

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

AP: Toyota Secrets In Auto 'Black Box' Data

SOUTHLAKE, Texas (AP) — Toyota has for years blocked access to data stored in devices similar to airline "black boxes" that could explain crashes blamed on sudden unintended acceleration, according to an Associated Press review of lawsuits nationwide and interviews with auto crash experts.

The AP investigation found that Toyota has been inconsistent — and sometimes even contradictory — in revealing exactly what the devices record and don't record, including critical data about whether the brake or accelerator pedals were depressed at the time of a crash. By contrast, most other automakers routinely allow much more open access to information from their event data recorders, commonly known as EDRs.

AP also found that Toyota has frequently refused to provide key information sought by crash victims and survivors.

Obama Urges House Dems To Pass Reform

WASHINGTON (AP) — Support from his own party in doubt, President Barack Obama summoned more than a dozen House Democrats to the White House Thursday, pleading with them to put aside their qualms, seize a historic moment and vote for his massive health care overhaul.

It's the opportunity of a generation, he told them — and a chance to revive the party's agenda after his rough first year in office.

In back-to-back meetings in the Oval Office and Roosevelt Room, Obama urged uneasy rank-and-file moderates and progressives to focus on the positives rather than their deep disappointment with parts of the bill. The lawmakers said Obama assured them the legislation was merely the first step, and he promised to work with them in the future to improve its provisions.

Cranking up the pressure, congressional leaders said they were hoping for votes on the legislation in as soon as two or three weeks.

Deadly Blasts Mar First Round Of Iraq Voting

BAGHDAD (AP) — A string of deadly blasts shattered an early round of voting in Iraq Thursday, killing 17 people and highlighting the fragile nature of the country's security gains ahead of crucial parliamentary elections this Sunday.

Iraq security forces were out in full force, trying to protect early voters in an election that will determine who will lead the country through the crucial period of the U.S. troop drawdown and help decide whether the country can overcome its deep sectarian divisions.

But three explosions — a rocket attack and two suicide bombings — showed the ability of insurgents to carry out bloody attacks. They have promised to disrupt the voting with violence.

Thursday's voting was for those who might not be able to get to the polls Sunday. The vast majority of early voters were the Iraqi police and military who will be working election day — when the rest of the country votes — to enforce security. Others voting included detainees, hospital patients and medical workers.

Alexander The Great-Era Coins Found In Syria

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — More than 250 silver coins dating to the time of Alexander the Great were unearthed in northern Syria, a Syrian archaeologist said Thursday.

Youssef Kanjo, the head of archaeological excavations in the ancient city of Aleppo, said the coins were discovered two weeks ago in northern Syria when a local man was digging the foundations of his new home.

The man handed the coins, that were found in a bronze box, to authorities, Kanjo said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.

The coins date from the Hellenic period, which ranges from 4th to the 1st centuries B.C. after Macedonian warrior-king Alexander the Great spread Greek culture into Middle East and beyond with his conquests.

Kanjo added that the box contained two groups of coins, 137 "tetra" drachmas (four drachmas) and 115 single drachma coins.

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2 Pentagon Police Officers Shot

BY CHRISTINE SIMMONS AND EILEEN SULLIVAN
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — A gunman coolly drew a weapon from his pocket and opened fire at the teeming subway entrance to the Pentagon complex Thursday evening, wounding two police officers before being shot and critically wounded, officials said.

The two officers suffered grazing wounds and were being treated in a hospital, said Richard Keevill, chief of Pentagon police.

The suspect, believed to be a U.S. citizen, walked up to a security checkpoint at the Pentagon in an apparent attempt to get inside the massively fortified Defense Department headquarters, at about 6:40 p.m. "He just reached in his pocket, pulled out a gun and started shooting" at point-blank range, Keevill said. "He walked up very cool. He had no real emotion on his face." The Pentagon officers returned fire with semiautomatic weapons.

Of the suspect, the chief said, "His injury is pretty critical."

The assault at the very threshold of the Pentagon — the U.S. capital's ground zero on Sept. 11, 2001 — came four months after a deadly attack on the Army's Fort Hood, Texas, post allegedly by a U.S. Army psychiatrist with radical Islamic leanings. In the immediate aftermath Thursday, investigators did not think terrorism was involved but were not ruling that out and did not discuss possible motives.

Law enforcement officials identified the suspect as John Patrick Bedell, 36. They also said they were speaking with a second man, who might have accompanied the shooter, and were running his name through databases.

The subway station is immediately adjacent to the Pentagon building, a five-sided northern Virginia colossus across the Potomac River from Washington. Since a redesign following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon, riders can no longer disembark directly into the building. Riders take a long escalator ride to the surface from the underground station, then pass through a security check outside the doors of the building, where further security awaits.

After the attack, all Pentagon entrances were secured, then all were reopened except one from the subway, said Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman. He said the subway entrance was likely to remain closed overnight at least.

Keevill said the gunman gave no clue to the officers at the checkpoint about what he was going to do. "There was no distress," he said. "When he reached into his pocket, they assumed he was going to get a pass and he came up with a gun."

"He wasn't pretending to be anyone. He was wearing a coat and walked up and just started shooting."

Keevill added: "We have layers of security and it worked. He never got inside the building to hurt anyone."

A Pentagon official working late in the building said people inside first heard of the shooting on television. They were later told the building was locked

down and to stay in place.

Then at around 7:30 p.m., they heard an announcement on the public address system that they could leave through Corridor 3 — one widely used to get access to one of the parking lots.

"We really don't know anything, just that we can leave now through that corridor," one official said on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak about the incident.



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