

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / 'Catastrophic' tornado hits US town of Little Rock

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I'm Alex Ritzen and in the early hours of Saturday 1st April, these are our main stories.

Hundreds reported injured by a tornado in the US city of Little Rock, Arkansas in what's been declared a mass casualty event. No handcuffs and a not guilty plea when Donald Trump surrenders at

a New York courthouse next week, his lawyers say. And China is a formidable competitor.

And this is something that we don't see in adversarial terms in NATO. We don't want a cold war with China. The deputy head of NATO speaks to the BBC. Also in this podcast, 2,000 Ugandan troops enter the Democratic Republic of Congo to start their peacekeeping duty in the eastern part of the country. And we now have confirmed traces ancestry in three places in Africa and in the Middle East and in South Asia. A new study reveals the ancestry of the medieval Swahili civilization.

Let's start in the US and in the state of Arkansas. We're receiving reports of what's being described as a catastrophic tornado in the city of Little Rock. This is how the local TV station KTHV reported its progress. Tornado warning Pulaski County downtown Little Rock in West Little Rock right now being impacted by a confirmed tornado with debris. Certainly looks like a tornado. Oh my goodness. My goodness, folks, please be in your safe place. It very well can see it right there. Tornado warning. North America correspondent David Willis told me the latest. The report suggests that a tornado hit, as you mentioned there, the capital of the state of Arkansas, Little Rock. It's been declared by the University of Arkansas for medical sciences a mass casualty event, but there are no reports so far anyway of deaths. This is a tornado which ripped roofs off buildings, uprooted trees, overturned vehicles and is said by the Reuters news agency to have left hundreds of people injured. There's some pretty dramatic aerial footage that's been running on the weather channel here in the United States. It shows several blocks of the city of Little Rock are very badly damaged. Meanwhile, tens of millions of Americans are currently the are currently the subject of hazardous weather warnings Friday afternoon. Going into this evening, all this coming as what's been called an immense blast of extreme spring air sweeping across the United States and affecting an area all the way from Texas in the south to the Great Lakes with thunderstorms and tornadoes. Briefly, whenever there's a weather story these days, we ask you if it's related to global warming. Is it? It's a very good question. We've certainly seen Alex a lot more extreme weather events of late, haven't we? I'm talking to you from California, which has seen three months of storms after wildfires ripped through various parts of the region towards the end of last year. And this comes exactly a week after a tornado hit the Mississippi town of Rowling Fork, killing 26 people and destroying many of the community's 400 homes there. That tornado caught many people by surprise because it came at night, this at least this one in Little Rock coming during the day. David Willis. He hasn't appeared in court yet, but Donald Trump has come out fighting on his social media platform, Truth Social. He wrote in capital letters, election interference kangaroo court. The former US president, the first to face criminal charges, will fly from Florida to New York next week, where he will surrender to the authorities in Manhattan. We still don't know the charges, but it's most likely they relate to alleged hush payments to the adult film star Stormy Daniels, who claims to have had an affair with Mr. Trump in 2006. He denies this and any wrongdoing. Washington correspondent Gary

O'Donoghue

has been following Friday's developments.

President Biden was tight-lipped about his predecessor's legal problems as he headed for Marine One this morning. But Donald Trump and his supporters have not been so reticent. The former president has been bombarding social media with professions of innocence and attacks on the Manhattan District Attorney and Democrats more generally. Thugs and radical left-wing monsters, he called them. His lawyer, Joe Takapina, said there was no crime. When the former president does come to court, he won't be handcuffed, but he'll have his fingerprints and a mugshot taken. The New York police department is putting plans in place in case of trouble. One Democrat, Senator Elizabeth Warren, said it was an important day and a reminder that no one was above the law. Not even a former president of the United States, a real moment in history. And yet I think the most important part of this is to say that a foundational piece of our democracy is holding. Donald Trump has come close to but avoided criminal charges on a number of occasions in his life. So the reality of this and other criminal probes he's facing is potentially hugely damaging. But they also represent an opportunity, a rallying cry for his supporters as he eyes up another run at the White House.

Gary O'Donoghue, Netta Torfick was outside the courthouse in New York where Donald Trump is due

to appear on Tuesday. She said security has already been increased in anticipation of his arrival. You have over 30,000 NYPD officers who have been told to be on standby and prepared, you know, already outside of the courthouse and we're days away. There has been an increased police presence.

It's been very calm so far, but come Tuesday we don't know how that might change. Already one Republican from the right, Marjorie Taylor Greene in Congress, a supporter of President Trump, she has said she will be coming to New York on Tuesday to protest. So here where I am, metal barricades set up, preparations very much underway already and that will certainly continue past Tuesday, I believe.

