

Knox Murder Conviction Overturned

ROME (AP) — Italy's highest court overturned the murder conviction against Amanda Knox and her ex-boyfriend Friday, bringing to a definitive end the high-profile case that captivated people on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Finished!" Knox's lawyer Carlo Dalla Vedova exulted after the decision was read out. "It couldn't be better than this."

The decision by the supreme Court of Cassation is the final ruling in the case, ending the long legal battle waged by Knox and Italian co-defendant Raffaele Sollecito. Both Knox, who was awaiting the verdict in her hometown of Seattle, and Sollecito have long maintained their innocence in the death of British student Meredith Kercher.

The supreme Court of Cassation overturned last year's convictions by a Florence appeals court, and declined to order another trial. The decision means the judges, after thoroughly examining the case, concluded that a conviction could not be supported by the evidence.

Their reasoning will be released within 90 days.

Airline Could Face 'Unlimited' Damages

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Lufthansa could face "unlimited" compensation claims for the crash that killed 150 people in the French Alps and it would be difficult, even counterproductive, for the German carrier to try to avoid liability, experts said Friday.

Under a treaty governing deaths and injuries aboard international flights, airlines are required to compensate relatives of victims for proven damages of up to a limit currently set at about \$157,000 — regardless of what caused the crash.

But higher compensation is possible if a carrier is held liable.

"So more or less you will have unlimited financial damage," said Marco Abate, a German aviation lawyer.

To avoid liability, a carrier has to prove that the crash wasn't due to "negligence or other wrongful act" by its employees, according to Article 21 of the 1999 Montreal Convention.

Racist Fraternity Findings Unveiled

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Members of a University of Oklahoma fraternity apparently learned a racist chant that recently got their chapter disbanded during a national leadership cruise four years ago that was sponsored by the fraternity's national administration, the university's president said Friday.

President David Boren said the school interviewed more than 160 people during its investigation into members of its now-defunct Sigma Alpha Epsilon chapter who were captured on video taking part in the chant, which included references to lynching, a racial slur and the promise that the fraternity would never accept a black member.

"That chant was learned and brought back to the local chapter," Boren said at a news conference in which he disclosed the school investigation's findings. "Over time, the chant was formalized by the local chapter and was taught to pledges as part of the formal and informal pledgship process."

Brandon Weghorst, a spokesman for SAE's national administration, which is based in Evanston, Illinois, said the organization planned to release a statement in response to the university's findings.

Boren said about 25 members of the school's SAE chapter will face punishment ranging from two expulsions the school announced previously to mandatory community service and cultural sensitivity training. The video, which surfaced earlier this month, showed fraternity members yelling the chant on a chartered bus while headed to a formal event at an Oklahoma City country club with their dates, Boren said.

Egyptian Warships Move Near Yemen

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — As airstrikes in Yemen intensified on their second day Friday, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were considering an intervention on the ground, aimed at giving the president a secure foothold to return to the country, while backing Sunni tribesmen to fight against Shiite rebels and their allies, military officials said.

A likely entry point for troops from the Saudi-led Arab coalition was the southern port of Aden, the Yemeni and Egyptian military officials told The Associated Press. But that could be a tough prospect: The city is already a battleground, and on Friday forces loyal to the rebels' top ally, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, were advancing toward it.

The officials' comments to the AP draw broad outlines for the likely strategy for the ambitious campaign launched Thursday, led by Saudi Arabia with a major role by its ally Egypt. The aim, they said, was to carve out enough room for President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who was forced to flee the country from Aden, to return. Longer-term, the campaign aims to wear down the Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, and Saleh's forces, enough to reach a power-sharing accord.

Co-Pilot Appeared Healthy, But May Have Hidden Illness

BY GEIR MOULSON
AND DAVID MCHUGH

Associated Press

MONTABAU, Germany — Germanwings co-pilot Andreas Lubitz appeared happy and healthy to acquaintances, but a picture emerged Friday of a man who hid evidence of an illness from his employers — including a torn-up doctor's note that would have kept him off work the day authorities say he crashed Flight 9525 into an Alpine mountainside.

