

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / ECOWAS threatens to send troops to Niger

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I was working in a coffee shop in Boston to like help pay rent while I was training for the trials. And so people kept joining me like, oh yeah, she just took a two hour coffee break and went and ran the Olympic trials marathon.

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This is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service.

I'm Nick Miles and at 13 hours GMT on Thursday the 17th of August, these are our main stories.

West African military chiefs have met to discuss possible armed intervention in Niger following last month's coup. The capital of Canada's Northwest Territories is being evacuated in the face of an approaching wildfire. Pakistani authorities have banned public gatherings in the city of Jalanwala after at least four churches were burned by Muslim crowds.

Also in this podcast, the first sports teams to leave North Korea since the COVID pandemic and individual mushroom is beautiful and a bunch of these growing together or if lots of them, it would be quite magical. Why do mushrooms glow green in the dark?

We are still giving diplomacy a chance, but if that fails, our forces are ready to go into Niger. That's the head of the regional security block, ECOWAS, making it quite clear that the new military leaders in Niger will not get away with last month's coup. The commissioner for peace and security, Abdul Fattar Musa, warned the junta would be held to account for their actions.

The ball is in the court of the junta, the CNSP in Niger. If they pull back from the brink, the military option will not be necessary, but we want to warn them that all options are on the table and no option is off the table. Our correspondent Thomas Nadi is in the Ghanaian capital, Accra. We are gradually getting closer to an arm intervention. Speaker after speaker at this particular conference emphasized the fact that they are determined to restore constitutional rule in Niger and they've said that everything is ready. They are just framing up their strategy as to when and how to possibly enter Niger. So we know that ECOWAS is split over this, but you're saying that it could well be that just a certain portion of ECOWAS goes in with their troops?

Yeah, it's just a few ECOWAS member countries who are unwilling to be part of this, but the majority of members of the block are supporting this and they are contributing troops. We know that Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea have opposed the invasion and we also know that they are under military rule and of course they've been, they are no longer part, they've been banned from the organization. And then one other tiny African country is not willing to take part in this, but quite apart from that, all member countries are ready and willing to contribute troops for this particular invasion. In most of these countries and places like Ghana, for instance, there's ongoing debate as to whether Ghanaian soldiers should take part in this.

Okay, well we're not there yet, are we? So they're saying, we just heard them say there, that there's a diplomacy to be played out. What's the likely reaction from Niger, the leaders there? Well, diplomacy appears to be faltering. Now the njanta in Niger is beginning to give diplomacy a chance. It's made it official that the newly elected prime minister has said that they are in a transition period and they will welcome negotiations or diplomatic officials

into that country, but we know that previously they've rejected this. So why now? And it's most likely because of the threat of the use of force in Niger. Thomas Nadine, get out of town before the weekend. That is the message given to the 20,000 residents of Yellowknife, one of the largest cities in Canada's far north, who've been told that they're in the direct path of fires that are burning out of control. Well, the major issue is that there's only one road out and that is through the fires. In the middle of the night in Canada, Bob Zimmer, the shadow minister for the region, urged families to get to safety. If you're in Yellowknife, I've actually been speaking to some locals about the situation and we want you to be safe. Make sure you take care of your families and get them to safety. We'll be watching the situation closely, but most of all, be safe out there. So a real sense of urgency now. Our reporter Stephanie Prentice gave me an update. It is dramatic and it is a fast moving situation. We know that order to leave Yellowknife was given out Wednesday evening, telling residents living close to the fires that's in the west in no uncertain terms to evacuate immediately and giving Friday at noon is the last possible time the whole community may be able to get out safely. Now, this is because those fires that have been burning up north and close to Yellowknife, they've been more ferocious than authorities have been expecting and natural and manmade firebreaks aren't doing anything. They're just going over them, going through them. So for those families who are now grabbing their belongings, packing up their homes, potentially saying goodbye to those homes forever, there is that other obstacle you mentioned. There are two clear paths out of this situation. One is a flight. The other is a highway and that highway runs through the main fire that's burning. So the advice that's being given is the road is closing intermittently. The advice is just get out when you can. Jets are also being deployed alongside commercial flights. That's to get people out that are vulnerable, that are older, that can't flee and might be unable generally to escape. And this is the most dramatic of a number of different wildfires that have been raging. I don't know, for several months now, I remember a few months ago we were talking about the first of these in Nova Scotia out east. It's been a particularly severe season for fires, hasn't it? Yes, we know that Canada has an annual wildfire season, but this is being described as it's worst and that's because these fires are wilder, they're harder to get under control, they're moving closer to communities and infrastructure than expected and officials are saying they're moving unpredictably at greater speeds and that's why for safety they want every single resident out. Now recent estimates do say that around a thousand fires are burning in the country and Yellowknife is the ninth NWT, Northwest Territory, to get that evacuation order and quickly for context. Another of those communities, it's called Hay River, they were told to evacuate last week. Residents told stories of driving through embers, their vehicles melting around them, windows cracking through heat and of driving through that dense orange haze we've been seeing in Canada recently. So these stories are fleeing and how hard it can be to show what could happen to those Yellowknife residents even if they leave within that safe evacuation window. Stephanie Prentice, let's stay with devastating wildfires now because President Biden says that he's going to travel to Hawaii next week to inspect the places affected on Maui. He's been criticized by his political opponents who said that he's been too slow to see the devastation for himself. So far officials have confirmed that more than 100 people have died in the fires. Josh Green is the governor of Hawaii. We're just a little bit more heartbroken because we do have to report that more of our loved ones have been confirmed, lost and deceased. 110 individuals

