

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Fatalities in Hawaii as wildfires engulf Maui

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

I'm Robin Brandt and in the early hours of Thursday, the 10th of August, these are our main stories. Officials in Hawaii have described apocalyptic scenes on one of the US state's main islands after wildfires destroyed buildings and forced residents to jump into the ocean.

The death toll from a migrant shipwreck off the coast of Italy rises.

Police officers in Northern Ireland say they are worried about their own security after a massive data breach. Also in this podcast. Back in 1997, a retired chicken farmer bought some rocks from a local quarry and as he was turning over one of the stones and hosing it off, this amazing fossil appeared underneath it. Scientists in Australia have identified a new species of large amphibian that lived in the Jurassic period more than 240 million years ago.

But let's start in the United States and specifically on the island archipelago of Hawaii where authorities are scrambling to rescue people who fled from numerous wildfires whipped up by hurricane-strength winds on one of the US state's main islands. As we record this podcast, at least six people are confirmed dead on Maui. Emergency services in one town there were said to be overwhelmed. Reports say the mobile phone and emergency networks went down. At a news conference

in the capital Honolulu, the state's lieutenant governor, Sylvia Luke, said Maui was not a safe place to be. On certain parts of Maui, we have shelters that are overrun. We have resources that are being taxed. We are doing whatever we can and the state is providing whatever support that we can to give support to both Maui and to the big island. Some people who fled their homes on Maui had to be rescued by helicopter after jumping into the sea. I spoke to the local journalist Malika Dudley who was forced to flee her home and she described what happened in the early hours of Tuesday morning. I smelled smoke and for a couple of hours there I was bugging my my husband and saying I think something's wrong. I smell smoke. I think maybe our house is

on fire and he was checking around the house and there was nothing there and we knew that a red flag warning was posted. We knew the winds were high and that fires could spread very quickly. So we just figured it's not uncommon that a fire is somewhere else on the island. Unfortunately at 3 a.m. we were woken up by our neighbors who said it was right near us and at 3 a.m. we looked out the window and the sky was red. We grabbed our children and a couple of suitcases with some toiletries and ran out the door. We went down to where I am now in Hale'i Maile. It's far enough away,

down the hill and upwind of where the fire was spreading at the moment and felt like we would be safe there and when we have been. Now we hear that hurricanes have whipped up these fires very

quickly but do we know how the fires actually started? So to clarify that I'm a meteorologist so I actually was on the news on KITV4 here on the weekend warning of this. The hurricane is well to the south of the island. It's more than 500 miles away. However it's a very strong hurricane

and that low pressure system with high pressure to the north of the islands sandwiched right in between those two pressure systems. The gradient got really tight and that's what whipped up the really strong winds so we knew we were going to have winds upwards of gusts of 60 miles per hour. What ended up happening was up to 80 mile per hour gusts and that really fanned the flames. But do we know if these are fires that started naturally or is there any kind of suspicion that people were setting fires? When you have winds that strong we know that it pushes down power lines and trees and things and so power lines did go down. In fact 29 power lines went down in Lahaina alone and 30 total on the island. We do not have investigations have not been conducted yet because we're still in recovery and preserving life and property mode. We just found out that six people lost their lives. Countless structures, homes, businesses have been lost to the fire so at this point we do not have the official word that it was naturally started but the fact that we knew that you know this could happen with power lines going down it's a safe assumption to make that at least one or more of the fires were started of natural causes. Is there a sense that some parts of the island were just overwhelmed in terms of the emergency services the ability to call them out hospital provision I mean did it get that bad that serious? Absolutely, absolutely. In my neighborhood alone we had firemen there they were monitoring situation first of all they couldn't even get in there because the winds were so high they couldn't man the helicopters and do water drops it was too dangerous so they were waiting they were just waiting for the brush to burn and then they would protect the homes if it got to that point. Unfortunately once the other fire started popping up around the rest of the island all firefighters were asked to work if they could and they just did not have enough resources it just happened so so quickly. Malika Dudley speaking to me from Hawaii. Now in Brazil the president Louis Inácio Lula da Silva has brought a summit of eight countries that share the Amazon to a close saying that for the first time the rainforest has spoken for itself. The meeting ended with a commitment to work together as a region but fell short of promising to end deforestation by 2030 as had been proposed by the host Brazil. The declaration was drawn up in the amazonian city of Belém from where our South America correspondent Katie Watson reports. This was a much heralded summit bringing together leaders from the countries with the most at stake those who share a piece of the world's largest rainforest in a region that often feels very fragmented and with huge political differences between neighbors the fact that South America wants to be seen as a leader on climate change is a big change in itself but those hoping to see an end to deforestation may be disappointed instead the countries issued a loose commitment to tackling the problem without giving big details on how. Ahead of the summit president Lula da Silva said this week would be a milestone one that would offer solutions rather than just talk. Critics may disagree but today Marina Silva Brazil's environment minister remained upbeat. Even though we didn't get this returning to the Belém declaration because we didn't come to a consensus Brazil is already committed to it and we will carry on with trying to achieve the goal. The amazonian nations did say though that hunger poverty and violence needed to be tackled in order to effectively protect the rainforest from environmental crimes there are 50 million people living in the amazon and without giving them a future conservation will be harder. Maria Susana Ferreira Consalves lives deep in the rainforest of Pará the states with the highest rate of deforestation. The small farmer doesn't commit a crime because he wants to it's because he needs to prepare the land so we can use it for

