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## Angela Merkel's ministers 'ignored warning over Volkswagen emissions rigging'

German ministers were warned months ago of Volkswagen so-called “defeat device” cheat software on diesel engines, a parliamentary answer reveals



German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives at a European Union leaders extraordinary summit, Belgium, her government is facing criticism over emissions rigging of German cars. Photo: REUTERS/Eric Vidal

By Tom Morgan and Emily Gosden

11:03PM BST 23 Sep 2015

Angela Merkel's government turned a blind eye to Volkswagen emissions rigging, it was claimed as the car company's chief executive resigned amid the [escalating crisis](#).

A written parliamentary answer shows that German ministers were warned months ago of the so-called "defeat device" cheat software on diesel engines.

The transport ministry answered a question about the motoring industry on July 28, in which it said: "The federal government is aware of [defeat devices], which have the goal of [test] cycle detection."



A worker tests a red 2016 Volkswagen AG Golf TDI emissions certification vehicle inside the California Air Resources Board Haagen-Smit Laboratory in El Monte, California Photo: Bloomberg

While the answer does not mention Volkswagen, the suggestion by the country's Green party, which posed the question, is that it was in reference to the car maker.

[Volkswagen's chief executive, Martin Winterkorn, was forced to stand down on Wednesday](#) at an emergency meeting.

His resignation followed an eight-hour summit at the company's headquarters in Wolfsburg.

Mr Winterkorn announced to the stock market that he was ["clearing the way for a fresh start"](#).

- [Volkswagen emissions scandal: all your questions answered](#)
- [How many investigations is Volkswagen facing?](#)

He announced his resignation as:

- There were suggestions the scandal [could widen to fuel consumption data after consumer groups warned they too could be based on flawed testing](#).
- The German public prosecutor's office in Brunswick started a "preliminary investigation" into VW employees while American authorities have widened criminal inquiries.
- Natalie Bennett, the Green Party leader, led calls for authorities to consider corporate manslaughter charges.
- VW is braced for class actions for billions of pounds in the US as British lawyers also urged [UK motorists](#) to sue.

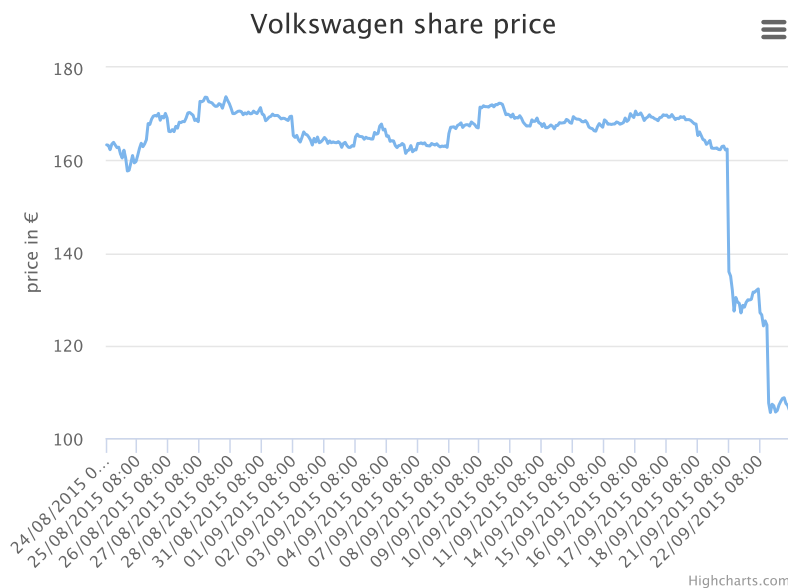
Defeat software on 2.0 litre VW diesels was discovered by a US regulator on Friday, prompting a 35 per cent slump in shares over two days.

There was no written evidence on Wednesday of a specific question or answer naming VW in the parliamentary exchange between the German Greens and the country's ministry in July.

However, the ministry wrote: "The government shares the view of the European Commission that there is no extensively proven means of preventing defeat devices."

Oliver Krischer, deputy leader of the Greens, told N24 television: "The government told us in July that it knew about this software, which has been used in the USA. It's clear they knew the software was widely in use."

The VW emissions scandal is the result of a politics in which environmental and consumer protection plays no role and every trick and means of cheating is accepted with a wink."



Claims that Mrs Merkel’s government should have done more were backed by a forum of German environmental businesses.

Alexander Dobrindt, German transport minister, said in Berlin on Wednesday that the allegation that the government had acquiesced in manipulation was “false and indecent”.

The German government has set up a commission of inquiry, headed by Michael Odenwald, a junior transport minister.

Meanwhile, Volkswagen is facing a class action lawsuit in Italy from a consumer group which found a “huge discrepancy” between advertised and actual fuel consumption on a VW Golf model, leaving drivers an estimated £350 a year out of pocket.