have been confirmed deceased. We'll get some details about this from our distinguished leaders and police and fire. A 38% of the territory has been covered. Lance is a resident of the worst affected town Lahaina and he spoke to my colleague Victoria Wonkunda about what happened to him and his family the day fires swept through his hometown. After fleeing he saw his house on the news in gulfed in flames. I wish I had taken more. If I could go back and you give me 30 seconds I can take so much more things that I value. Just the pictures, the memories of my children, my important documents that I left at home. I'm a prior military. I was in the Air Force for six years. I got a newborn on the way. I just wish I had taken all the supplies that we had been piling up in his nursery. A lot of things that we had bought prior waiting for his arrival and you know everything is kind of gone but I just wish I had taken more from my kids and my family. That's that's all. How is it fleeing your home seeing your home go up in flames when you have a wife who is expecting? It's terrifying when when I finally left the house it wasn't on fire yet but I could see the fire across the highway of the street above our house. It was kind of like a realization. It was it was so close. I've never seen fire this close before. I had to make sure that they they left for safety. You know we just wanted them everyone to get the safety like the women and children and then the evacuation center had to get evacuated because the fire was so close to to that area. You know that's how fast it moved. Sorry I'm just trying to compose myself. Take your time. You know we're fortunate. We're fortunate we've got a big family. A lot of people that care about us but there's so much people out there missing. Lost. Us you know they don't have their loved ones. People I know people that are in my life we're one of the lucky ones. You know I was running down front street. I actually when they evacuated the first time my family we we parked our cars and me and my brother were kind of like we have to go home to get our dogs so we drove back we were driving back with a wall of orange surrounding us and when we got to the ending the north ending of front street we we just realized how how bad everything had gone and the and the flames were already on lighting up houses on that end of front street. It jumped the road already at this point. I just looked at them I said you know we we got to start running and so we we ran from that beach park to my house it's maybe a quarter of a mile. Running down front street I passed by houses of Kipu Aino. Tigre is a a chef that I used to work at Malo Ocean Tavern with. I saw his house in flames. I saw one of our family friends his house in flames and he came her house was on fire and I just cried I just cried as we ran it was so hard to process we got there and as soon as like I passed my mailbox I was screaming for my dogs and sure enough they they came out you know they were waiting they couldn't go anywhere just it's all a blur it was you look in the rear view and it's that the sky is just little in red and orange it was so terrifying it's never going to be the same I want it I want it back I need to go back there I want to I want Lahaina back. That was Lance a residence of Maui there. Now to Pakistan where we've been bringing you news of the terrible violence after two Christian men were accused of desecrating pages of the Quran. Well the police are now guarding a Christian neighborhood in the province of Punjab after hundreds of Muslim men attacked the area. The violence broke out in the city of Jaranwala and five churches were torched.