our own use so do we commit crimes we do we do it because we have to commit crimes if we don't we go hungry. This week has put Belém and the amazon in the spotlight this region can and wants to play a big role in securing a better future for the rainforest the world's experts and politicians will be back here in two years time for the COP30 climate summit. Katie Watson in the amazon now just under 14 000 kilometers to the west of there lies the pacific island nation of Tonga where in recent days there's been a rush for warm clothing as it experiences an unusually cold winter driven by the El Niño weather phenomenon. Some store owners say hooded sweatshirts have completely sold out. Jiusong Lee reports. Tonga's national weather agency says it recorded 9.3 degrees celsius at the end of july slightly above the country's lowest ever recorded temperature for many that might feel rather warm for winter but Tonga usually sees temperatures around 18 to 21 degrees celsius during the season. Children have been pictured in their hoodies with arms wrapped around their body to beat the cold. The cold snap is expected to continue with temperatures as low as 10 degrees predicted next week. The Italian authorities have begun an investigation into the drowning of 41 migrants off the island of Lampedusa. 45 people had been aboard a boat which set off from Tunisia last thursday before it capsized. Four survivors originally from the Ivory Coast to Angini gave their account to Italian coast guards after being brought ashore. One of the groups involved in the rescue mission was Sea Watch which monitors the Mediterranean for migrant boats in distress. Paul Wagner from the group said the kind of boats used on the route from Tunisia were particularly dangerous. There's no life-saving equipment normally that the refugees have on their boats so they're all very insecure. The boats that are used on the Tunisian coast are specifically insecure as they sink very fast so you imagine you're on the middle of the ocean and your boat sinks and you're on a wooden boat you can at least hold on to something that floats while if your boat sinks and you're on an iron boat they disappear like within less than two minutes. In the last few days alone more than 2,000 people have arrived in Lampedusa. Many had to be rescued at sea by Italian patrol boats after strong winds hit the coastal waters. This assessment of the latest tragedy from our Arab Affairs editor Mike Thompson. Lampedusa is just 150 kilometres from Tunisia from Svax so it's about the nearest land point you could get to and when you talk about the numbers yes I mean Tunisia has taken over from Libya as the biggest departure point for migrants and when I was there I saw boats piled high literally maybe you know two meters high one upon each other all iron boats that we were hearing about just now complete wrecks and so you look at those and you understand just by that site the loss of life. In Tunisia in particular what are the push factors in terms of Tunisia at the moment that are forcing these people to seek to to undergo this perilous route? Well there are really two things the first is people looking for a better life and that's the reason they fled the country they came from in many cases but there's also the racism and the growing anti-migrant sentiment in the country there was a speech by President Qaisaid in February in which he talked of in his own words hordes of migrants heading to the country intent on a criminal plot to change the country's demography and that's led to a lot of attacks on migrants they've been pushed out of lodgings and sacked from their jobs bussed into the desert to border regions without food or water and for many they just want to get out. What about the place that many are initiating their journey from S-Fax? Can you tell us a bit more about that why that's particularly problematic at the moment?

Well it's a place where I remember standing early morning on the coastline there and it looked beautiful the Mediterranean was like a mill pond and suddenly the wind gets up and it's ferocious and you can imagine what happens if you're out in a small iron boat and that whips up it really is terrible I mean you find talked to people they had found bodies on the beach almost every day and a fisherman who'd fish 15 migrants bodies out of his nets in just a few weeks.

Mike Thompson let's stay in Europe where Ukraine has refused to confirm reports that several dozen of its troops have managed to cross the Denipro River in key southern battlegrounds break Russian defences and then advance almost one kilometer. Sasha Schlifter reports.