Mr. Trump, of course, denies the allegations and claims this is a political prosecution.

Is there any evidence for that?

Yeah, that's exactly right. And in fact, he has several members in Congress, Republicans, who have written to the district attorney saying that they want to investigate this case to see if there is any political interference here. The district attorney has responded now twice in letters with a very robust response saying that it was the citizens of New York carrying out their civic duty who found that there was enough evidence to take this to trial and they say that Donald Trump will have the rights of any other citizen to defend himself in court.

Nada Tulfik. Mick Mulvaney was President Trump's chief of staff for 15 months while he was in the White House. He spoke to Luke Jones about his view of the indictment.

I happen to think this is a political wish on it. People seem to have forgotten already that the district attorney in Manhattan, it was the one bringing these charges, ran for office with a promise that he would indict Donald Trump.

It's not like it's just this district attorney pushing this. A grand jury has looked at these and has said he needs to be indicted. It has. Keep in mind there's a saying in our criminal justice system that you can indict a ham sandwich. The standard for bringing an indictment is so low

at a grand jury. It's not nearly the level of actual conviction. Conviction is beyond a reasonable doubt. Grand juries much, much lower than that. I do point out that there was a previous elected Democrat district attorney who chose with the same facts and circumstances not to even bring this to a grand jury in the first place. What's happened now? What do you make of his chances? His chances, I think, are very good of being found not guilty. Keep in mind no person in our country has ever been convicted of this particular charge. There's even liberal leaning jurists in the country today on television saying, look, as much as I dislike Donald Trump, this is a new untested criminal theory and they're a little surprised that it's being brought against a former president of the United States. And yet you have someone who worked very closely with the Michael Cohen, who is the lead witness on this. So clearly if there is a crime that's been committed, they'll have a good idea in terms of documentation, the rest of what there could be into evidence. But Michael Cohen is a convicted perjurer. Michael Cohen went to jail for lying to banks and then went to jail for lying to Congress. Cohen is one of the least credible people in the country right now. And yet he has told US networks this morning that it's not just his testimony. He has documents. He says there are messages and he says there are other witnesses. That's a good point. And so one of the questions I think we've raised here is, is there new information that came to the fore since the previous Democrat district attorney chose not to pursue these same charges? That is a good question and we will find that on Tuesday. If there's new evidence, then obviously a lot of this analysis could change very quickly. I'm a critic of the president and have been for more than a year now, but I'm defending him on this one. I can't defend him on January 6th. I'm having difficulty defending him when it comes to the election charges in Georgia. But on this, it's just a max of political opportunism to the point where it's so egregious that even the president's critics and his opponents is the named opponents running against him in the Republican primary have come out to defend him on this particular charge. Mick Mulvaney, who was President Trump's chief of staff. Ugandan soldiers on Friday entered the East Democratic Republic of Congo, border town of Bunagana as part of an international force to try to stabilize the troubled region. The troops were intended to supervise the gradual withdrawal of the M23 rebel group, which has conquered territory in eastern Congo. The rebels had agreed to withdraw under a regional peace initiative, but they continue to occupy its strategic positions in the east of the country. The East African troops in the DRC are under the command of Kenyan general Jeff Niaga. We have agreed that their first mission is to ensure the security of our people, and we ask all humanitarian organizations to be able to deploy in all areas to help the population. Earlier I spoke to our correspondent patients Atuhare, who's in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. There has of course been suspicion in the past about Uganda being a supporter of the M23 rebels, who are the rebels that are based in this particular region, where the Ugandan troops have been deployed. Those allegations have been denied and denied again and again, so we think that since the troops are part of an East African community contingent, they should be able to watch over civilians, open trade routes, because the regional member states are trying to find a homegrown solution to lasting peace in eastern DRC. It's still quite a thing though, isn't it, when another country's troops have to come in and sort out the mess in your country? That has been a subject of debate as well. Some sentiments have been that the Democratic Republic of Congo needs to sort out its problems

