEVO HERALD

CROWD POURS IN: After waiting in line patiently for hours, hundreds of early birds rush in as the Dolphin Mall opens its doors to shoppers at 6 p.m. on Thanksgiving.

■ Lines snaked around stores as bargain-hungry shoppers pursued doorbusters and discounts on Thanksgiving Day, the kickoff to the holiday shopping season.

BY INA PAIVA CORDLE, THEO KARANTALIS AND CRYSTAL CHEW
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Hector Perez camped out for more than 29 hours at Best Buy, to be first in line to snag a 50-inch Panasonic TV for \$199, speakers and a tablet.

"Between all that, I'll save 500 bucks," said Perez, 32, of Westchester, who arrived at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday to await the store's 5 p.m. opening on Thanksgiving. "So it's worth it."

Nearby, Natalie Leon and her fiancé Leonardo Gonzalez had gotten in line at 6 a.m. on Thursday to get the same doorbuster TV and a GoPro camera.

"We're getting married in June, so it's the first TV for our new apartment, and the GoPro camera is for our honeymoon" — a weeklong cruise in the Caribbean, said Leon, 23, of Westchester.

Across South Florida, the holiday shopping season kicked into high gear on Thanksgiving Day, as many stores paraded their wares in a flurry of doorbusters,

• TURN TO SALES, 6A



JON DURR/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

SNAGGED IT: Pedro Rodriguez helps bring a TV to the car on Thanksgiving after a successful trip to Best Buy in Miami.

SYRIA

How Frenchman became U.S. target

■ A McClatchy probe found many who believe David Drugeon was recruited by France to work as an informant in al-Qaida, despite French denials that the man who turned into a jihadist was its spy.

BY MITCHELL PROTHERO
McClatchy Foreign Staff

PARIS — To hear French officials tell it, David Drugeon is a 24-year-old former truck driver from the Brittany region of France who occasionally worked out with French soldiers before slipping off to Pakistan to join al-Qaida. He is, at such a tender age, no former French intelligence officer with military

training, certainly no "James Bond."

Then why has he been targeted at least twice in U.S. air raids on Syria at a likely cost in expended weapons of millions of dollars? "We don't waste \$1.5 million cruise missiles on truck drivers from Brittany," said an American official asked last month about Drugeon's background. Like all of the intelligence officials cited in this story, he spoke on condition

of anonymity.

According to knowledgeable European intelligence officials, killing Drugeon was among the chief goals when the United States unleashed 47 cruise missiles on Syria in the early morning hours of Sept. 23, striking at a unit of al-Qaida fighters that American officials call the Khorasan group, which the U.S. said had set up shop in Syria to plot attacks on the West. At least 50 fighters from al-Qaida's Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front, with whom the Khorasan fighters were

• TURN TO DRUGEON, 10A

OIL PRICES

OPEC's move bodes well for gas prices

■ Venezuela and Ecuador will be among countries to suffer from OPEC's decision, but U.S. consumers should benefit.

By Miami Herald Wire Services

VIENNA — In a move that signals good news for consumers, OPEC took no action Thursday to ease a global oil-supply glut, resisting calls from Venezuela that the group needs to stem the rout in prices.

Oil prices fell sharply on the news. Even though the decision was largely expected, it showed the once-pow-

erful cartel is losing the power to push up markets to its own advantage.

That may hurt the cartel, but help American consumers. Lower fuel prices help the U.S. economy in several ways. They make goods cheaper to ship and make travel more affordable. Drivers are left with a few extra dollars in their pockets. And consumers grow confident enough to make other purchases, perhaps even big-ticket items. Consumer spending accounts for 70 percent of the U.S. economy.

• TURN TO OPEC, 10A

DETROIT

South Florida native lifts Motor City

■ Kevyn Orr, the son of Broward educators, has steered Detroit through a bankruptcy minefield and onto a path toward healing.

BY LINDA ROBERTSON
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DETROIT — Hundreds of city loyalists pedaled through a panorama of all that is hip and horrible about their home on a Slow Roll group bike ride that commenced at the Museum of Contemporary Art, passed blocks of blight and circled back by glorious vintage apartment buildings under renovation.

On one corner, a charred house, its Victorian craftsmanship covered by plywood. On the next, an urban farm. Here, the skeleton of a

factory. There, the Shinola shop, where custom-made bicycles and watches are in demand the way Pontiac Trans-Ams once were.

"Go through some run-down areas and you think, 'They must have lost the war,'" said Greg Maslak, a 30-year resident of the revitalized Woodbridge neighborhood. "Pockets of life are interspersed with pockets of strife. But at long last, we can envision Detroit being whole again."

Detroit is a city on the

• TURN TO ORR, 2A



ROMAIN BLANQUART/DETROIT FREE PRESS

MARCH 2013: Kevyn Orr was chosen by the governor of Michigan to be emergency manager for Detroit.

