

# Man charged after NY scare over rice cookers

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New York, United States

A young homeless man has been charged with placing false bombs, police said Saturday, after three empty rice cookers caused major commuter disruption in New York.

Larry K. Griffin II, 26, was arrested by the New York Police Department and charged with three counts of placing a false bomb, according to a statement released Saturday.

Parts of the city were alerted for two hours Friday morning as three suspicious objects were found: two near the World Trade Centre in the Fulton Street subway station, and one in the Chelsea district further north.



This undated surveillance video screen grab handout released by the New York City Police Department shows suspect Larry K. Griffin leaving rice cookers in New York

The station was quickly evacuated, service on two subway lines was suspended and trains on other lines serving Fulton Street bypassed the station.

All of the suspicious objects were ultimately determined to be empty rice cookers, each the same model, according to police.

Griffin is reportedly a former resident of Bruno, West Virginia, US media said.

West Virginia's Logan County Sheriff's office said he had a history of criminal activity.

Griffin had been arrested at least three times in the last eight years on charges such as possession of a controlled substance involving weapons, and use of obscene material to seduce a minor, the office said. He was indicted on the latter two charges.

There was also an active arrest warrant for failure to report, and

for missing drug screens while on pre-trial bond supervision, the office said in a Facebook statement.

US media said Griffin's motive remained unknown.

Surveillance camera footage had shown a man taking two rice cookers out of a shopping cart and placing them at the Fulton Street station.

His cousin, Tara Brumfield, told local news station WSAZ3

that, "Little Larry's a good person. He's got issues but he don't ever mean no harm or anything."

In September 2016 a pressure cooker containing a homemade explosive device detonated in the Chelsea neighborhood, injuring 31 people and triggering panic in a city that had not endured an attack since 9/11.

Since then, the US financial capital has been hit by two other incidents.



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COUSIN, TARA BRUMFIELD

In October 2017, Uzbek man Sayfullo Saipov used a truck to run over cyclists and pedestrians on a bike path in Manhattan, killing eight people and injuring 12.

And in December 2017, Bangladeshi immigrant Akayed Ullah detonated a bomb in a subway tunnel near Times Square, leaving three people slightly injured.

## Spain offers to take Open Arms migrant vessel

Madrid, Spain

Spain yesterday offered to take in the charity vessel Proactiva Open Arms with more than 100 migrants on board, slamming Italy's "inconceivable" refusal to allow it to dock.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez "today ordered the port of Algeciras to be ready to receive the boat Open Arms," which is currently in limbo off the Italian island of Lampedusa, his office said in a statement.

It cited the "urgent situation" on the vessel and



The Spanish migrant rescue NGO ship Open Arms is seen off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa

the "inconceivable decision by the Italian authorities... to close all its ports" to the migrants.

## Filipino, not Chinese, sailors kidnapped off Cameroon

Douala, Cameroon

The attacks took place on Thursday in Cameroonian waters off Douala

Most of the sailors kidnapped off the Cameroon coast last week were Filipinos, not Chinese as first reported, according to an official document seen by AFP yesterday.

On Friday, an official in the port of Douala said that 17 crew had been abducted, including "nine Chinese civilian sailors" from one of the two ships attacked, along with Ukrainians.

The attacks took place on Thursday in Cameroonian

waters off Douala, located at the apex of a gulf that has become a hot-spot of seaborne crime.

The port document said instead that "nine hostages, all Filipinos," were seized from a Greek-owned ship while "eight (three Russians, four Filipinos and a Ukrainian)" were taken from a German-owned vessel.

Noel Choong, head of the information service of the International Maritime Bureau based in Kuala Lumpur, confirmed the figures but said he could not be sure of the nationalities on the second ship.

## UK strips citizenship from 'Jihadi Jack' dual national

London, United Kingdom

Britain has revoked the citizenship of a dual national Muslim convert to the Islamic State group dubbed "Jihadi Jack" being held in northern Syria, according to reports yesterday.

The move targeting Jack Letts, 24, who was a dual UK-Canadian national, has prompted a diplomatic row with Ottawa, Britain's Mail on Sunday reported.

Former prime minister Theresa May approved the decision -- which had been made by then-interior minister Sajid Javid -- in one of her last ac-



Letts fled to Syria in 2014 (Courtesy of the Sun)

tions before leaving office in early July, the newspaper said.

A spokesperson for Britain's interior ministry declined to confirm the report, noting it does not routinely comment on individual cases.

## Vintage car rally marks Baltics human chain anniversary

Vilnius, Lithuania

Hundreds of vintage cars set out across the Baltic states Sunday to mark the 30th anniversary of a human chain of more than a million people demanding independence from the Soviet Union.

Decorated with Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian national flags, some 200 cars began their journey

from the central square in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius to the cheers of onlookers.

A number of concerts are scheduled en route before the convoy reaches the Estonian capital Tallinn on Tuesday.

The 675-kilometre (420-mile) human chain, known as the Baltic Way, linked Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn on August 23, 1989 to mark the 50th anniversary of the infamous Nazi-Soviet

pact that carved up eastern Europe and led to the Baltic states' occupation by the Soviet Union.

The vintage cars taking part represent both eras, from Mercedes-Benz and Lincolns of the 1930s to Soviet-era Volgas and Ladas of the 1980s.

One of the largest demonstrations in the Soviet Union, the Baltic Way was a "life changer" for many of the six million people living in the three countries, said parade participant Raimundas

Skridulas.

"We were at the Baltic Way near Panevezys in northern Lithuania. It means everything, it changed our life for the better," the 60-year-old told AFP, sitting in a 1972 Mercedes.

Six months after the protest, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare independence.

The three countries won international recognition in 1991 before joining the EU and NATO in 2004.

Organiser Egidijus Einoris said it was the first joint event of this scale for vintage car enthusiasts in the three states.

"All Baltic people were united 30 years ago and we have managed to repeat that," he told AFP.

"It is hard to describe the feelings in 1989. It was a huge feeling of national pride. I feel nostalgic when I look

back at the pictures," he added.



Participants of the "Baltic Way 30" depart the antique cars' event at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius, Lithuania