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The most reverend Dr Azad Marshall is president of Pakistan's National Council of Churches and he told the BBC that these mobs were intent on stoking unrest. It's very sad and shocking because

Christian community is a peaceful community and they're minding their own business and they are not the ones who will commit crimes like desecrating the Quran and there is no real clear evidence. I believe it is really made up claim and just to create disturbance.

All public gatherings in Jaranwala have now been banned for seven days. Our correspondent Caroline Davies is at the scene of the attacks. We're in the Christian quarter of Jaranwala and you can see the level of destruction. All of these items are things that have been taken from inside the homes of Christians in this community brought outside and burnt. That's according to what the authorities have told us that there are fans, there are chairs, there are beds, fridges, any items that people could get hold of. Now we understand that this is all a reaction because there were accusations that two Christian men had damaged the Quran, had torn pages and desecrated

the Quran and that this was a response. People gathered together in anger and then came out and we've talked to people who are from some of the homes nearby talking about the fear when they started hearing of people coming towards them of attacks imminent that they gathered their children together and then ran away as quickly as possible. St John's church which is a Catholic church the walls are completely blackened from the smoke and from the items that were burnt here all that is left inside is there are the remains of the of the altar a few tables that have been blackened as well but this is just one part of the devastation we know that there have been at least four churches that have been damaged now according to the authorities they've arrested over a hundred people because of this damage in relation to this damage but we know that the two individuals the two Christians that have been accused of having desecrated the Quran have so far not been arrested. Caroline Davis two green buses have been spotted crossing the river that divides North Korea and China a small event maybe but a huge moment for the country and its journey with the coronavirus on board are believed to have been members of a North Korean Taekwondo team

on their way to a competition or Pyongyang sealed itself off from all trade and diplomatic ties in early 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic the BBC's Michael Bristow told me more about this Taekwondo team. North Korea doesn't give official announcements often on all kinds of things but this team have been observed as you mentioned they're crossing the border to Dandong which is a city

on the border with North Korea Chinese city they then got on a train an overnight train and went to Beijing where they were again spotted traveling on buses which belonged to the North Korean embassy

it's assumed that this is a Taekwondo team on their way to Astana which is a capital of Kazakhstan where there's international the world Taekwondo championships taking place this weekend so that's what we know and as you indicated there in your introduction it's a sign that after strict COVID restrictions being sealed off from the rest of the world North Korea is slowly slowly opening up. Michael I understand that cross-border freight trains between North Korea and China started again last year so goods have been coming in and getting out of the country particularly food because

it was a real concern wasn't there during the pandemic that there was sort of starvation and

real lack of food during the pandemic and real problems there. What is the overall situation now in terms of North Korea's attitude to the pandemic and COVID how is it dealing with it? Well no country in the world closed itself off quite as much as North Korea's did as you indicated their train freight train between China and North Korea resumed last year and slowly they were opening up earlier just to give you an example of how closed off it was North Korea's biggest

ally China didn't even have its ambassador in North Korea until March this year the North Koreans gave the Chinese special dispensation to send their ambassador so that gives you an example of greatest ally can't get its ambassador in that shows you how closed off it was last month there was a parade to mark the end of the fighting in the Korean War and a Chinese and Russian delegation

went there so that's another indication that it's opening up this taekwondo team is yet another signal so North Korea will open up slowly and that will only help the economy and help the country reintegrate to a certain extent with the international community. Michael Bristow Still to come in this podcast she lined us up in front of the class and hit our palms with a plastic ruler one by one why some in South Korea still want to see teachers fight back What in the world is the podcast exploring the stories and the issues that you need to know about 93 percent of fast fashion workers aren't getting paid a living wage the former president is accused of trying to overturn democracy how do elite athletes train in and around their menstrual cycle understand more feel better with what in the world from the bbc world service find it wherever you get your bbc podcast and hit subscribe welcome back it is the stuff of heist films and best-selling fiction the theft of priceless jewelry from the british museum in london we gave you details in our earlier podcast of the robbery of items including gemstones dating back to 1500 bc from the museum's vaults a member of staff has been arrested george osborne chairman of the museum said the theft which was discovered earlier this year was a sad day for all who love our british museum and the staff would do whatever it takes to improve security christopher marinello is a lawyer and founder of art recovery international specializing in recovering stolen art and artifacts

