


Spoof Anthem Prompts Crackdown

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ASTANA, Kazakhstan —  Kazakhstan has toughened penalties for desecrating its state symbols in a bid "to bring up patriotic feelings" after repeated cases of spoofs being played at ceremonies in place of the central Asian nation's anthem.

In March, the Kazakh shooting team demanded an apology after a phony national anthem from the comedy film "Borat" was played instead of the real one at an award ceremony in Kuwait. Shortly before that, Ricky Martin's racy hit "Livin' La Vida Loca" was performed instead of the national anthem to a confused audience before the start of a skiing competition in northern Kazakhstan.

"Lately, there have been so many misdeeds against our state symbols," Economy Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev told the upper chamber of parliament. "There are certain things that we must respect."

The Senate voted overwhelmingly late last week to double penalties for desecrating state symbols to a maximum of 1.23 million tenge (\$8,300).

A separate bill passed by the Senate obliged Kazakh athletes to know the lyrics

of Kazakhstan's anthem.

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