

At trial, former Uber CEO seeks to fend off conspiracy talk

February 7 2018

Former Uber chief executive Travis Kalanick appeared tense and tentative as he took the witness stand Tuesday seeking to counter allegations that his company stole autonomous driving secrets from former Google car unit Waymo.

A key witness in the blockbuster trade secrets case, Kalanick appeared to offer no revelations as he underwent questioning for around 45 minutes from Waymo's lawyer on his decision to hire engineer Anthony Levandowski from Google as part of an effort to ramp up Uber's own self-driving car project.

Waymo, now an independent unit within Google parent Alphabet, is seeking at least \$1 billion in damages from Uber in the closely watched case of two major players in Silicon Valley and autonomous driving.

Kalanick told the San Francisco federal court jury under questioning from attorney Charles Verhoeven that he did not recall some details of his discussions with Levandowski, who has been accused of stealing thousands of proprietary documents before leaving Google.

Kalanick's responses appeared aimed at fending off the theory posited by Waymo of a conspiracy by him and Levandowski to use illegal means to get ahead in the race for autonomous cars.

"I don't remember what he discussed," Kalanick said of a meeting with Levandowski in late 2015.

When shown an image of a document he wrote which included the phrase, "lasers, data and advice are the three things," Kalanick said under questioning he was not sure what that meant, sidestepping a question on whether he was asking Levandowski for Google secrets.

Asked why he hired Levandowski, Kalanick said, "He was very adamant about starting a [company](#), we were very adamant about hiring him."

He then added, "We created a situation where he felt he started a company and I felt like I hired him."

Kalanick was to resume testimony early Wednesday in the trial, which could last up to three weeks.

If Waymo prevails, it could deal a severe blow to Uber's efforts to widely deploy self-driving vehicles as part of its ridesharing operations—a field that also includes Waymo and other rivals.

The trial comes with Uber seeking to turn the page following a series of scandals over alleged misconduct and a cut-throat workplace culture, as new chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi strives to get the company on course and prepare for a [stock market debut](#) in 2019.

To prevail, Waymo must show not only that documents were misappropriated but also that they were used for "unjust enrichment."

© 2018 AFP

Citation: At trial, former Uber CEO seeks to fend off conspiracy talk (2018, February 7) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-02-trial-uber-ceo-fend-conspiracy.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.