

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Toyota: Tests And Documents Vanish

MIAMI (AP) — Toyota has routinely engaged in questionable, evasive and deceptive legal tactics when sued, frequently claiming it does not have information it is required to turn over and sometimes even ignoring court orders to produce key documents, an Associated Press investigation shows.

In a review of lawsuits filed around the country involving a wide range of complaints — not just the sudden acceleration problems that have led to millions of Toyotas being recalled — the automaker has hidden the existence of tests that would be harmful to its legal position and claimed key material was difficult to get at its headquarters in Japan. It has withheld potentially damaging documents and refused to release data stored electronically in its vehicles.

For example, in a Colorado product liability lawsuit filed by a man whose young daughter was killed in a 4Runner rollover crash, Toyota withheld documents about internal roof strength tests despite a federal judge's order that such information be produced, according to court records. The attorneys for Jon Kurylowicz now say such documents might have changed the outcome of the case, which ended in a 2005 jury verdict for Toyota.

"Mr. Kurylowicz went to trial without having been given all the relevant evidence and all the evidence the court ordered Toyota to produce," attorney Stuart Olanik wrote in a new federal lawsuit accusing Toyota of fraud in the earlier case. "The Kurylowicz trial was not a fair trial."

In another case involving a Texas woman killed when her Toyota Land Cruiser lurched backward and pinned her against a garage wall, the Japanese automaker told lawyers for the woman's family it was unaware of any similar cases. Yet less than a year earlier, Toyota had settled a nearly identical lawsuit in the same state involving a Baptist minister who was severely injured after he said his Land Cruiser abruptly rolled backward over him. Under court discovery rules, Toyota had an obligation to inform the woman's attorneys about the case when formally asked.

Senator: Nominee Expected Soon

WASHINGTON (AP) — The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee predicts that President Barack Obama will nominate his next Supreme Court justice in time for hearings to wrap up this summer.

Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont says he expects that Justice John Paul Stevens' successor will be on the bench for the fall term that begins in October. Stevens says he will retire at the end of this year's term.

The top Republican on the Judiciary Committee, Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, isn't ruling out a filibuster to stop a nominee if Republicans believe extraordinary measures are warranted. Without Democratic support, Republicans cannot vote down Obama's nominee.

The senators spoke Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Thai Protesters Reject New Talks

BANGKOK (AP) — Both government and protesters mourned their dead Sunday after a night of savage street fighting that left 21 dead, but neither side appeared ready to compromise to end the political stalemate that has bedeviled Thailand for five years and threatens more violence.

At least 874 others were injured when security forces tried to crack down Saturday on demonstrators who have been staging a month of disruptive protests in the Thai capital, seeking to have Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajva dissolve Parliament and call new elections. It was the country's worst political violence in nearly two decades.

Bullet casings, pools of blood and shattered army vehicles littered the streets near a main tourist area where soldiers had pitched nighttime battles with the protesters.

The fighting halted after the army pulled back its troops and initiated an informal truce. However, there was no sign that either side was willing to negotiate the issues underlying the protests.

Jatuporn Prompan, a leader of the "Red Shirt" protest movement — which contends the current government is illegitimate because it does not reflect the results of the last elections — said Abhisit's hands were "bloodied" by the clashes.

Euro Governments Offer Greece Help

BRUSSELS (AP) — Trying again to halt a debt crisis that has hammered the euro, fellow eurozone governments tossed struggling Greece a financial lifeline Sunday, saying they would make euro30 billion in loans available this year alone — if Athens asks for the money.

The International Monetary Fund stands ready to chip in another euro10 billion, said Olli Rehn, the EU monetary affairs chief.

The promise — filling in details of a March 25 pledge of joint eurozone-IMF help — was another attempt to calm markets that have been selling off Greek bonds in recent days.

Markets viewed the March pledge as too vague and carrying such tough restrictions that Greece could not easily get the money. As a result, investors demanded high rates to loan to the government as it struggles to avoid default — rates the government says it can't go on paying. Greece has some euro54 billion in debt coming due this year and a huge budget deficit.

In an emergency video conference, the finance ministers of the 16-eurozone nations agreed on a complex three-year financing formula that generates an interest rate of "around 5 percent."

Gov.: Confederate Flap No Big Deal

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The dustup over Virginia's proclamation for Confederate History Month seems like a lot of noise over something that "doesn't amount to diddly," Mississippi's governor said in an interview aired Sunday.

Virginia's Republican governor, Bob McDonnell, apologized for leaving out of his proclamation any reference to slavery. He added language to the decree calling slavery "evil and inhumane" after being criticized for reviving what many Virginians believe is an insensitive commemoration of its Confederate past.

Fellow GOP Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi said he doesn't think the proclamation was a mistake.

"To me, it's a sort of feeling that it's a nit, that it is not significant, that it's not a — it's trying to make a big deal out of something (that) doesn't amount to diddly," Barbour said in the interview aired on CNN's "State of the Union."

'Date Night,' 'Titans' Clash For Cash

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Steve Carell and Tina Fey are in a box-office clash with the gods of Mount Olympus.

No. 1 bragging rights for the weekend were too close to call Sunday, with 20th Century Fox estimating a \$27.1 million debut for Carell and Fey's comedy "Date Night" and Warner Bros. reporting the action tale "Clash of the Titans" at \$26.9 million.

