

Ma spokesman dodges motorcade remarks

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Presidential Office Spokesman Wang Yu-chi (王郁奇) yesterday declined to apologize after being accused of making “reckless” remarks in response to a report in the -Chinese-language Liberty Times (the Taipei Times’ sister paper) on Monday that President Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) motorcade abused its traffic privileges while the president was not in the car.

“I don’t understand what they are thinking,” Wang said. “Doesn’t the Liberty Times, which created a composite photograph that deviated from the truth, owe the public an explanation?”

Wang made the remarks in response to a request by the Liberty Times in a news analysis published yesterday that Wang clarify and apologize for “speaking recklessly” about the matter.

The report accused Wang of taking up a minor issue to evade a major issue because the question the paper raised was whether the president’s motorcade had abused its traffic privileges while the president was not in the car.

The Liberty Times ran a composite photograph on Monday as an illustration to accompany a story about Ma, who doubles as chairman of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), as he stumped for KMT candidates ahead of Saturday’s local elections.

The report said Ma’s motorcade was speeding while using loudspeakers to order vehicles to make way.

The composite photo had a caption identifying it as such in the lower, left-hand corner.

Following the Liberty Times report on Monday, Wang apologized for any inconvenience caused by Ma’s motorcade.

The Presidential Office -confirmed that Ma was not in the car at the time, but was flying from Hsinchu to Chiayi on the presidential plane.

Wang on Tuesday said the photo used did not picture Ma’s convoy, but probably showed former president Chen Shui-bian’s (陳水扁) motorcade. He said the leading vehicle in Ma’s motorcade is a BMW740 and that Ma rides in a Ford E350, while the lead car in the composite photograph was a Ford and the presidential vehicle a BMW — a formation used during the Chen presidency.

Meanwhile, Chen yesterday accused Wang of “lying” and “leaking sensitive information” on presidential security.

In a statement issued by his office, Chen asked the Presidential Office to instruct the National Security Bureau’s special forces center to clarify the matter.

Chen accused Wang of making remarks that “did not tally with the facts,” saying his

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motorcade never used vans as the lead vehicle nor used the fast lane to abuse its traffic privileges.

“Is what Wang said the official response of the Presidential Office?” Chen asked. “Who authorized him to reveal details of the security deployment of the president and his vehicle formation?”

Wang yesterday avoided Chen’s questions, saying that the paper that created the composite photograph knew the truth.

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