

EPA claims Volkswagen cheated again

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Volkswagen emissions scandal widened Monday when the U.S. government accused the German automaker of cheating for a second time. Although VW denied the charge, it faced the prospect of steeper fines and lost sales, as well as more intense scrutiny from disbelieving U.S. lawmakers.

The Environmental Protection Agency, along with the California Air Resources Board, said Volkswagen installed software on thousands of Audi, Porsche and VW cars with six-cylinder diesel engines that allowed them to emit fewer pollutants during tests than in real-world driving. The previous revelations of cheating involved four-cylinder diesels in smaller cars.

U.S. regulators continue to tell owners of all the affected cars



AP photo/Nam Y. Huh, File

But Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which is investigating the scandal, said it's time for VW to come clean. "The latest revelations raise the question, where does VW's road of deceit end?" said a joint statement by Chairman Fred Upton, R-Michigan, and senior lawmakers from both parties.

VW officials, including U.S. CEO Michael Horn in congressional testimony, have claimed only a small number of software developers in Germany were responsible for the computer code that let the cars trick U.S. government emissions tests. On Monday, analysts said the latest charges call those claims into question.

"Volkswagen would do well to immediately and completely disclose all people and products involved in this deception, no mat-

ter how far-reaching," said Karl Brauer, senior analyst for Kelley Blue Book.

Monday's announcement makes the notion that only a limited number of people were involved in the deception appear "even more outrageous," Brauer said.

The violations cover models including the 2014 VW Touareg, 2015 Porsche Cayenne and the 2016 Audi A6 Quattro, A7 Quattro, A8 and Q5. The agency said a recall is possible, but it wants to make sure whatever fixes Volkswagen proposes are appropriate.

The spat with the EPA could hurt sales of the Audi and Porsche brands, which previously had been unscathed by the scandal. But as of Monday the 2016 models remained on sale, at least until the company gets test results from the agency, spokesman Bradley Stertz said.

E. coli outbreak is Chipotle's third this year

SEATTLE (AP) — An E. coli outbreak linked to Chipotle restaurants in Washington state and Oregon has sickened nearly two dozen people in the third outbreak of foodborne illness at the popular chain this year.

Cases of the bacterial illness were traced to six of the fast-casual Mexican food restaurants, but the company voluntarily closed down 43 of its locations in the two states as a precaution — all those in Washington state and in the Portland, Oregon, area.

Three people in the Portland area and 19 people in western Washington have gotten sick with E. coli as of Friday. Seventeen of them had eaten at a Chipotle restaurant during the past few weeks. Eight people have been hospitalized but no deaths have been reported.

Health officials are investigating the cause of the outbreak. The source was most likely a fresh food product because it probably could not be traced to one sick individual or one instance of cross-contamination of food since the cases are connected with various restaurants, said Marisa D'Angeli, medical epidemiologist with the Washington State Department of Health.

The company is not planning to close any other restaurants in other states because there is no evidence of a link to other locations, company spokesman Chris Arnold said. Reopening the shuttered locations in Oregon and Washington will depend on the investigation, he said.

"Right now, that is the priority," Arnold said.

Health officials expect the number of illnesses to rise as more people hear about the outbreak and go to the doctor.

D'Angeli encouraged anyone who has been sick with intestinal symptoms and has eaten at Chipotle since mid-October to go see their doctor and get tested. She also said anyone with bloody diarrhea should go to the doctor whether they have eaten at Chipotle or not.

Mystery, confusion surround Russian plane crash

By **DMITRY LOVETSKY** and **VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV**
Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — Mystery and confusion surrounded the final moments of a Russian jetliner that plummeted suddenly from high altitude to the Egyptian desert, killing all 224 people aboard. The airline Monday ruled out pilot error or a technical fault, but Russian aviation officials dismissed those comments as premature.

Some aviation experts raised the possibility that a bomb on board the Metrojet Airbus A321-200 brought it down, while others cited an incident in 2001 when the aircraft grazed the runway with its tail while landing.

James Clapper, the U.S. director of national intelligence, said that while there is no direct evidence of any terrorist involvement yet, it couldn't be excluded that the plane was brought down by Islamic State extremists in the Sinai Peninsula.

"It's unlikely, but I wouldn't rule it out," he told reporters in Washington.

Asked if a terrorist attack could be ruled out, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said: "No versions could be excluded."

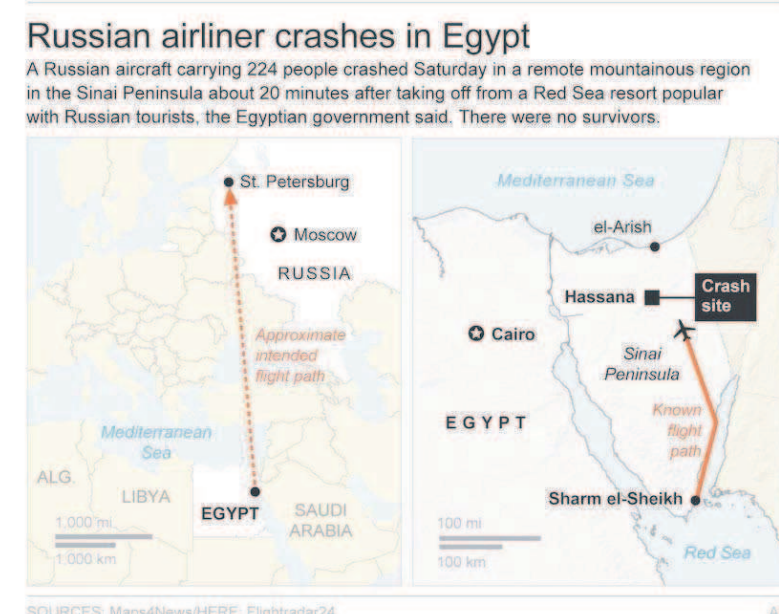
The Metrojet was flying at 31,000 feet over the Sinai when it crashed Saturday only 23 minutes after taking off from the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh for St. Petersburg with mostly Russian passengers.

