

U.S. sues VW over cheating software in diesel cars

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department sued Volkswagen on Monday over emissions-cheating software found in nearly 600,000 vehicles sold in the United States, potentially exposing the company to billions of dollars in penalties for clean air violations.

The civil complaint against the German automaker, filed on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency in U.S. District Court in Detroit, alleges the company illegally installed software designed to make its "clean diesel" engines pass federal emissions standards while undergoing laboratory testing. The vehicles then switched off those measures in real-world driving conditions, spewing harmful gases at up to 40 times what is allowed under federal environmental standards.

"Car manufacturers that fail to properly certify their cars and that defeat emission control systems breach the public trust, endanger public health and disadvantage competitors," John C. Cruden, the assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division, said in a statement.

"The United States will pursue all appropriate remedies against Volkswagen to redress the violations of our nation's clean air laws alleged in the complaint," he said.

The company is in the midst of negotiating a massive mandatory recall with U.S. regulators and potentially faces more than \$18 billion in fines for violations of the federal Clean Air Act.

Obama moves for background checks on more gun sales

By JOSH LEDERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama moved Monday to expand background checks to cover more firearms sold at gun shows, online and anywhere else, aiming to curb a scourge of gun violence despite unyielding opposition to new laws in Congress.

Obama's plan to broaden background checks forms the centerpiece of a broader package of gun control measures the president plans to take on his own in his final year in office. Although Obama can't unilaterally change gun laws, the president is hoping that beefing up enforcement of existing laws can prevent at least some gun deaths in a country rife with them.

"This is not going to solve every violent crime in this country," Obama said. Still, he added, "it will potentially save lives and spare families the pain of these extraordinary losses."

Under current law, only federally licensed gun dealers must conduct background checks on buyers, but many who sell guns at flea markets, on websites or in other informal settings don't register as dealers. Gun control advocates say that loophole is exploited to skirt the background check requirement.

Now, the Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives will issue updated guidance that says the government should deem anyone "in the business" of selling guns to be a dealer, regardless of where he or she sells the guns. To that end, the government will consider other factors, including how many guns a person sells and how frequently, and whether those guns are sold for a profit.



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

Attorney General Loretta Lynch listens as President Barack Obama speaks in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Monday during a meeting with law enforcement officials to discuss executive actions the president can take to curb gun violence.



Ralph Barrera/Austin American-Statesman via AP

Terry Holcomb, Executive Director of Texas Carry, walks to a rally. Open Carry Texas and Texas Carry held a rally on the south steps of the Texas State Capitol in Austin to celebrate Texas becoming an open carry state.

ed lawmakers attempted to buy guns. "We're very comfortable that the president can legally take these actions," said Attorney General Loretta Lynch.

Obama's announcement was hailed by Democratic lawmakers and gun control groups like the Brady Cam-

paign to Prevent Gun Violence, which claimed Obama was making history with "bold and meaningful action" that would make all Americans safer. Hillary Clinton, at a rally in Iowa, said she was "so proud" of Obama but warned that the next president could easily undo his changes.

"I won't wipe it away," Clinton said. But Republicans were quick to accuse Obama of gross overreach. Sen Bob Corker, R-Tenn., denounced Obama's steps as "divisive and detrimental to real solutions."

"I will work with my colleagues to respond appropriately to ensure the Constitution is respected," Corker said.

Far from mandating background checks for all gun sales, the new guidance still exempts collectors and gun hobbyists, and the exact definition of who must register as a dealer and conduct background checks remains exceedingly vague.

Details of the plan

The president's actions will make clear that anyone who's in the business of selling guns must obtain a license, regardless of whether they sell firearms online or at gun shows, and must conduct background checks on their customers. Currently, only federally licensed gun dealers must conduct background checks on buyers. The White House says there's no threshold number of sales that will trigger the licensure requirement, and that even a few transactions may be enough to establish that a person is engaged in the business of selling guns.

• MORE FBI EXAMINERS: The FBI will hire more than an additional 230 examiners and other staff to help process background checks. The National Instant Criminal Background Check System in 2015 received more than 22.2 million background check requests, or an average of more than 63,000 per day. The FBI is also working to modernize NICS, which dates to the 1990s, and to improve the response time for alerting local law enforcement authorities that someone who is disqualified from buying a gun attempted to do so.

