

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / EU 'worried' by US decision to halt Ukraine aid

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

I'm Charlotte Gallagher and at 13 hours GMT on Monday, the 2nd of October, these are our main stories.

The EU says it's committed to supporting Kiev as US funding for Ukraine's war effort comes under threat.

Emergency workers in Mexico search for survivors after a church roof collapses.

Two scientists are awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine for their efforts to develop COVID-19 vaccines.

Also in this podcast.

We are just here to prevent people from dying.

It happened to people calling because they cannot feel their legs or their hands in winter.

And unfortunately, sometimes they have to amputate their fingers.

We investigate the perilous journey thousands of migrants are making across Europe and the new high-speed train that will cut travel time in Indonesia by more than two hours.

But first, many billions of dollars have been donated in military aid to Ukraine since Russia's invasion. But any future funding from the US appears to be under threat.

After politicians there agreed a last-minute budget, which excluded any new aid for Kiev. This has got the EU worried.

Today, foreign ministers from all 27 member countries are meeting in Kiev to discuss continued funding and Ukraine joining the bloc in the future.

The EU's top diplomat, Joseph Burrell, said it was important to express solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people.

We see unity from the beginning of the war.

Everybody has been putting money and political commitments in spite of all that.

Even countries who are reluctant to dissensions, they have been voting in favor of the dissensions.

I am worried by the last decision of the Congress about the Ukrainian funding, but one thing is clear. To us, Europeans, for us, the war or Russia against Ukraine is an existential threat and we have to react according to that.

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmitry Kulev, said he believed U.S. support for Ukraine would resume at some point.

We are now working with both sides of the Congress to make sure that it does not repeat again under any circumstances.

We don't feel that the U.S. support has been shattered because the United States understands that what is at stake in Ukraine is much bigger than just Ukraine.

So, how damaging is Western funding fatigue to Ukraine's war effort?

I've been speaking to our Europe regional editor, Danny Abahard, who told me about the focus of today's meeting in Kyiv.

It's an informal meeting. It's historic and very symbolic in the sense that it's the first such

meeting to take place outside the EU's borders, but there won't be any concrete decisions made. They'll be discussing things like President Zelensky's plan for peace, which is something that Russia itself says is a non-starter.

They're also talking about aid, continued aid, and they are talking about things like how to protect Ukraine from an expected renewed assault on its energy network.

So, Annalena Baerbock, the German Foreign Minister, has been saying things like Ukraine needs more generators, for example, as well as air defences to prevent against a renewed assault of the type we saw last winter.

And we just heard from the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, very much confident, he says, in U.S. support for Ukraine.

Do you think that is the reality of the situation?

I'm sure Ukraine and the EU, of course, will be worried.

Well, it's clearly a concern, both for Kyiv and for the wider EU.

The Ukraine element of this is part of a wider domestic dispute within the U.S.

So, hard-line Republicans have been trying to get serious spending cuts, force that on the Biden administration.

And Ukraine spending is part of that.

Now, both President Biden and the leaders of the Republican and Democrat parties in, for example, the Senate have stressed their commitment to providing Ukraine with long-term support. So, there's moves now to try to force a vote specifically on Ukraine military funding in a separate vote, away from the wider budget.

And what is Russia saying?

The Kremlin is seizing on any instance of division amongst or perceived division.

So, it says that basically the U.S. move is a sign of conflict fatigue.

And it says this will grow.

It's seized on also, for example, the recent result in Slovakia's election, where a party seemed to be more pro-Russia, is in, looks like it may well become the next government.

And also things like, for example, the row between Ukraine and Poland on grain.

Now, a lot of Europeans say these are small issues, they're solvable.

The French Foreign Minister today, going into the meeting, said Russia should not look on this as a sign of conflict fatigue.

Basically, this is a sign of ongoing EU support.

And that the Russia shouldn't take any comfort from the things it's seen in recent days. Taniae Bahad.

Emergency services in Mexico have worked through the night after a church collapsed in the coastal town of Cedar Madero.

At least 10 people, including three children, are thought to have died when the roof caved in during mass on Sunday.

The Red Cross said about 80 people were in church at the time of the collapse.

