

Obama Announces Deal To Boost Fuel Economy

BY DINA CAPPILLO AND TOM KRISHER
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Ushering in the largest decrease in auto fuel consumption since the 1970s, President Barack Obama and automobile manufacturers Friday announced a deal that will save drivers money at the pump and dramatically cut heat-trapping gases coming from tailpipes.

The agreement pledges to double overall fuel economy to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025, bringing major under-the-hood changes for the nation's automobiles starting in model year 2017. Cars and trucks on the road today average 27 miles per gallon.

"This agreement on fuel standards represents the single most important step we have taken as a nation to reduce our dependence on foreign oil," Obama said, sharing the stage with top executives of the major auto makers before a backdrop of some of the most cutting-edge cars on the road.

"Just as cars will go further on a gallon of gas, our economy will go further on a barrel of oil," Obama said.

When achieved, the 54.5 mile-per-gallon target will reduce U.S. oil consumption from vehicles by 40 percent and halve the amount of greenhouse gas pollution coming out of exhausts.

For American families, the president said the agreement — which will be subject to a mid-course review — means flipping up the car every two weeks, instead of every week. That would save \$8,000 in fuel costs over the life of a vehicle, he said.

The deal was less than what environmentalists and public health advocates wanted, but more than the Detroit Three automakers desired. In a letter to the president last week, Michigan lawmakers called the higher proposal "overly aggressive," after automakers had said they'd work to get vehicles averaging 42.6 to 46.7 miles per gallon. Green groups, meanwhile, had pushed for a 62 miles-per-gallon target by 2025.

For Obama, who watched his campaign promise on this issue die when Republicans retook control of the House, the compromise provides a way around political roadblocks and offers an opportunity to affect climate change.

The deal also provides an answer on the issue of oil dependency. It promises reduced demand at a time when Republicans in Congress have criticized Obama for being too slow to drill and not opening up more areas to oil and gas exploration after the massive Gulf oil spill last year.

And at a time when a consensus in Congress is elusive on the debt ceiling and curbing the federal deficit, the president said the fuel economy deal was a "valuable lesson to" Washington.

"You are all demonstrating what can happen when people put aside differences," Obama said. "These folks are competitors, you've got labor and business. But they said we are going to work together to achieve something important and lasting for the country."

For automobile manufacturers, particularly the Detroit Three, the deal signals a turnaround from the days when they resisted boosting fuel economy targets, arguing that consumers would not buy smaller and more efficient cars, and the technology to reduce fuel dependency was too expensive.

The dynamics were also changed by

the \$62 billion bailout of GM and Chrysler by taxpayers, making it harder for automakers to say no to the White House.

Some environmentalists lauded the agreement Friday, but said that manufacturers owed taxpayers a bigger deal after the multibillion-dollar bailout.

"An auto industry that owes its survival to taxpayer bailouts ungratefully flouted the public's demand for fuel efficiency and less pollution, fighting for loopholes until the bitter end," said Dan Becker, Director of the Safe Climate Campaign. "We will use every opportunity, including the midterm review that the automakers demanded, to strengthen the standards."

For consumers, the new requirements are well beyond the gas mileage of all but the most efficient cars on the road today.

By the time the new standards take effect, the government expects gas-electric hybrids to make up about half the lineup of new vehicles, with electric vehicles making up about 10 percent of the fleet.

Currently hybrid and electric vehicles combined amount to less than 3 percent of U.S. vehicle sales, according to J.D. Power and Associates.

AWOL Soldier Shouts '09 Suspect's Name

BY JAMIE STENGLE
Associated Press

WACO, Texas — Coolly defiant, Pfc. Naser Abdo shouted "Nidal Hasan Fort Hood 2009!" as he was led out of the courtroom Friday, an apparent homage to the suspect in the worst mass shooting ever on a U.S. military installation. He condemned the attack less than a year ago, but is now accused of trying to repeat it.

Investigators say Abdo, who cited his Muslim beliefs in requesting conscientious objector status last year, was found in a motel room three miles from Fort Hood's main gate with a handgun, an article titled "Make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom" and the ingredients for an explosive device, including gunpowder, shrapnel and pressure cookers. An article with that title appears in an al-Qaida magazine.

Abdo went absent without leave from Fort Campbell, Ky., early this month after being charged with possessing child pornography.

Police and the Army say Abdo admitted plotting an attack, but in Fuhais, Jordan, his father insisted the allegations were "all lies from A to Z."

"My son loved people no matter who they are, whether Jews or Christians," Jamal Abdo said. "Naser is not the kind of a person who harbors evil for the other people, he cannot kill anyone and he could not have done any bad thing."

Jamal Abdo, 52, is a Jordanian who lived near Fort Hood in Killeen for 25 years until he was deported from the United States last year after being convicted of soliciting a minor.