• LOST AND STOLEN WEAPONS: A rule issued by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives will clarify that a dealer shipping a gun is responsible for notifying law enforcement once it determines it was lost or stolen in transit.

• SMART GUN TECH: A presidential memorandum to the departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Justice directs the agencies to conduct or sponsor research into smart gun technology. That technology is aimed at reducing the risk of accidental gun discharges and improving the tracing of lost or stolen firearms.

• MENTAL HEALTH: The White House is proposing a \$500 million investment to improve mental health care.

Allies follow Saudis in cutting ties with Iran

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Allies of Saudi Arabia followed the kingdom's lead Monday and scaled back diplomatic ties to Iran after the ransacking of Saudi diplomatic missions in the Islamic Republic, violence sparked by the Saudi execution of a prominent Shiite cleric.

Sudan and the tiny island kingdom of Bahrain said they would sever ties with Iran, as Saudi Arabia did late Sunday. Within hours, the United Arab Emirates announced it would downgrade ties to Tehran to the level of the charge d'affaires, while other nations issued statements criticizing Iran.

The concerted campaign by Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia highlights the aggressive stance King Salman and his son, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, have adopted in confronting Iran, a longtime regional rival.

"What we have seen during the last 24 hours is unprecedented... It shows you Saudi Arabia has had enough of Iran and wants to send a message," said Abdulkhalq Abdullah, a political science professor at Emirates University. "This is the Saudis saying: 'There is no limit to how far we will go.'"

The standoff began Saturday, when Saudi Arabia executed Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr and 46 others convicted of terror charges — the largest mass execution carried out by the kingdom since 1980.

Al-Nimr, a central figure in the Arab Spring-inspired protests by Saudi Arabia's Shiite minority, long denied advocating violence. News of his execution has sparked Shiite protests from Bahrain to Pakistan.

In Iran, protesters attacked the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Mashhad. Late Sunday, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir announced the kingdom would sever its relations with Iran over the assaults, giving Iranian diplomatic personnel 48 hours to leave his country.

On Monday, Saudi Arabia's civil aviation authority suspended all flights to and from Iran, saying the move was based on the king-



AP Photo/Vahid Salemi

An Iranian woman holds up a poster showing Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent opposition Saudi Shiite cleric who was executed last week by Saudi Arabia, in Tehran, Iran, Monday.

dom's cutting of diplomatic ties.

Iran expressed "regret" over the attacks on the diplomatic missions in a letter to the United Nations on Monday and vowed to arrest those responsible. In the letter, obtained by The Associated Press, Iran's U.N. envoy Gholamali Khoshroo said more than 40 protesters have been arrested and that authorities are searching for other suspects.

In response to a Saudi letter, the U.N. Security Council late Monday strongly condemned the attacks by Iranian protesters on Saudi diplomatic posts. The council statement, agreed to after hours of negotiations, made no mention of the Saudi executions or the rupture in Saudi-Iranian relations.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have long vied for influence in the Middle East. Their rivalry deepened following the toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the chaos of the Arab Spring, which gave rise to proxy wars in Syria and Yemen.

An early battleground was Bahrain, where the Shiite majority staged mass protests in 2011 demanding political reforms from the Sunni monarchy. Saudi Arabia and the Emirates sent in troops to help quash the revolt, viewing it as an Iranian bid to ex-

and its influence.

Bahraini officials since have accused Iran of training militants and attempting to smuggle arms into the country, which hosts the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. In October, Bahrain ordered the acting Iranian charge d'affaires to leave within 72 hours and recalled its own ambassador after alleging that Iran sponsored "subversion" and "terrorism" and funneled arms to militants.

Sudan, which has been looking to Saudi Arabia for aid since the secession of oil-rich South Sudan in 2011, on Monday announced an "immediate severing of ties" over the diplomatic mission attacks. Sudan once was closer to Iran, but in recent years has tilted toward Saudi Arabia, and has contributed forces to the Saudi-led coalition battling Shiite rebels in Yemen.

The UAE, a country of seven emirates, has a long trading history with Iran and is home to many ethnic Iranians. It said it would reduce the number of diplomats in Iran and recall its ambassador "in the light of Iran's continuous interference in the internal affairs of Gulf and Arab states, which has reached unprecedented levels."