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SHOPPING

For big bargain hunters, 'the game is on'

• SALES, FROM 1A

deals and discounts. At some stores, lines snaked around buildings hundreds-thick, as shoppers salivated — for deals.

Maura Herrholz left her turkey in the oven to run to Old Navy at the Shops of Dadeland with her two daughters and a family friend, in hot pursuit of sweaters, jeans and T-shirts.

"We popped in to take advantage of sales," said Herrholz, of Kendall. Everything in the store was 50 percent off.

At Toys"R"Us in Hialeah, more than 100 shoppers were lured away from dinner by more than 200 doorbuster deals at 5 p.m.

"I have to have these LEGO's for my son," said Michelle Gonzalez, 27, a medical assistant, who put her turkey in at noon before getting in line. "It's cooking now on low and should be ready when I get back."

Heralding the start of the season, Best Buy Tropicale General Manager Jorge Alicea and his staffers cheered when the doors opened, in anticipation of the onslaught.

"This is our Super Bowl every year," Alicea said. "The game is on. It's busy. It's a lot of fun. The days go by fast. This is what we prepare for all year."

Outside, new friendships bloomed, as shoppers bonded, laughed and held each others' places in line. Alex Godoy, 32, joked that his family "left me here alone," since 6 a.m., with a mandate to bring home a TV. Leon said she and her fiancé had adopted him.

"We've become a family," Leon said. "If not, this would have been boring."

The Thanksgiving shopping frenzy in South Florida points to what experts predict will be a relatively robust season, spurred by an improving economy, rising stock market, job growth and



PEDRO PORTAL/EL NUEVO HERALD

ALL EYES: Above left, store clerks Osleidys, center, and Rachel, at Just One Look Fashion Eyewear store, take care of customers at Dolphin Mall on Thanksgiving evening. At right, lines gather outside the Toys"R"Us in Hialeah.



THEO KARANTHALIS/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD



THEO KARANTHALIS/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

TWO CARTS BETTER THAN ONE: Julmar Cordero, and wife Marbely filled two carts with diapers and presents in less than five minutes at Toys"R"Us in Hialeah.

lower gas prices.

Buoyed by tourists and seasonal residents, retail sales in November and December are expected to jump 5 percent in Florida, above the 4.1 percent national forecast, the Florida Retail Federation said. It would be the biggest projected increase since 2008.

This year, the average person celebrating the holidays is expected to spend \$804.42, according to the National Re-

tail Federation.

Inside Best Buy in Westchester, Cousins Alvaro Mendez, 35, and Gabriel Orosco, 30, piled up their baskets with a dozen laptops and 10 Chromecasts. "We're just beginning," said Mendez, who was buying inventory to sell for Christmas at their store in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. It was the cousins' sixth annual shopping trip to Miami.

In Broward, Sanya Houston, 42, was first in line at

h Gregg in Pembroke Pines, in a queue that swelled to more than 100 people before the store opened at 4 p.m. Her goal: to save \$350 on a stainless steel refrigerator, discounted to \$699.

"This is only a one-time thing for me and only because I have a need," said Houston, of Miramar. "I might even buy a stove."

Not far away, Robyn Weiniger, of Coral Springs, lined up outside of Tory Burch at

Sawgrass Mills in Sunrise, on a mission to splurge on herself.

"This is my 'congrats' for surviving the hardest year of my life," said Weiniger, 24, who got into a car accident, moved, graduated Florida International University and had to adjust to a new job.

To make their waits more comfortable, some shoppers brought portable chairs, blankets and other gear. Sukjoon Hwang, 23, and Youngwan Kim, 25, English students from South Korea, slept on Styrofoam boxes in the Best Buy line in Westchester.

"It will be a good memory," joked Hwang, who wanted to get a pair of headphones, while Kim planned to buy a tablet. Electronics are more than double the price in Korea — including Korean brand products, made in Korea, they said.

In search of bargains, many shoppers said they delayed their Thanksgiving feasts, opting to shop first.

"Thanksgiving dinner is going to be in front of a 50-inch TV," said Jhonne Alexandre, 26, of Miami.

At Dolphin Mall late Thursday afternoon, hundreds bundled up in parkas and sweaters, as holiday music greeted shoppers arriving in the atrium.

"It is 40 percent off at Armani Exchange," said Tito Chavez, 27, an auto mechanic from Doral. "I told my family to have a few extra cocktails and I'll be back."

Still others just decided to forgo the feast altogether.

"This is all about priorities," said Fannie Baez, 39, an insurance salesperson, who spent an unusually cold night outside Best Buy in Hialeah wearing a Winnie the Pooh outfit to stay warm. "Either a turkey or a TV."

Baez, third in line, managed to block out tires screeching and horns honking along the nearby Palmetto Expressway. Though the rest of her family returned home at 3 a.m. to sleep, she said she just couldn't take her mind off getting a Panasonic 50-inch television for \$199.

"Look at me," Baez joked. "I don't need the turkey right now anyway."

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