he spoke to simon jackam well it happens every single day around the world what's shocking is that it's happened to the british museum one of the most important and well-funded museums in the world

would they put out feelers to somebody like you and say keep your eyes peeled for various stolen artifacts well i would hope so i mean historically we have been notified once there is a list of objects that have been stolen that should be the priority at this point is preparing an inventory and comparing it with a previous inventory to find out what exactly is missing and then get those objects listed on various databases private public interpol so that the art market could start searching for these objects because is there i mean what kind of a market is there for stolen artifacts like this i would have thought that once the word is out and you've got this inventory that you say be very difficult to move on or are there private collectors who have got no scruples about this well we're talking about the art world and and that's something where scruples is hard to come by we have very reputable uh auction houses that will do due diligence that will hold objects that they know are stolen but then you have a lot of smaller auction houses that are more interested in earning commissions and get frustrated when someone reports

something has stolen in their sale room and they just hand it back to the person who brought it in and then you have disreputable dealers who will handle anything to make a profit and you know so there is also the the black market which will sell anything at a severe discount to collectors and dealers who do no due diligence and really don't care that was Christopher Maranello there let's head to Zimbabwe now where people will soon take part in a presidential election it will be the second since Robert Mugabe was ousted by the military six years ago and when he left hopes were high that his successor Emerson Mungagwa might rebuild

the failing economy and commit to democratic principles and those hopes after president Mugabe was ejected have all but vanished and skilled workers are leaving in their thousands Charlotte Ashton reports now from the capital Harari everyone she spoke to asked us not to use their real names that's the street where money changes are from this corner all these guys it's exchanging foreign currency exchanging foreign currency yeah they're buying and selling yeah taxi driver Dixon is taking us on a tour of downtown Harari the streets are lined with money changes swapping Zimbabwe dollars for US dollars because the US dollars will retain their value and the Zimbabwe dollar is not it's not and there's no ways you can keep Zimbabwe dollars now at home like in banks or even at home because it's losing value nearly every day the local currency has rapidly devalued in the last five years driving a black market for US dollars street vendors selling other things are everywhere too and on 3rd avenue there are sex workers look at the girls from the right side young girl in a young girl short dress there big eyelashes fake eyelashes and dyed hair all the way down there and there's a number of sex workers on this street increased in recent times it has increased this is not good at all the last 12 months have seen outbreaks of typhoid and cholera as water and sewage systems deteriorate about a third of Zimbabweans are food insecure and a quarter of children under five are chronically malnourished all this is driving an exodus of skilled workers the UK is one of the top destinations in 2020 the British government issued a thousand skilled worker visas to Zimbabweans last year that had risen to more than 23,000 the main decision i made to come to the UK was based on finding stable and solid ground to be able to have a guaranteed salary every month despite the type of work that i'm doing that is worlds apart from what i went to school to study rose has a master's degree but moved to the UK last year for a care worker job in the midlands she lives in shared accommodation but the biggest sacrifice she's made

is leaving behind her nine-year-old daughter rose's hope is to bring her daughter to the UK for secondary school because Zimbabwe's education system once famed as the best in Africa is collapsing gosh this is very neat handwriting what are you what homework are you doing this evening um i was writing notes on history because we have exams that are coming up so you're you're teaching yourself basically yes earlier this year the British government put Zimbabwe on a list of countries whose teachers can apply for qualified teacher status allowing them to work long term in the UK so the exodus of care workers could become an exodus of the country's educators that was charlotte ashton and you can hear more from charlotte about the current situation in zimbabwe on this week's edition of assignment here on the bbc world service or search for the documentary wherever you get your podcasts teachers in most countries used to be able to physically restrain or even beat the kids in their classrooms that's been outlawed

in most places now but one nation south korea is at least partially going back to the past jay sung lee from the bbc's newsroom went to school in south korea and he told me more about the new rules so south korea's education ministry approved these new powers which come into force next month

for teachers to discipline their students after protests by teachers over abuse by pupils and parents now under these new laws teachers will be allowed to remove students from classrooms and confiscate their mobile phones if they cause any disruption in class currently as we've talked about any form of physical punishment for students is banned this was after authorities introduced the ordinance of student right law in 2010 which prohibits these kind of physical punishment in classrooms but now authority to think that this law has taken too much power from teachers in classroom and the announcement today follows the death of a 24-year-old elementary school teacher