On Tuesday several Russian war bloggers reported that seven Ukrainian boats conducted a daring cross river raid landing near the settlement of Kazachi Lakhiri and advancing up to 800 meters.

They reportedly exploited a Russian troop rotation which meant they faced an inexperienced enemy. The Denipro forms a natural front line in the war crossing it in high numbers would give Ukraine an immediate advantage opening the way to occupied Crimea and cities like Militopol and Mariupol.

But Ukraine's deputy defense minister said journalists had to stick to official information

and not Russian blogs. Sasha Schlifter reporting. Now scientists have identified a new species of large amphibian about 1.2 meters long that lived in what is now Australia at the start of the Triassic period. Lachlan Hart is the PhD student who decoded the fossil. He's based at the University of New South Wales and the Australian Museum in Sydney and he first told Krupa Paddy how it was discovered. Back in 1997 a retired chicken farmer who was living on the central coast of New South Wales bought some rocks from a local quarry to build a retaining wall for his garden at his property and as he was turning over one of the stones and hosing it off this amazing fossil appeared underneath it. Why is it taken so long to identify it? Simply because there hasn't been somebody who's

had enough time and patience to do so. So it's a big part of my PhD project and so I've been pondering about this thing for about four years. Yeah I mean I have to say you first encountered this fossil as a child. Yeah so obviously the man who found the fossil alerted the Australian Museum which is based in Sydney and they had a few experts look at it but it was just coincidence that at the same time there was a touring exhibition called the Dinosaur World Tour and so they decided to put this fossil on display at that dinosaur world tour stop in Sydney and yeah I went there with my family, my parents and my little brother and I saw the fossil for the first time then when I was 12 years old. From the data we have what can we understand about what this amphibian looked like when it was alive? It was rather large especially for its time. It looks a bit like a cross between a crocodile and a giant salamander. It's got a quite rounded shaped head with lots of tiny little teeth inside and also two quite large tusk-like fangs. What more do we know about it? So it lived about 240 million years ago in what's now called the Sydney Basin. It was swimming in fresh water lakes and streams hunting fish more likely. And in terms of the significance of this discovery it's quite the rare find isn't it? It is so in paleontology we don't often find skeletons as complete as this one. So this one has the head plus most of its skeleton of its body and it's also got soft tissue preserved in prints of its skin and fatty tissue around the outside of its body. And does it give us a better understanding of evolution? Is it some kind of missing link perhaps? Not a missing link per se but what it does tell us is that these amphibians were going to considerably large sizes immediately after what's called the endpermean mass extinction

event. The endpermean mass extinction event was the greatest mass extinction in Earth's history.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Fatalities in Hawaii as wildfires engulf Maui

Over 80% of all living things were wiped out. Tempest bundles managed to survive and there was a theory that there should have been larger ones hanging around especially in Australia early on after this extinction event but this new discovery has cemented that theory. Can I just confirm it's got a name now? It does. So one of the great fun things about being a paleontologist is we get to name these that we work on. So the name of this animal I've given is arena erpeton supernatus. So arena erpeton translates from Latin into sand creeper and the supernatus part refers to the fact that it's lying belly up so we can see parts of its chest bones and the underside of its head and its ribs and its spine but we can't see the top of its head or its eyes. Lachlan Hart from the University of New South Wales in Australia. Still to come.

Sisto Rodriguez the searching for Sugarman musician has died aged 81.

Do you ever feel a bit overwhelmed when you check the news on your phone first thing in the morning?

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Welcome back to the Global News Podcast. Next to Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world which has been brought to the brink of collapse by almost a decade of civil war.

Back in 2014, Houthi forces who are backed by Iran seized the capital. A Saudi-led coalition supported by Britain and the United States intervened but the Houthis have not been dislodged and still control Sana and the north where most of the population live. Has been less violent since a temporary truce last year between the Saudis and the Houthis but there's no sign of a comprehensive

peace deal. Few places have suffered more than Taiz, a city which for more than 3,000 days has been virtually besieged by Houthi forces. Our senior international correspondent, Ola Geirin, spent several days in the city's main hospital.

We're in the emergency department of Al-Thawra Hospital, the main hospital in Taiz. It's very busy here, very chaotic. There's just been a rush of people coming in. Soldiers have been brought in, injured on the front line. We meet a local man, Abdul Said Ahmed, who arrived with the casualties. He blames Houthi forces for the attack and says they don't just target soldiers.