Rankings will be sorted out Monday when studios release final numbers, which can vary by \$1 million or more for some films compared with Sunday estimates.

Warner executives said they tracked "Clash of the Titans" as No. 1 for a second straight weekend, with "Date Night" trailing by about \$1 million.

"I'm not complaining about it," said Dan Fellman, head of distribution for Warner. "They're certainly entitled to their own projection, and we'll see. Maybe they're right and we're wrong. Monday will tell."

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Obama Warns Of Nuke Threats

Says Al-Qaida 'Would Have Ho Compunction At Using' Nuclear Weapons

BY ANNE GEARAN
AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON — If al-Qaida acquired nuclear weapons it "would have no compunction at using them," President Barack Obama said Sunday on the eve of a summit aimed at finding ways to secure the world's nuclear stockpile.

"The single biggest threat to U.S. security, both short-term, medium-term and long-term, would be the possibility of a terrorist organization obtaining a nuclear weapon," Obama said. "This is something that could change the security landscape in this country and around the world for years to come."

"If there was ever a detonation in New York City, or London, or Johannesburg, the ramifications economically, politically and from a security perspective would be devastating," the president said.

"We know that organizations like al-Qaida are in the process of trying to secure nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, and would have no compunction at using them," Obama said.

The Nuclear Security Summit of more than 40



Obama

world leaders in Washington this week is aimed at securing "loose nuclear material," Obama said. He was holding one-on-one meetings Sunday with several of those leaders.

He said other world leaders have offered "very specific approaches to how we can solve this profound international problem."

Obama singled out South Africa for giving up its nuclear program, and said it "has been a strong, effective leader in the international community on nonproliferation issues. South Africa has special standing in being a moral leader on this issue."

South African President Jacob Zuma was among the leaders Obama met with Sunday at Blair House, across from the White House. Others included Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"I feel very good at this stage in the degree of commitment and a sense of urgency that I have seen from the world leaders so far on this issue," Obama said. "We think we can make enormous progress on this, and this then becomes part and parcel of the broader focus that we've had over the last several weeks."

Last Thursday, Obama and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that reduces each side's

deployed nuclear arsenal to 1,550 weapons. Earlier in the week, Obama approved a new nuclear policy for the United States, vowing to reduce America's nuclear arsenal, refrain from nuclear tests and not use nuclear weapons against countries that do not have them.

Obama said securing loose nuclear arms is "a central part of the process, but probably the most urgent one and the one we are most concerned with in the short term."

After his remarks, Obama met with Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani. The White House said Obama praised Pakistan for its quick reaction to an attack by Islamic militants against a U.S. consulate in northwestern Pakistan last week. Obama also reiterated that the U.S. and Pakistan are facing a common enemy.

Pakistan has a troubled history with the United States, and anti-American sentiment runs high among ordinary Pakistanis. U.S. leaders go out of their way to assure Pakistan that the United States will not walk away from the improving relationship with Pakistan, and Congress has committed billions in new aid to the country.

Regarding the purpose of the summit, the White House said Gilani assured Obama that Pakistan takes nuclear security seriously and has appropriate safeguards in place.

Obama wrapped up his Sunday schedule by meeting with acting Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan before returning to the White House.

Poles Grieve After President Killed In Plane Crash

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland's government moved swiftly Sunday to show that it was staying on course after the deaths of its president and dozens of political, military and religious leaders, even as tens of thousands of Poles expressed their grief over the plane crash in Russia that shocked the country.

New acting chiefs of the military were already in place and an interim director of the central bank was named Sunday, with work running as usual, said Pawel Gras, a government spokesman.

It was a rare positive note on a day wracked by grief for the 96 dead and laced with reminders of Poland's dark history with its powerful neighbor. The Saturday crash occurred in thick fog near the Katyn forest, where Josef Stalin's secret police in 1940 systematically executed thousands of Polish military officers in the western Soviet Union.

President Lech Kaczynski and those aboard the aging Soviet-built plane had been headed there to honor the dead. A preliminary analysis showed the plane had been working fine, a Russian investigator said.

Skirmishes Renewed At UN Climate Conference

BY ARTHUR MAX
Associated Press Writer

BONN, Germany — Climate talks nearly ground to a halt before they began in earnest Sunday, with delegates squabbling over how to conduct negotiations for the rest of the year on a new agreement to control global warming.

Talks about talks appeared at times on the verge of breakdown over seemingly minor procedural issues, but that reflected a deep divide on how to treat the hastily crafted political deal struck at the Copenhagen summit last December by President Barack Obama with a small group of other world leaders.

The lengthy battle ostensibly was over the authorization of a committee chairwoman to prepare a draft negotiating text for the next meeting in June.

But it provided an early warning that the rancor evident during the Copenhagen summit had not faded, and that the split between industrial countries and the developing world is likely to continue characterizing the talks.

After the letdown of Copenhagen, delegates and officials appeared determined to dampen expectations of a final deal this year, and said negotiations are almost certain to stretch past the next major conference in Cancun, Mexico, in December.

"We should not be striving to get answers to each and every question in Cancun," Yvo de Boer, head of the U.N. climate secretariat, said Sunday. "The quest to address climate change is a long journey, and achieving perfection takes practice."

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