As German prosecutors sought to piece together the puzzle of why Lubitz locked his captain out of the cockpit and crashed the Airbus A320, police in the French Alps toiled to retrieve the shattered remains of the 150 people killed in Tuesday's crash.

Searches conducted at Lubitz's homes in Duesseldorf and in the town of Montabaur turned up documents pointing to "an existing illness and appropriate medical treatment," but no suicide note was found, said Ralf Herrenbrueck, a spokesman for the Duesseldorf prosecutors' office.

They included ripped-up sick notes covering the day of the crash, which "support the current preliminary assessment that the deceased hid his illness from his employer and colleagues," Herrenbrueck said in a statement.

Doctors commonly issue employees in Germany with such notes excusing them



RUOPPOLO GUILLAUME/MAXPPP/ZUMA PRESS

French prosecutor Brice Robin, center, discusses evidence pointing to deliberate actions by the co-pilot in the crash of a Germanwings jet, killing all 150 people on board, during a press conference on Thursday, March 26. Robin confirmed that Andreas Lubitz, a 28-year-old German citizen, refused to re-open the cockpit door for the pilot and pressed a button that sent the plane into its fatal descent.

from work, even for minor illnesses, and workers hand them to their employers. Doctors are obliged to abide by medical secrecy unless their patient explicitly tells them he or she plans to commit an act of violence.

Prosecutors didn't specify what illness Lubitz may have been suffering from, or say whether it was mental or physical. German media reported Friday that the 28-year-old had suffered from depression.

The Duesseldorf University Hospital said Friday that Lubitz had been a patient there over the past two months and last went in for a "diagnostic evaluation" on March 10. It declined to provide details, citing medical confidentiality, but denied reports it had treated Lubitz for depression.

Neighbors described a man whose physical health was superb and road race records show Lubitz took part in several long-distance runs.

"He definitely did not smoke. He really took care of himself. He always went jogging. ... He was very healthy," said Johannes Rossmann, who lives a few doors from Lubitz's home in Montabaur.

People in Montabaur who knew Lubitz told The Associated Press that he had been thrilled with his job at Germanwings and seemed very happy.

Colorado Defends State Pot Law, Says States Are Free To Legalize Weed

BY KRISTEN WYATT

Associated Press

DENVER — States are free to legalize marijuana, Colorado argued Friday in a filing to the U.S. Supreme Court in response to a lawsuit from neighboring states that have asked the nation's highest court to shut down Colorado's pot law.

The filing marks the first time Colorado has defended legal marijuana in writing. The federal government did not sue to block the state's 2012 vote to legalize pot for all adults over 21.

Colorado said that Nebraska and Oklahoma should sue the federal government for not enforcing the Controlled Substances Act, not other states. Colorado said the states' "quarrel is not with Colorado but with the federal government's" approach to letting states experiment with pot law.

"Nebraska and Oklahoma filed this case in an attempt to reach across their borders and selectively invalidate state laws with which they disagree," Colorado argued.

Because federal drug law bans marijuana for any purpose, including medical, Col-

orado argues that blocking recreational pot would also block pot for medical use in 23 states and Washington, D.C.

"Congress has endorsed a policy, at least with respect to medical marijuana, supportive of state regulatory and licensure laws," Colorado wrote. "This suit threatens to upset those administrative and political decisions."

The U.S. Supreme Court has not said whether it will hear the challenge, and it has no deadline for doing so.

Colorado Republican Attorney General Cynthia Coffman

opposes marijuana legalization, but she said the problem needs to be fixed by federal drug authorities. "This lawsuit ... won't fix America's national drug policy—at least not without leadership from Washington, D.C., which remains noticeably absent," Coffman said in a statement.

In addition to the lawsuit from Nebraska and Oklahoma, Colorado faces three more marijuana challenges in a lower federal court.

A set of county sheriffs from Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska have filed a separate

lawsuit in federal court in Denver. The third lawsuit comes from a Colorado hotel owner who argues that marijuana is hurting his business. The fourth one is from a southern Colorado couple who say that a pot-growing warehouse near their property diminishes the property's value.

Two other states that have legalized recreational marijuana, Oregon and Washington, filed their own briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday arguing that states are free to legalize pot.

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