by itself. But then Kinshasa has also argued that some of his problems have external elements. This also is a reality. There is, for instance, a rebel group of Ugandan origins called the Allied Democratic Front, which is also based in eastern Congo, further north in a place called Beni. And some of the elements that are armed groups, there are some that originate from Burundi as well. And so Kinshasa has argued that if a lasting solution is to be found, it needs to be found jointly by all these countries. And one of the resolutions in the peace talks was that these armed groups need to go back to where they come from so that the people of eastern DRC can find peace. Patience at Uhari. At least 11 people have died in a stampede in the city of Karachi in Pakistan as residents flock to collect rations at a factory during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Initial reports said a woman and two children were among those killed. With more details, here's our South Asia editor and Barasan Atirajan. Scores of people had gathered to collect free food at a factory in the Pakistani city of Karachi. Eyewitnesses said several people fell into a canal during the crash. The distribution was part of a charity drive. Six people have been injured. A police officer said they did not get prior information about the event. An investigation has been launched. Earlier this week, five people were killed and dozens injured in stampeds at sites distributing free wheat flour under a government backed scheme to help people from low income groups. Millions of low income families have joined the food distribution scheme due to the soaring cost of living. And Barasan Atirajan. The controversial influencer Andrew Tate and his younger brother Tristan have been in prison in Romania since December. They're being investigated for alleged human trafficking and rape. There's now been a development. Andrew Tate, a British American former kickboxer with millions of online followers and Tristan have been moved from jail to house arrest. Our correspondent Lucy Williamson is following the case. Tonight, the two brothers have emerged from three months of preventative custody. A court ruling earlier today came down saying that they were going to be released as a result of an appeal that they'd filed and instead they were going to be held in house arrest, not in police detention. That's something that the brothers have been trying to win a court's approval for really ever since they're arrested. And speaking to one of their team tonight, she said they were ecstatic at the news. And certainly when they did emerge from detention and spoke to journalists outside, they seemed very pleased. Tristan said the judges today made the right decision. I respect what they've done. And when the BBC's man on the ground asked him what his plans were for tonight, he said

we're going home. And what do we know about the allegations Lucy and what exactly is being investigated? What's being investigated? Allegations of rape, human trafficking and setting up an organised crime group. It's the two Tate brothers who are being investigated but also there are two Romanian women who are close associates of theirs who were also being held in preventative custody.

They have also now been transferred to house arrest. The investigation will continue so that's not going to stop. And we're not quite clear what the terms of their house arrest are except for the fact that they have been told to stay in the buildings where they live. They're not allowed to leave the buildings without a court's permission. Lucy Williamson speaking to my colleague Luke Jones.

Still to come after more than five decades, freedom at last for Florida Aquarium killer whale Lolita. The place was full of children clapping and having a great time until I hear my daughter say I cannot be more time here because this place is too small for Lolita.

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Late on Thursday night, Turkey's parliament became the 30th and final NATO member to ratify the entrance into the Western military alliance of Finland. The Nordic nation with a long land border with Russia had stood apart from NATO for decades, but the invasion of Ukraine changed policy in a heartbeat. Sweden and Finland applied to join together, but Sweden's entry has been blocked by Turkey and Hungary both angling for different concessions. Near-Church Joanna, Deputy General Secretary of NATO has been speaking to Johnny Diamond. We are very pleased to see Finland joining

our ranks and also very confident that Sweden will follow suit. Probably after the Turkish elections we'll have a new window opportunity and as I hope that we'll have the Finnish Foreign Minister as a new member of the alliance at the Foreign Minister's meeting next week in Brussels, I also have the expectation and the hope that by Vilnius at our summit we'll also have Sweden coming amongst

our ranks. You still see NATO as a defensive alliance. There are those that speak of NATO as an aggressive alliance, as NATO is an expansionist alliance. Listen, I'm coming from Romania and I know how much we lobby to join NATO, how much Poland has lobby to join NATO, how much the Baltic countries, all of us who are now members of this alliance, nobody came to pressure us, to lobby us, we were doing just the opposite because we knew that our security and our prosperity are linked to the Western institutions and this idea that NATO is an expansionist alliance is not just true. We are true to our mission to defend one billion people. We are the greatest alliance in human history and that's why Ukraine is so important because what we are now witnessing is not just a

war by Russia in Ukraine and our support to Ukraine is also a huge precedent. What happens today in Europe could happen tomorrow in Asia, so I tell also to the ones who are not from Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America, this war and how this war will end and we hope will end with the victory of Ukraine will shape the new world order because this will shape behaviors and patterns not only in Europe but also around the world and this is why NATO is also engaging with our Indo-Pacific partners like Japan or Korea or Australia, New Zealand. This is a moment of huge transformation in global affairs. You mentioned Asia, how troubling does NATO find the Russia-China alliance? This no-limit partnership is growing stronger for the time being. We don't see China helping militarily Russia in its war against Ukraine. I think there will be a severe crossing of the Rubicon on behalf of China but they're helping Russia in many other ways, so that's a matter of concern and if you had Iran and North Korea to the menu because we see a sort of a ganging up of authoritarian regimes and of course China is a much bigger player than Russia, it's clear that it is sort of an asymmetrical partnership because China is so big and they are so more competitive economically than Russia. They're building up the nuclear arsenal. I would say that China is a formidable competitor and this is something that we don't see in adversarial terms in NATO. We don't want a cold war with China. It sort of sounds like it when you speak of them