Metrojet firmly denied that the crash could have been caused by either equipment failure or crew error.

"The only possible explanation could be an external impact on the airplane," Metrojet's deputy director Alexander Smimov told a news conference in Moscow. When pressed for more details, Smimov



Maxim Grigoriev/Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations via AP
Egyptian military vehicles approach the wreckage of a passenger jet bound for St. Petersburg in Russia that crashed in Hassana, Egypt. The Russian cargo plane on Monday brought the first bodies of Russian victims to St. Petersburg, a city awash in grief for its missing residents.



Russian airliner crashes in Egypt
A Russian aircraft carrying 224 people crashed Saturday in a remote mountainous region in the Sinai Peninsula about 20 minutes after taking off from a Red Sea resort popular with Russian tourists, the Egyptian government said. There were no survivors.

he refrained from citing a reason for the crash pending the investigation.

Viktor Yung, another deputy director general of Metrojet, said the crew did not send a distress call and did not contact traffic controllers before the crash.

Egyptian officials have offered conflicting accounts on whether or not the plane issued any distress calls.

Experts say planes break up in flight usually due to one of three factors: a catastrophic weather event, a midair collision or an external threat, such as a bomb or a missile.

A local affiliate of the extremist Islamic State group has claimed it brought down the aircraft, which crashed in the northern Sinai where the Egyptian military and security forces have battled militants for years. Both Egyptian and Russian officials have dismissed that claim as not credible.

Still, the U.S., Germany and Britain all had overflight warnings in place for the Sinai. They advised airlines to avoid flying over the peninsula below 26,000 feet and to avoid the Sharm el-Sheikh airport due to extremist violence and, notably, the use of anti-aircraft weapons.

British military analyst Paul Beaver said he thought the crash was most likely caused by a bomb on board, because the IS hasn't been known to possess surface-to-air missile systems capable of striking passenger planes at cruising altitude.

"That's a very serious piece of equipment, and I don't think they have that sophistication," Beaver said, adding that the Sinai desert is well-scrutinized by intelligence agencies, so a missile system would have been seen.

Robert Galan, a French aviation expert, said Metrojet's claim of an "external impact" pointed to two possibilities: a bomb or sabotage.

TransCanada asks U.S. to suspend pipeline application

TORONTO (AP) — The company behind the controversial Keystone XL pipeline from Canada to the U.S. Gulf Coast has asked the U.S. State Department to pause its review of the project.

TransCanada said Monday a suspension would be appropriate while it works with Nebraska authorities for approval of its preferred route through the state. The move comes before the Obama administration was widely expected to reject it.

For seven years, the fate of the 1,779-mile long pipeline has languished amid debates over climate change, the intensive process of extracting Alberta's oil and U.S. energy security.

The pipeline has long been

a flashpoint in the U.S. debate over climate change. Critics oppose the concept of tapping the Alberta oil sands, saying it requires huge amounts of energy and water, increases greenhouse gas emissions.

Vatican arrests priest, laywoman in probe

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican said Monday it had arrested a high-ranking priest and another member of a papal reform commission on suspicion of leaking confidential documents — a stunning move that comes just days before the publication of two books promising damaging revelations about the obstacles Pope Francis faces in cleaning up the Holy See's murky finances.

The developments threatened to become a new "Vatileaks" —

the 2012 scandal that began with the publication of a blockbuster book by Italian journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi detailing the corruption and mismanagement in the Holy See. The scandal ended with the conviction of Pope Benedict XVI's butler — and Benedict's resignation a year later.

The latest arrests of two advisers hand-picked by Francis to help in his effort to overhaul Vatican finances threatened to further expose infighting and rifts surrounding the pope's efforts at reform and a more open church.

Monsignor Lucio Angel Vallojo Balda, a Spaniard, and Francesca Chaouqui, an Italian public relations executive, had served on a now-defunct financial reform commission set up by Francis in 2013 as part of his drive to clean house at the Vatican, especially in its scandal-tainted economic affairs.

Bush retools slogan: 'Jeb Can Fix It'

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Jeb Bush hit the reset button on his faltering presidential campaign, racing across Florida Monday with a new slogan that cast him as the sole Republican candidate who can right what's wrong with Washington: "Jeb Can Fix It."

But the pithy phrasing could apply as much to his effort to steady the campaign as it does to his sense of confidence about handling the nation's problems.

"This is not about big personalities on the stage. It's not about talking. It's about doing," he told supporters in Jacksonville.

His remarks, repeated earlier in Tampa and Orlando, were obvious jabs at rivals Donald Trump and Marco Rubio, and a nod to his flat performance in the debate last week in Colorado.

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