



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Volkswagen Robbery

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Libertyville, Illinois---Taylor Shepard was returning home in her Volkswagen, when an assailant pulled up behind her car and “violently beat her and knocked her to the ground. He then stole the Volkswagen Atlas containing Shepard’s two-year-old child, Isaiah, and fled, running Shepard over.”

Shepard was four months pregnant at the time. But after being assaulted and run over by her own car, she was still able call 911. The call was received by the Lake County Sheriff’s Office. An ambulance was summoned and a deputy sheriff swung into action. He immediately contacted Volkswagen.

“He explained the ‘extremely urgent’ circumstances, namely that the stolen Volkswagen contained a two-year-old child who had just been violently abducted from his mother.” The deputy requested the GPS tracking information on the car.

I am not a fan of the Volkswagen company. I had read about their executives expressing disdain for Americans and American cars. During their dissing one of their best customers, in 2015, these same executives, clean-cut Germans, were fraudulently deceiving Americans in order to circumvent the US Clean Air Act.

This deception was not instigated and carried out by lowly VW mechanics. It was a corporate scam, affecting about 11 million cars worldwide and a half-million in the US. It was determined the vehicles actually emitted 40 times more toxic discharge than VW reported.

Years ago, while in college, my fraternity brother often lent me his VW Beetle, nicknamed the bug. I liked the car. It was fun to drive and had great gas mileage. But after reading about the company’s blatant coverup, I concluded the bug was not an aspect of the car, the bug was in VW’s ethics.

Disdain for Americans? Who was defrauding whom?

Back to the chase for the kidnapped car and baby. In response to the call from law enforcement, “Volkswagen confirmed that Shepard’s Atlas was equipped with Car-Net services and its location was capable of being ascertained.”

- However...VW²: “But we cannot release this information to you.”
- Law enforcement officer, “What! A child is in danger at this very moment.”
- VW, “Our records show this vehicle’s free trial period for Car-Net has expired. The service is no longer available for this Volkswagen.”
- Officer, “For God’s sake, this is a dire emergency!”
- VW, “Well, emergencies go both ways. A subscription fee of \$150 is required before we can release location information on this vehicle.”
- Officer, “This is a ‘life or death’ situation.”
- VW, “No booty, no baby. It’s the frugal German way!”

It’s too painful to continue to makeup satire about this debacle: “Eventually, a member of the woman’s extended family footed the bill. ... They provided a credit card number that investigators used to pay the \$150 fee and access Volkswagen’s GPS data for the stolen vehicle. But 30 minutes had passed by then, and the stolen SUV and toddler had already been located by

¹ *Harper’s Magazine*, April, 2024, 17.

² A recitation of these events begs for parody.

officers in the field [abandoned in a parking lot], leaving investigators and the family relieved but frustrated.”³

The Shepard family has pressed charges against Volkswagen. As of this writing, the courts have not made a ruling. If VW is found culpable, I will give your odds and bet VW’s big-wigs will not be affected. They might fire the VW phone operator who was following company policy.

The reason I will give odds for this bet is based on US courts’ ritual of penalizing stockholders for a company’s malpractices, while the executives go scot-free. Just look at that case about VW trickery on its cars spewing out toxic exhaust, now known as Emissiongate.

Due to violating the Clean Air Act and engaging in illegal coverups, Volkswagen was fined several billion dollars. Not one red cent was taken from wallets of the VW higher-ups who were responsible for the swindle.

Disdain is a two-way street.

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/02/28/volkswagen-stolen-car-charged-gps/>.