Saudi Arabia had previously severed ties with Iran from 1988

to 1991 over rioting during the hajj in 1987 and Iran's attacks on shipping in the Persian Gulf. That diplomatic freeze saw Iran halt pilgrims from attending the hajj in Saudi Arabia, something required of all able Muslims once in their lives.

Iranian lawmaker Mohammad Ali Esfahani, spokesman of the Judicial and Legal Committee, said security issues and the fact that Iranian pilgrims wouldn't have consular protection inside the kingdom made halting the pilgrimage for Iranians likely, according to the semi-official ISNA news agency.

World powers have sought to calm the tensions. On Monday, Germany called on both sides to mend ties, while Russian state news agency RIA Novosti quoted an unnamed senior diplomat as saying Moscow is ready to act as a mediator.

The U.N. envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, was en route to Riyadh on Monday with plans to later visit Tehran. Iran, a staunch supporter of embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad, and Saudi Arabia, a key backer of the opposition, have participated in three rounds of international talks aimed at ending the conflict. De Mistura has set a Jan. 25 target date for a fourth round of talks.

BRIEFLY

2 Clintons and plenty of Republicans in motion

BOONE, Iowa (AP) — The sprint to the Iowa caucuses opened Monday with nearly a dozen presidential candidates in motion, a rather restrained Bill Clinton stepping up for his wife and a pledge by the only billionaire in the race to start spending serious money.

From Iowa to New Hampshire — on the air, on the bus and on the stump — candidates vying to become America's next president roared out of the holidays in full force with less than a month to go before voting begins.

The coming weeks are especially crucial for Republicans as voters look to weed through the thicket of choices to determine who will represent and attempt to reunite a bickering party. This, as contentious issues over terrorism, security, civil liberties and gun ownership reverberate, giving candidates plenty to argue about.

Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump have been the consistent favorites in polls overall. But they have very different strengths.

Clinton also has an impressive organization behind her while Trump's ability to pull off a winning ground game is in question and his frugal spending to date has stood in stark contrast to his vast personal wealth. He says he's opening the money spigot now.

Levees among possible cause of more frequent flooding

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The Mississippi River floods more often than it used to, and at higher levels. Richard Knaup thinks he knows why. The veteran emergency management director for southeast Missouri's Cape Girardeau County is fighting floods again, just as he did last year, and the year before that.

"Prior to levee building, the river was a wild thing and it spread out between the river bluffs," Knaup said Monday. "Now we tried to tame it. Mother Nature and Old Man River will fight back."

The rains that caused this winter's flood, blamed already for 25 deaths and damage to hundreds of homes and businesses, ended a week ago, but the water was still rising Monday in southern Missouri and Illinois. The Illinois River, which joins the Mississippi above St. Louis, was expected to reach near-record crests this week between the Illinois towns of Havana and Valley City, creating "a very dangerous situation" as levees there become saturated, said Steve Buan, a National Weather Service hydrologist.

Several other states along the Mississippi River were still bracing for the crest, which was flowing past Tiptonville, Tennessee, and expected to reach Memphis on Thursday at 6.5 feet above flood stage.

Bisnett Insurance
Safeco Insurance • Allstate Mutual of Enumclaw • Chubb • Travelers
121 S. Main, Pendleton, OR 541-276-1418 • 800-303-0419
Main Street Service Where One Call Insures it all
www.bisnett.com
Office locations: Pendleton • Baker City • Milton-Freewater • Medford • John Day • Hood River • Lake Oswego • Ketchikan, ID • Scottsdale, AZ

Deana's PENDLETON ATHLETIC
1980 35 YEARS 2015
249 S. Main, Pendleton • 541-276-6988
Cari Broker
www.deansathletic.com

Happy New Year! Thank you for your Patronage and Support!
PENDLETON ART+FRAME
We look forward to serving all your framing needs in the coming year! Cherise and Dena
36 SW Court Ave, Pendleton • 541-276-3617

Pendleton Book Co.
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Start your year right by choosing from our vast selection of "good reads!"
125 S. Main, Pendleton, OR 97801
(541) 276-9292 • penbco@eotnet.net

