

Mercedes dealership in trouble

United Press International

DALLAS — The Mercedes-Benz dealership that led the nation in sales the past two years will be accused next week of rolling back odometers on new and used luxury cars, said an official of the attorney general's office.

Stephenson Motor Co. will be charged in a lawsuit next week with violating the state's Deceptive Trade Practices Act, said Clyde Farrell, chief of the attorney general's consumer protection division.

Farrell told the Dallas Times Herald Tuesday the charge is the result of a five-month investigation prompted by allegations by two former employees and five customers.

James Stephenson Jr., owner of the dealership, called the allegations "ridiculous."

"The last thing I'd ever do is deceive a customer," Stephenson said.

The suit will allege the Stephenson Motor Co. and Texas Classic Auto Sales, a Fort Worth broker owned by Ronnie Bradshaw, who is also Stephenson's used car sales manager, concealed mileage put on cars during delivery to the Dallas area for sale.

Investigators said they had evidence that Stephenson Motor Co. used the Fort Worth dealer to obtain cars from other Mercedes dealers around the country. The cars were driven to Dallas, sometimes as far as 1,500 miles, to avoid the higher costs of shipping them, and the odometers were then rolled back to allow the cars to retain their higher value, investigators said.

Other area Mercedes salespeople say that on a new Mercedes with a value of between \$44,600 and \$52,000, the extra miles could cut the price by \$2,600 to \$3,600.

Bradshaw denied the cars were driven to Texas Classic Auto Sales.

"That's not correct," he said. "We have statements where they were trucked and trailered."

A&M

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when traveling hundreds of miles such as Williams must do when she goes home to Derby for Christmas and summer vacations.

"You know about it before you leave, so if you don't think you can adjust, you go somewhere else," she said.

Like his sister Melissa, Rob Williams, a freshman agricultural economics major, also has made that adjustment.

"I've had to adjust to having to take responsibility for all your actions, for everything you do," he said. "You've got to make all the decisions."

Another adjustment that Rob Williams has made is simply being an out-of-state student and not having the built-in high school friendships that Texas students have.

"It gets kind of lonely," he said. "Everybody in-state knows people. I think I know three people from Kansas that go here, but I've made a lot of friends."

Williams said he came to A&M because of the Corps of Cadets and because of the quality and cost of education.

Kansas in-state tuition costs between \$40 and \$50, he said.

"If I'm going to pay that much why not go someplace to get a quality education?" he asked.

Spy

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couldn't say what they do in another country's airspace."

Udell said that increased Soviet and Cuban activity in Central America was not the primary factor in the decision to deploy the interceptors in South Texas. However, he said that the United States is concerned about a large airbase near completion at Punta Huete, Nicaragua, about 20 miles northeast of Managua.

A U.S. intelligence report on communist activity in Nicaragua, obtained from the White House, said that when the base is opened it will be "the largest and most capable military airfield in Central America." The report said the base will be capable of supporting any type of Soviet aircraft, including the advanced Backfire bomber, as well as cargo and reconnaissance aircraft.

"There's no secret about what we're doing in our exercises. If there was no communist activity in Central America it would be pretty pointless to be operating from these civilian bases (in South Texas). What we don't like is the communists — Cubans or Soviets — running amok in Latin America like they have been recently; they are flying around down there all the time," Udell said.

"The deployments to the civilian bases would have been executed regardless of aggressive action in Central America. It is timely; however, it is merely a coincidence," Udell said.

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