His 21-year-old son was ordered held without bond Friday. He is charged with possession of an unregistered destructive device in connection with a bomb plot and has yet to enter a plea. If convicted, he could face up to 10 years in prison.

It was not immediately known if he would face additional charges. "Our office will pursue federal charges where the evidence takes us," said Daryl Fields, spokesman for federal prosecutors.

A Week Later, Norway Mourns Massacre Victims

BY IAN MACDOUGALL
AND BJOERN H. AMLAND
Associated Press

OSLO, Norway — Norway began burying the dead on Friday, a week after an anti-Muslim extremist killed 77 people in a bombing and shooting rampage. Mourners of all ages vowed they would not let the massacre threaten their nation's openness and democracy.

An 18-year-old Muslim girl was the first victim to be laid to rest since the gunman opened fire at a political youth camp and bombed the government headquarters in Oslo.

After a funeral service in the Nesodden church outside the capital, Bano Rashid, a Kurdish immigrant from Iraq, was buried in a Muslim rite. Sobbing youth accompanied her coffin, which was draped in a Kurdish flag.

The attack will "not destroy Norway's commitment to democracy, tolerance and fighting racism," Labor Party youth-wing leader Eskil Pedersen said at a memorial service in Oslo.

Pedersen, who was on the island retreat of Utøya when the gunman's attack began, said: "Long before he stands before a court we can say: he has lost."

Pedersen said the youth organization would return to Utøya next year for its annual summer gathering, a tradition that stretches back decades.

Police raised the death toll to 77, from 76, and said all those killed in the July 22 terror attacks in Oslo and on Utøya have now been identified and those reported missing have been accounted for.

Norway's Police Security Service said the threat from right-wing extremists remains unchanged after Anders Behring Breivik's attack.

It said the 32-year-old Norwegian's actions lack parallels in Europe or elsewhere, his views differ from the ideology of most racist and neo-Nazi groups, and very few people in Norway are capable of replicating what he did.

Since the massacre, questions have persisted about whether authorities had underestimated extremist dangers in Norway.

At Friday's memorial service in Oslo at the assembly hall of the "People's House," a community center for Norway's labor movement, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said: "Today it is one week since Norway was hit by evil."

REBUILDING BOOK BY BOOK



"We are overwhelmed with the support from all over the country," said Irving Elementary School principal Debbie Fort on Monday, July 18, 2011, in Joplin, Missouri. Her school will be held in the former Washington School in Joplin where donated books and other supplies already fill the auditorium.

Jeffs Threatens Court With Repercussions

BY WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

SAN ANGELO, Texas — A polygamist sect leader defending himself against sexual assault charges broke his silence Friday with a 55-minute sermon defending plural marriages as divine and later said God would visit "sickness and death" on those involved if his trial wasn't immediately stopped.

Warren Jeffs, 55, could face life in prison if he's convicted of sexually assaulting two underage girls. He has been representing himself since he fired his high-powered lawyers Thursday, but he made no opening statement and spent hours sitting alone at the defense table staring into space in silence while prosecutors made their case.

On Friday, however, the ecclesiastical head of the Fundamental Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints suddenly cried "I object!" as FBI agent John Broadway testified about seizing eight desktop computers and 120 boxes and large folders of documents from the church's remote compound in West Texas in 2008.

"There is sacred trust given to religious leadership not to be touched by government agencies," said Jeffs, who leads an offshoot of mainstream Mormonism that believes polygamy brings exaltation in heaven. The sect's 10,000 members see Jeffs as a prophet who speaks for God on Earth.

Jeffs then launched into a

lengthy defense of polygamy, but Walther eventually overruled his objection. She said court rules prohibited him from testifying while objecting but she let him go on at length because he hadn't offered an opening statement.

Jeffs then said he had no choice but to read a statement from God. Walther dismissed the jury and allowed him to read it.

"I, the Lord God of heaven," Jeffs read, "call upon the court to cease this open prosecution against my pure, holy way."

If the trial continues, the statement said, "I will send a scourge upon the counties of prosecutorial zeal to make humbled by sickness and death."

Jeffs has frequently said the charges against him are the work of over-zealous prosecutors.

Walther responded to the statement by telling Jeffs he could not threaten the jury.

"If you call for their destruction," she said, "or in any way say that they will be injured or damaged because of their service, you will be removed from the courtroom."

During afternoon testimony from Broadway and other witnesses who detailed documents seized from the FLDS compound, Jeffs objected so much that Walther eventually had a bailiff remove his microphones.

It was a sharp contrast to his earlier silence and halting speech. When answering questions from Walther earlier in the week, Jeffs usually paused for a full minute or two and then spoke in slow, deliberate tones interrupted by long, awkward pauses. But his words flowed freely Friday.

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Monday, August 1
7:40 am Yankton County Commission
8:15 am L&C Theater

Tuesday, August 2
7:40 am Yankton Library (Kathy Jacobs)
8:15 am Riverboat Days
8:45 am Dakota Territorial Museum
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