The Chamber means business!
PENDLETON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Adams-Hagen Estate Kristin Lovell, Owner 380 South College St, Adams (541) 969-9463 • khagena@msn.com www.vrbo.com/725031	LHT Farming Company 75604 Crawford Hollow Rd, Adams 541) 566-3840 • lht@bmi.net
Cliff Bracher 81891 Hwy 37, Pendleton (541) 966-8659 • cliff@bracherfarms.com	Pendleton Plumbing, LLC J.T. Dooley 1802 SW Emigrant Ave, Pendleton (541) 278-2800 sales@pendletonplumbing.com www.pendletonplumbing.com
C & H Glass Shop Doug Warner, Owner 309 SE 7th St, Pendleton (541) 966-9881 • dougvw@eotnet.net	Kick it Up After 5 Business After Hours Event January 14th 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Juniper HOUSE AN ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY
Karen Licurse 71588 SW Lake Dr, Pendleton (541) 276-0923 • nklicurse@msn.com	
Jenson & Spratling, LLP Patricia McBee-Jenson, Office Administrator 116 S Main St, Ste 4, Pendleton (541) 278-2840 • info@jensonspratlingcpa.com www.jensonspratlingcpa.com	

DON'T MISS! Morning Buzz
Coffee & Networking! Free!
U.S. Bank, **January 6th** @ 7:15am

THE PENDLETON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESENTS:
Hearts of Pendleton
60TH ANNUAL FIRST CITIZENS BANQUET & BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS
JANUARY 22, 2016 @ WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO

Tickets Available! \$45 each call (541) 276-7411 to purchase

THIS EVENT PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:
WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO **EnergyTrust of Oregon** **PACIFIC POWER**

LEADERSHIP PENDLETON CLASS OF 2016: APPLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE!

If you, or someone you know would like to participate in the Chamber's Leadership Pendleton Class of 2016, the application period is open! Please complete the application located on the Chamber's website, and return it to the Chamber office. Applications are due **January 12, 2016**.

Leadership Pendleton 2016 will start in February. Tuition for the class is \$600. Please contact the Chamber if you have any questions. There are 300+ graduates of the Leadership Pendleton program.

RAYMOND JAMES FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.
Member FINRA/SIPC
Serving Eastern Oregon & Washington for over 23 years

Our Professionals Offer:
• Retirement Cash Flow Planning • Consolidating Assets
• Investment Management • IRA's • Roth IRA's • 403b's • 401k's

John Cimmiyotti - Branch Manager
305 SW Dorion Ave. - Pendleton, OR 97801
8797 W. Gage Blvd., Ste. C-103 - Kennewick, WA 99336
541-276-9184 • 800-276-9184
Web Site: www.RaymondJames.com/JohnCimmiyotti

Elite Guns & Bows, LLC
213 SE 2nd St., Pendleton, OR 97801
P 541-276-1243 • F 541-276-1253

For all your shooting needs & Gun Smithing - Reloading
We aim for the lowest prices
www.elitegunsandbows.com
• Highest quality • Excellent product knowledge • Friendly Service

Thai Crystal
Visit the finest Thai Restaurant in the West. Located in the shadow of the County Court House
Open 7 days a week • 541-278-4182
210 SE 5th Street, Pendleton, OR 97801
thaicrystalrestaurant.com

CHI St. Anthony Hospital
Imagine Better Health...
2801 ST. ANTHONY WAY, PENDLETON, OR 97801

PGG PETROLEUM
Contact Pendleton Grain Growers, Inc. for all your agricultural transportation, agricultural and residential energy and grain marketing needs today.
pendletongrain.com • (800) 422-7611

ROB MERRIMAN PLUMBING & HEATING, INC.
NEW CONSTRUCTION • REMODEL • REPAIRS
DRAIN CLEANING • CAMERA & LOCATOR • BOILERS

4354 Westgate Pendleton, OR 97801
CCB #60927 #30-54PB #599-2216

541-276-7221
HERMISTON 541-564-6393
FAX 541-966-1199

HAIRPINS on 6th
Tues - Fri 9am - 5:30pm
Saturday & Evening by Appointment
311 SW 6th • Pendleton 541-278-8099

Advertise in this space,
Call Dayle Stinson 541-966-0806
dstinson@eastoregonian.com
EAST OREGONIAN