Journalist Frank Contreras gave us this update from Mexico City.

Rescuers have been working for hours now, pulling rubble by hand.

They've been able to rescue one or two people live from under the rubble there.

And so there's still hope that the bishop says that the roof collapsed right around the major moment of the mass on Sunday and the afternoon there. The church was packed with about 100 people. And people were lined up to take the communion. Of course, that's sort of the climax of the Catholic mass. And that's when the roof came down on top of them. Bricks, concrete, and of course, steel support structures coming down on top of the people. Now, there's a bit of hope at this hour because the experts on location, their National Guard Units and Red Cross officials, are reporting that some of the rubble came down on top of the pews in the church. So that could open the possibility of air passages under all of that heavy tonnage. It's still unclear what actually caused this. It could have been a bad structural design. It could have been a building error, something of that nature, according to authorities. Along that gulf coast of Mexico, all along the coast, their building structures of that size are generally made of concrete, steel, and some bricks as well. Some of those structures are very strong. They've withstood tremendous hurricanes and even earthquakes in that part of Mexico. But there are other structures that don't pass inspection. And so there's speculation that that could be one of the issues here with the church in question. Frank Contreras. The UN says the number of migrants who have died or disappeared crossing from North Africa to Europe has tripled since last year. Italy is the main entry point to the EU, but many who arrive there don't want to stay. And increasing numbers are traveling north to try to cross the border into France. Our Italy correspondent, Mark Lowen, has been to see the perilous journey some are attempting. We are between Italy and France. Here on the left, we are Italy. On the right, we are France. In the thick of night, we climb the steep, rocky paths of the Alps in a 4x4 of the Red Cross, along routes that migrants are taking by foot. Volunteer Jessica Ostorero tells me 150 a day are now taking this route between Italy and France. Double recent months as they seek a new way north. We are not here to help people cross the border or to stop them. We are just here to help people and to prevent people to die here. Have there been migrants who have died on this route? Yeah, unfortunately, yes. The last one was a few months ago. It happened people calling because they cannot feel their legs or their hands in winter. And unfortunately, sometimes they have to amputate their fingers. As the night wears on, the temperatures are falling further. The Red Cross have come to hand out food and water to migrants who are waiting to cross. A couple of guys from Egypt have just told me that they're going to try to cross at 2 o'clock in the

morning.

It will be very cold.

It's going to be a very tough journey.

With the Alpine route treacherous, some are trying a different part of the border.

Four hours south at Ventimiglia, where trains make the short crossing.

Well, a train has just pulled up here in Montaigne.

The French side of the border coming from Ventimiglia in Italy.

The French police go on board and they are checking now every train that comes to see whether there are any undocumented migrants.

There's a group of migrants that have been pulled off the train now.

They do not have passports, papers.

They're led off to be sent back into Italy, a new bottleneck emerging in the heart of Europe.

Others try narrow cliffside parts above the train station,

which is where we meet Jamal, one of a recent surge of arrivals to the southern Italian island of Lampedusa.

My journey was from Sierra Leone to Guinea, Mali, Algeria, to Tunisia.

He's aiming to get to Britain, but has just been pushed back by French police.

Me and my family, we don't have no documents, no passports, nothing else.

I'm a migrant, I'm just a migrant, you know.

I was colonised by the British people, so I guess studying in the UK would be better for me, you know.

Everyone yearning for a better place and a better life.

The pushbacks by France, facilitated by its suspension of the Schengen Free Movement Zone on this border, has infuriated the mayor of Ventimiglia, Flavio Di Muro, from the far-right legaparty.

The EU is not working.

Each country is setting its own migration limits, and Italy has to shoulder the burden alone.

France suspended free movement at this border, and we are forced to take back huge numbers, which is only slowing the flow to Cali in Britain, not solving it.

Migrants have spat and urinated in the cemetery.

We've reached our limit. We could become the Lampedusa of the North.

On the beaches of Ventimiglia, groups huddle from across Africa and the Middle East, waiting for their next move, the only certainty that they will try again, even when driven back.

That was Mark Lowe in reporting from Italy.

Let's head to Southeast Asia now, where there's excitement about a quick away for people to travel from A to B.