like that. No, we are seeing that this is a huge change in global affairs and for our American friends and allies we say that is the most important change in decades to our European allies and friends. We say this is probably the most important transformation in centuries. If you read what President Xi is saying, they are proposing to the world an alternative pathway towards prosperity. That's a big ideological and idea struggle for the commanding heights of how human society is organized. Democracy free markets like we embody or a fusion between civil and

military state and party economic and politics in one hand like in China and that's why NATO is also embodying not only a defensive alliance but also an alliance of ideas. So we have now a competition like never before and I'm seeing this also with the hope that peace will be preserved but just to sit idle and not see the consequences of the rise of China and the ganging up around China of other authoritarian regimes would be also be a severe mistake.

Mircha Jo Anna speaking to Johnny Diamond.

To Canada where police in Quebec have recovered a number of bodies on marshland near the border with the United States. I heard more from Nadine Youssef in Toronto. Police have just provided an update and they said that they found two additional bodies. So now a total of eight migrants have been found in the St. Lawrence River on the Quebec side near the US-Canada border.

We know that they belong to two families one Romanian and one Indian and that they were trying to enter the US illegally from Canada and police are still trying to sort out exactly what happened but we do know that the bodies were found in a marsh near an overturned boat.

Six were found last night and then two more were recovered today and yes among the bodies sadly recovered was an infant and a child that was under the age of three years old.

This comes amid a surge of illegal crossings doesn't it?

Yeah it does you know the US-Canada border has seen a lot of traffic recently when it comes to illegal crossings on both sides. Last year for example nearly 40,000 people crossed from the US into Canada and now we're actually seeing a spike of people crossing the other way around as well from Canada into the US. Actually US border patrol issued a statement recently basically saying that they caught 367 people trying to cross into the US in January and they said that this number is actually higher than that what they've seen in the last 12 years combined. And this was the topic of big discussions between President Biden and Justin Trudeau the Canadian Prime Minister only last week. Yeah so President Biden was visiting Ottawa and the two actually signed a deal that effectively closes one of the popular entry points for migrants into Canada. That entry point is called Roxham Road it's located between Quebec and New York state. Now Roxham Road has been mainly used by people crossing into Canada from the US so the

closure of it is probably unrelated to the bodies that were recovered today. However the fact that such an agreement has been reached obviously highlights the record number of migrants seen at the US-Canada border in recent years and actually some advocates have spoken out against the agreement because they fear it will lead to more deaths as people attempt more dangerous routes

to cross the border. Nadine Yousif in Toronto. A Spanish actress has caused a huge debate on social media and among politicians after revealing that she had a baby girl through surrogacy in the US at the age of 68. Anna Obregon is best known for starring in a number of Spanish sitcoms. Surrogacy is when a woman agrees to carry and give birth to a baby on behalf of someone else sometimes for a fee and it is illegal in Spain. Andrew Ochiang reports. Earlier this week the Spanish magazine Aula reported that the actress Anna Obregon had had a baby via surrogacy in the US

state of Florida. It published her picture outside a Miami hospital cradling the newborn baby girl.

On Wednesday she confirmed the news on Instagram saying,

A light full of love came into my darkness. I will never be alone again. I am alive again.

That last sentence in capital letters. There have been more than 50,000 comments to the post

with different reactions. Her supporters seem to understand her pain. Three years ago her only child, her son, died of cancer at the age of 27. Afterwards she also lost both her parents. She had since spoken of her struggles to move on with her life. Her critics though, including some ministers, see things differently. Spain has banned all forms of surrogacy. Irene Montero is minister of equality for the Spanish government from the left wing Podemos Party. It's regulated. It's a practice that is not legal in Spain. Publicity about it is also banned. The new law in sexual rights and productive rights recognizes it as a form of violence against women.