last month who killed herself after allegedly being harassed by parents over a school violence case and her premature death has sparked a national outcry in south korea i mean that's clearly appalling i understand until quite recently in fact when you were at school teachers were allowed to use corporal punishment weren't they oh definitely the mentality was like spare the rod spoiled the child

and parents thought it was actually okay for teachers to discipline their children at school if they misbehaved this was quite normal i remember back when i was a elementary school student in the early 2000s we misbehaved and we unfortunately broke a window in the classroom and the teacher got really really angry and she lined us up all up in front of the class and hit our palms with a plastic ruler one by one and i remember some of my classmates crying and you know it's it's not a nice thing and but that was kind of normal back then and these new laws aren't going to go back to that kind of thing but are there some people in south korea who still feel that would be a good thing to do so definitely these news rules means that you know teachers will

be able to physically restrain their those students who misbehave but i think there is still some sort of mentality in south korea that feels like if children misbehaved they need to be punished that was jay sungly people visiting the forest of goa in southwest india have been treated to a rare scientific spectacle an unearthly glow coming from the forest floor itself having been drenched with rain mushrooms are glowing in the dark committing a bioluminescence which has inspired wandering people who've been witnessing it for thousands of years even Aristotle it seems once witnessed it and mused on why it might be happening professor jay dunlap is from the geisel school of medicine at dartmouth in the us whose research focuses on bioluminescent fungi he described it to simon jackam it looks like a mushroom except that it is making its own light the light is very dim so if you were trying to look at it in the daytime you wouldn't be able to see anything but at night when there aren't any when there's no interference from outside lighting it's a constant green light coming from the inside of the mushroom so you can still see the the the gills underneath it's all glowing and en masse it must create quite a magical effect it's quite magical an individual mushroom is beautiful and a bunch of these growing together or if they would move off into the distance with lots of them it would be quite magical and what's going on here what's creating this unearthly light it's an enzymatic reaction there's an enzyme called a luciferase that's a generic term i should back up and say that bioluminescence is is very widespread in nature so fungi do it insects do it fish do it bacteria do it so that's you know lots of organisms

do it and they all use an enzyme called a luciferase although the luciferases are different in different organisms so this enzyme works on a substrate called a luciferin and along with molecular oxygen the luciferase oxidizes the luciferin that makes a high energy intermediate and the enzyme holds this oxidized substrate and causes the energy to be emitted as light instead of heat that's what's going on in the cells of all these fungi i'm no linguist but luciferase luciferin that sounds like has its origins in lucifer is that's that's that's uh you're very perceptive and that is exactly correct do we know why um what sort of function this performs in nature

do we know what the function of this reaction is different organisms use bioluminescence for different things they can they can use it for communication or for attracting mates or uh as a an epistematic warning that uh i am poisonous don't eat me or i don't taste good don't eat me one of the uses is probably in helping uh fungi get from place to place the green light is attractive to insects that like to come and eat them and when they they come they will uh the insects will be covered with spores and then they'll carry these spores off into the the rest of the forest and so it's it's beneficial to the fungi to help them get around but and then is this rare i mean citing like this a phenomenon like this that we're seeing in in in goa in southwest india is this a kind of once in a lifetime thing for uh for a botanist or uh or someone lucky enough to come across it far from once in a lifetime once the mushroom is there it will continue to turn up when the conditions are right and if the mushroom is not there then then they will never be there so uh i would guess this will be a uh not infrequent occurrence it may be not annual but uh but certainly far from rare in uh in the regions where they are seen yeah i've seen it myself in the sea at the atlantic occasionally is it the same sort of process that's happening it's it's the same it's very similar chemistry again there's a luciferin and a luciferase the energetics are are very similar you're talking about the flashing light you would see in an ocean wave when it breaks

yes but just one of those things in nature that gives us a sense of real wonder yes this is the beauty of biology professor j dunlap and that's all from us for now but there will be a new edition of the global news podcast later on if you want a comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it you can send us an email the address is globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk you can also find us on twitter at global news pod this edition was mixed by martin baker and their producer was rachel right the editor is caron martin i'm nick marz and until next time goodbye