That's the sound using a model of Indonesia's new high-speed bullet train being inaugurated by President Joko Widodo. It connects the capital, Jakarta, with the fourth largest city of Bandung, a journey that will now take just 45 minutes, compared with around three hours on the old trains. The multi-billion dollar project is partly funded by China, but may prove to be less popular and more pricey than hoped for. Here's Jason Lee.

It's called Wush, a fitting name as it can reach speeds of up to 350 kilometres per hour.

It will run on a 142-kilometre long track on the world's most populous island of Java, connecting two of Indonesia's largest metropolises, the capital Jakarta and the city of Bandung,

reducing the current journey time of around three hours to 45 minutes. Now, the train was scheduled to launch four years ago, but was delayed due to the pandemic. Now, the train is built by China and it's funded by a consortium of Indonesian and Chinese state firms, and it's an ambitious venture for both countries. For Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, who praised the train's speed, it's part of its plan to attract infrastructure investment deals. For China, though, it's part of its Belt and Road Initiative, a plan to set up new trade routes linking China with the rest of the world. Now, the critics of Indonesia's new high-speed railway system say due to its relative short distance, it might be less competitive to slower trains or cars resulting in low demand, and with little passengers, even though electric trains reduce energy consumption and pollution, it might be less cost-effective. And with the surge in costs, it may prove to be a bad investment for Indonesia because it had to use state funds and a loan from a Chinese bank to keep this project afloat.

That was Jason Lee reporting.

Still to come on the Global News Podcast.

The songs drive the drama along and the story is based on actual testimony from the day.

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Next, the development of vaccines that would eventually change the course of the COVID-19 pandemic took many years of scientific focus and unprecedented international cooperation.

Now, two scientists who played a key role in those efforts have just been awarded this year's Nobel Prize for Medicine.

Dr. Kathleen Carrico from Hungary and Dr. Drew Weisman from the US will share the prize.

Our health correspondent, James Gallowert, told me more about the pair.

It's remarkable now, isn't it? Because we've had millions and millions and millions of people given these vaccines. But if we take it back, before the COVID pandemic, mRNA vaccines was a completely experimental technology. None of them had been officially approved.

And they turned out to be remarkable in the fight against COVID.

Now, if you have to go back to the origins of them, you really have to go back to this pair in the early 1990s, when they were largely considered to be pursuing a scientific backwater.

Nobody thought that what they were doing was ever really going to amount to anything.

And they were studying this, the structure called RNA and whether it could be used to develop a completely new way of developing vaccines.

And this technology that they developed is now being used in other areas as well.

Yeah. Well, once COVID happened, it all got really quite exciting for this field because the advantage that these vaccines have over other styles of developing vaccines is incredibly fast

and incredibly flexible. So you can develop new vaccines really quickly. So it's being investigated for a whole range of different infectious diseases, but as well as that, it's even being investigated in cancer. So there's like this really big idea, exciting at the moment, where you would look inside somebody who has cancer, you'd analyse their tumour and see if there was something in there that you could train the immune system to attack. And you'd use this technology to basically train your body how to attack your own cancer. So there's kind of like lots of really interesting, exciting opportunities with this technology that are being researched at the moment. And what effects has COVID done on and vaccine conspiracy had on the development of this mRNA vaccine? Because I feel like it's something that people do talk about a lot on social media. Yeah, it always comes up on social media, doesn't it? I think the thing, there's always been some degree of kind of conspiracy theory around vaccines. I mean, we've seen that for years. What changed a little bit during the pandemic and with the emergence of these new vaccines was that

concept that corners had been cut, that it was all being rushed. Those were the kinds of things that were being claimed, despite the fact they went through the same kind of like scientific process that vaccines would normally do. So that was kind of like the thing that changed.

But ultimately, it always comes down to that kind of group of people that buy into the idea that vaccines are dangerous, despite the overwhelming medical science saying the opposite.

James Gallagher. Johnny Kitagawa was one of the biggest names in Japan's entertainment industry until his death in 2019. His legacy now is not the boy bands he created, but a series of sexual abuse allegations against him. Last month, an investigation found Kitagawa had abused hundreds of boys and young men over his six decade career. There had been some criticism that his former talent agency, Johnny & Associates, chose to keep the name of a sexual predator. But that's about to change. As our correspondent in Northeast Asia, Gene McKenzie explains.