Despite the ban, parents who have babies via surrogacy abroad can adopt them when they return to the country. But even that is also tightly regulated. The maximum age difference between a parent and a child going through adoption cannot be less than 16 or more than 45 years to protect the interest of minors. Andrew Ochieng. A new study published this week shows the first DNA recovered from medieval Swahili civilization shows they were much more cosmopolitan

and there was significant intermingling. The communities span the East African coastline with millions of people identifying as Swahili and the language is one of the most widely spoken in the region. Chapuruka Kusimba, a professor of anthropology at the University of South Florida, explained the findings to Audrey Brown. DNA provides us with information that we did not have about Swahili ancestry. So for the Swahili, this sample that we looked at, which is an elite sample, all the skeletal remains that we excavated are drawn from within the cemeteries of the town walls. We now have confirmed traces ancestry in three places, in Africa and in the Middle East and in South Asia. Was that a surprise? It's not a surprise for me because the Swahili themselves spent years talking with elders and midwives and generally Swahili people. We have in our possession more than 1200 hours of interviews that we've collected since 1989 and almost all of them talk about the cosmopolitan nature of Swahili society.

But what's the controversy around it? What is the issue that it's trying to address or the link that it's trying to establish? The controversy has always been that the Swahili civilization was not an African civilization. The controversy was that it was an Asiatic civilization.

It was a fine example of the Asiatic colonization of Africa. It also subscribed to the idea that without the presence of foreigners and a colonizing presence, that the Africans who were there would not have developed the civilization that Africans are now very proud of. So for the Swahili cause that was and has always been in many ways the understanding of the Swahili which unfortunately

because it's been taught in schools so many times even Africans came to believe that this was the case.

I'm surprised that we're still having these kinds of conversations and we're still arguing and answering these sort of allegations. I thought they were long put to bed.

Within scholarly circles yes but in the public sphere no. In Kenya for example my own country a Muslim person particularly Swahili person is often I think not truly seen as an indigenous person. It's a somewhat of second-class citizen. The pressure for a Swahili person to get identification to get even a passport to travel is so high they have to produce so much evidence of their own ancestry. And so because of that that's actually tied to how their history is understood. The coast is now still the only place that is contested when it comes to issuance of land titles. These people have lived here for no more than 2000 years continuously

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but still many of them are squatters on their own ancestral land.

Professor Chapparuka Kusimba from the University of South Florida. Let's end the podcast on a positive note the story of Lolita the orca who will be set free after being held in captivity in Florida. This follows a lengthy campaign by a group founded in her name Terry Egan reports. Lolita is a killer whale weighing nearly 2300 kilograms who's been held in captivity for more than half a century. Captured in 1970 in a cove off Seattle the 57 year old is also known as Toki short for the well's Native American name of Tokite. But under the name of Lolita she's been a top attraction at the Miami Sequerium and entertaining as she is it was difficult to envisage freeing her. That though was before the dolphin company took over the oceanarium. Its chief executive Eduardo Albor explains one of the reasons for his involvement in helping to free Lolita. I pay my ticket and I go with my daughter and the place was full of children and I was just like a child also and clapping and having a great time until I hear my daughter say hey that I have to go why we need to go I mean this is this great I cannot be more time here because this place is too small for the for Lolita. I have to go right we'll cry. The push to free Lolita though goes further back a 2013 documentary Blackfish highlighted the captivity of orcas the performing the confinement the loneliness and America's national oceanic and atmospheric administration added orcas to the list of endangered species in 2015. After that animal rights activists fought in court at first unsuccessfully to obtain Lolita's freedom. Then Mr Albor worked with the animal rights group Friends of Toki and the owner of the National Football League the philanthropist

Jim Ease. I'm excited about being part of Lolita's journey to really great excitement and freedom and things I know that she wants you know just being with her and feeling her energy and she's special now. Now Lolita is to be returned to her original home in the Pacific Northwest. She'll be transferred to a sanctuary between Washington state and Canada where she'll be taught to catch fish and because orcas typically swim more than 150 kilometers a day be encouraged to build up her muscles. Lolita is likely to remember her family song the sounds used for navigation and socializing but it will take time. Luckily orcas have time the oldest known is ocean son thought to be Lolita's mother who's over 90. That rare and lovely thing a happy news story Terry Egan and that's all from us for now but there'll be a new edition of the global news podcast later but staying with that idea of happy news let's first have a word about this weekend's happy pod with Andrew Peach. So imagine you're out with a metal detector wondering what you can find. What you find is a rock which contains a hundred and seventy thousand dollars worth of gold. We've got that story from

Australia for you. In China if you fancy taking your dog for a walk in your lunch break but you don't have time to go and collect your dog from home there's now a taxi service that means you can meet your dog in the park and scientists in Sweden have been looking into the secret messages contained in our sweat and how they can make us happier. Those stories plus listeners in the Philippines, Spain, Italy and New Zealand in the happy pot in this podcast feed on Saturday. This edition of the global news podcast was mixed by Paul Mason and the producer was Emma Joseph.

The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Alex Ritzen until next time. Goodbye.