



DON

Yo, I'll play Gotti, star tells 'Junior'

TRAVOLTA

Watch where you point that, pal. John Travolta, who'll play John Gotti in a movie, greets the Dapper Don's son, "Junior," this week at an LA restaurant. PAGES 10-11

O's \$400B 'scalpel'

By CHARLES HURT
Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON — President Obama said yesterday he will send Congress a new budget next month that he claims will save some \$400 billion.

"Frankly, we're just going to have to trim some of these programs," he said in his first interview since his State of the Union Address Tuesday, when he urged Congress to freeze spending for five years.

His administration will "cut with a scalpel, as opposed to a chainsaw," he said.

According to White House aides, Obama's budget plan will be rolled out the week of Feb. 14.

Yesterday's live interview was conducted on YouTube with questions sent in from viewers.

On education, Obama said that there are limits to how much the government can do and that parents need to do better.

"Nothing government does replaces the importance of parents in education," he said. "If we're parents, we've got to step

up our game."

On the protests in Egypt, Obama said he has told President Hosni Mubarak that it is "absolutely critical" for Cairo to carry on with political reforms, and urged government forces and demonstrators alike to avoid further violence.

Egyptians need "mechanisms for people to express legitimate grievances," he said.

Asked what is the best thing about being president, Obama responded, "Every once in a while, you do something that you know has a direct impact on somebody."

And the worst: "I can't go for a walk."

"I can't go to a coffee shop. I can't leave the house and not shave, have my sweats on," he said. "So, that is something that I don't think I'll ever get used to."

Another viewer asked what he got First Lady Michelle for Valentine's Day.

"Each Valentine's Day gets more expensive," Obama said. "I've got more to make up for."

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TRAVOLTA'S



LOOK WHO'S TALKING! John "Junior" Gotti (center) and John Travolta talk movie-making with film producer

Star dines with 'Junior' &

By JOSH MARGOLIN, BRUCE GOLDING, JEANIE MACINTOSH and BOB FREDERICKS

It was a reel-life mob sit-down.

Gambino crime-family scion John "Junior" Gotti and his ex-con film-producer partner held a meeting with a dapper-looking John Travolta this week in a trendy LA trattoria.

The calamari confab was called to toast a deal in which the "Get Shorty" star will portray Gotti's late dad, ruthless Mafia boss John Gotti Sr., in a flattering new biopic.

Travolta, Chili Palmer-cool in a tailored dark suit and blue silk open-collar shirt, and Junior, in a wiseguy-loud checked sports coat his "Dopper Don" dad wouldn't have been caught dead in, broke bread and downed vino with Marc Fiore, the film's executive producer — who once pleaded guilty in a multimillion-dollar pump-and-dump stock scam reminiscent of a "Sopranos" episode.

The restaurant, a Travolta favorite popular with Hollywood A-listers, shut its kitchen to regular customers as the gang scarfed down an "old-fashioned Italian dinner of seafood, chicken parm, steak, pasta and red wine."

An insider told The Post that Travolta had made the reservation and hosted the lavish dinner.

Fiore told The Post yesterday that he and Gotti agreed Travolta was the man made to play the late Gambino crime boss.

"Travolta is the guy," Fiore said. "When you watch a Travolta movie, you're never watching John Travolta, John Gotti Sr. is an iconic figure. You have to be an actor that can become



JOHN GOTTI SR.
Set for biopic treatment.

John Gotti Sr."

And in what could be a criminal case of miscasting, bumpy actor James Franco of "127 Hours" fame is up for consideration for the role of Junior.

The early dinner at Amici in Brentwood was the first time the "Pulp Fiction" star and Gotti met face to face, though they've been in contact.

"John [Gotti] came in to put his stamp of approval," Fiore said.

Gotti turned down Hollywood heavyweight Sylvester Stallone in favor of the little-known Fiore Films because Stallone balked at giving Junior creative control of the biopic, to be called "Gotti."

Travolta and Gotti arrived separately

Pentagon shot at pols

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned Congress was causing a "crisis on my doorstep" by failing to pass a key spending bill.

Congress has not passed the fiscal year 2011 Pentagon appropriations bill, inaction that Gates said could create a \$23 billion shortfall.

The Pentagon, like the rest of the government, is operating under a stopgap measure that keeps funding at 2010 levels.

"I have a crisis on my doorstep," Gates said in comments made public by the Pentagon. "Frankly, that's how you hollow out a military even in wartime."

Reuters

GOP gains popularity

WASHINGTON — The Grand Old Party can finally break out the champagne: its six-year popularity drought has come to an end.

For the first time since 2005, more people view the Republican Party favorably than unfavorably by a margin of 47 to 43 percent, according to the latest Gallup poll, just weeks after the GOP took over the House.

The Democrats' 46-47 percent favorability rating is an improvement over recent readings, although it is poor by historical standards. The Democratic Party generally polls above 50 percent favorable.

Geoff Earle

'MOB' SCENE



Marc Fiore (second from right) and director Nick Cassavetes (far right) over dinner at an LA restaurant.

buddies for Gotti biopic

— no bodyguards in sight — and joined a crew including the film's director, Nick Cassavetes, veteran character actor Leo Rossi, who is writing the script, and ex-Howard Stern sidekick "Stuttering" John Melendez, a partner in Fiore's film company.

Fiore said he paid the dinner tab but invoked the Mafia code of omertà when asked how much it was. But he was happy to boast about the film.

"This is not a movie; this is part of American history. We have the exclusive story for first time ever told by John Gotti Jr. and his family," he said.

Gotti, the one-time heir apparent to his dad's criminal empire who the federal government four times has tried and failed to convict on racketeering and murder charges, has maintained he is long-retired from the mob.

Fiore, meanwhile, revels in his

criminal past. In fact, he's producing another film, "MOB STREET," inspired by his own story.

Fiore and eight other brokers were charged with operating a "boiler room," in which callers used deceptive, high-pressure sales tactics to swindle small-time investors out of their meager nest eggs.

For that, he did time at the federal prison in Allenwood, Pa. He said that history was key to him building a bond with Junior Gotti, who was impressed that Fiore never turned snitch.

"One of the things that gave him a comfort level with me is I didn't take the easy way out — rat on whoever," Fiore said.

"MOB STREET," due out in a year, is being written by Chazz Palminteri. The plot is not only autobiographical, it also resembles several "Sopranos" episodes in which young mobster Christopher

Moltisanti operates a "pump and dump" stock operation for the TV crime family, an observation that didn't escape the sentencing judge in the case.

"It looks like a bad episode out of 'The Sopranos.' It was despicable, and I don't know what else to say about it," federal Judge Lewis Kaplan said at the time.

Early reviews for the Gotti flick, meanwhile, are mixed.

Prominent mob lawyer Gerald Shargel said yesterday: "It's an interesting project. I think Travolta would be perfectly appropriate."

A law-enforcement source was dubious.

"The movie is spinning toward ridiculousness," the source said. "James Franco is 20 times better looking than Junior."

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WISEGUYS: John Travolta and John "Junior" Gotti pal around during their powwow at a Los Angeles restaurant.

Ramsey Photo