Johnny Kitagawa was one of the richest and most powerful men in Japan. For decades, he was responsible for launching the country's most famous boy bands and artists. But last month, an independent investigation found he'd sexually assaulted many of the boys and young men he'd made famous. As the agency scrambles to repair its reputation, it has announced the existing company will be renamed and will deal solely with identifying and compensating victims, while a new company will be created to manage the talent. It says more than 300 victims have so far come forward asking for compensation. Since news of the abuse broke, broadcasters and brands have stopped using the agency's talent. This restructure is an attempt to win back their support. Gene McKenzie. Authorities in Armenia say that almost the entire population of 120,000 ethnic Armenians are now gone from the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, which came under full Azari control

last week. Tens of thousands of refugees have been provided with temporary accommodation inside Armenia, but there are still many in need of a roof over their heads. Our correspondent Rehana Mitri has visited one of the shelters in the Armenian town of Gorish and sent this report. Playing under a peaceful sky at last. Just two weeks ago, these children were hiding in bomb shelters. 15-year-old Masis says everything still feels like a bad dream. When on September the 19th,

Azerbaijan launched its military offensive to establish full control over Nagorno-Karabakh, he was at school in his hometown of Martuni. At around 2pm, we finished lessons at school.

I was on my way home with a friend. We heard loud banging at first. I thought it was a military exercise. Then the explosion started to happen one after another. We ran to the nearby police station to hide in the basement to save our lives. Masis is sheltering in the center in the outskirts of Gorish with his parents, siblings and his aunt, Lucine. Everyone here is traumatized by the violence and the sudden uprooting from their homes. We didn't imagine that all this would happen to us, says Lucine, the mother of four. We have been abandoned. We're alone, she says.

The Armenian authorities have provided temporary accommodation to 35,000 refugees out of the 100,000 that were forced to flee Nagorno-Karabakh. But this shelter is the initiative of a local non-governmental organization, Women in Network. We adopted our whole as a shelter providing them accommodation for some hygiene items. This warm and welcoming place is only a temporary solution for Karabakh Armenians that are still coming to terms with the events of the past weeks. Their lives have been turned upside down. And what these people need the most is a place they can call home. Inga is waiting for transportation. She decided to move her family to Khrasdan in central Armenia. Now that the unrecognized republic of Artsakh ceased to exist, she's asking what was all the sacrifice for. Let God give us peace to our land. I do not want anything else. I just want peace. Gokhar is drawing the road from Karabakh. It's empty, she says, because everyone has left. That was Reyhan Dimitri. Finally, it's nearly 40 years since millions of people around the world watched the charity concert Live Aid featuring performances by David Bowie, Queen and U2. Now it's being turned into a stage musical, which will feature many of the songs performed on that day in 1985. Our entertainment correspondent, Colin Patterson, has been finding out more. It's 12 noon in London, 7am in Philadelphia, and around the world it's time

for Live Aid. One of the most famous concerts of all time is being turned into a musical. Live Aid, which raised money for famine relief in Ethiopia, was watched by an estimated 1.5 billion people in 1985. Now a stage version is heading to the Old Vic Theatre in London, with the blessing of the original organiser, Bob Geldof.

Live Aid, the musical happened 40 years ago, it was on Wembley. They came and said, we know you're going to say no, but we want to do it because our dads have never stopped talking about this day. We think it's theatre.

The musical is called Just for One Day, after the line in David Bowie's Heroes.

The Band Aid Charitable Trust will receive 10% of all ticket sales.

Bob Geldof hopes the musical will tour possibly internationally after its original nine-week run started in January. Live Aid lives again.

That was Colin Patterson reporting.

And that's all from us for now, but there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast later.

If you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it, you can send us an email. The address is globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk.

You can also find us on X, formerly known as Twitter, at Global NewsPod.

This edition was mixed by Joe McCartney and the producer was Shantel Hartle.

The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Charlotte Gallagher. Until next time, goodbye.