They attack civilian areas where there are children and innocent people. They hit hospitals, they strike randomly, kill people who are not connected with the war. Sometimes they hit military targets. These days in Taiz and in Yemen, it's not all out war but it's not peace either. The guns are quieter but this hospital is still receiving plenty of patients wounded by the conflict.

On the bed just in front of me, there's a little boy. He's seven years old. His name is Muhammad Al-Wan.

He's having a dressing changed on his hand. It's distressing for him. It's painful.

He's lost several of his fingers. His uncle Farhan tells me what happened.

He was playing with his brothers and suddenly there was an explosion. We didn't know what had caused it. The danger will last for hundreds of years because of the explosive remnants of war.

The people who planted the landmines here did not leave a map so the pain and the injuries

will continue for a long time. I'm surrounded by work benches and technicians in white coats, cutting, sawing, drilling and filing. They're making artificial limbs.

Many of those who come here are children. I'm sitting with Shamah Ali Ahmed who's 12 and Shamah has just had her weekly physiotherapy session here at the prosthetics clinic and she's been telling me what life is like in Taiz for children like her.

Children here suffer. They've lost their arms and legs. They don't go out and play like other children around the world. They play in comfort but we play in fear. We just stand by the doors of our homes. When we hear shelling or gunfire, we run back inside.

Shamah was maimed by a landmine which took her right leg and killed her friend.

She's determined to be a lawyer and she has a question for the international community.

Why don't you see the children of Taiz? Why all this neglect? Are we not humans in your eyes?

That report from Ola Geirin in Yemen. Next let's go to Northern Ireland

where officers and civilians working for the regional police service there also known as the PSNI have expressed fear and anger after some of their personal details were published online by the force in a major data breach. The data released on Tuesday is particularly sensitive because of Northern Ireland's troubled past and security threats facing police from dissident paramilitary groups. Our Ireland correspondent Chris Page has more. Police everywhere face danger. In this part of the UK the risks are especially stark. Members of the police service of Northern Ireland take particular steps to protect their identities but information appeared online about all 10,000 staff. Two serving officers have told the BBC about the distress the leak has caused. Their words are spoken here by BBC producers. We go to great lengths to hide what we do even from our children to protect them so they don't innocently tell the wrong person and put themselves or us as a family at risk of danger. I have chosen to do this job and over time have become accustomed to the risks but what this breach has done is highlight the fear and concern

that my family have. The problem came about after a routine request for data under freedom of information

laws but the police also released a huge Excel spreadsheet by mistake containing the surname, initials and work departments of every employee. The details were on a website for about two hours. The policing board which holds senior officers to your count has called an emergency meeting. The Stormwood Assembly member Mike Nesbitt who represents the Ulster Unionist Party on the board

said he was mainly concerned about three categories of officers. That's undercover officers that that is officers who have an unusual surname because they will actually be somewhat easier potentially to trace and the third category is officers from a Catholic nationalist background and it's that last category who have been most in touch with me over the last 24 hours.

During the conflict known as the Troubles more than 300 police officers were killed.

Attacks are much more rare now but dissident republican paramilitaries who oppose the peace process continue to target members of the security forces. Earlier this year a detective John Caldwell

was shot and critically injured by the group known as the New IRA. Northern Ireland's former justice minister Naomi Long said the terrorism threat was already stretching police resources and the service might not have the budget to deal with the consequences of the data leak.

The reality is that at the moment the peace and I don't have that capacity but a security assessment

would need to be made by the chief constable where someone did need potentially to have either additional security or to be moved. The individual officer would have to be assessed. The police said they were investigating another data breach. In July a police laptop and documents were stolen from a car. They included a spreadsheet with the names of 200 workers. Chris Page reporting from Northern Ireland. Let's go to China now and the aftermath of widespread flooding there. A more detailed picture is emerging of the impact and scale of floods following a typhoon that first hit in the east of the country almost two weeks ago. Dozens of people have died. Tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed. The impact on the country's economy is estimated to be in the billions of dollars. Now as is often the case with state controlled propaganda in China the coverage of what happened is not always the same as other stories that are now emerging from affected communities. As our China media analyst Kerry Allen explains. State media dominates the media environment within the country. So there is yes this very much this focus on. We did tell you and and the positives of the community pulling together. So it's very much saturated by that. Whereas on social media platforms like Weibo for example you will see censorship if people try to vent their frustration specifically against the government. But there is a lot of anxiety at the moment because these floods persist in the country and people are being warned but the cleanup operations are not happening quickly enough. So yeah there's a lot of anxiety in the country at the moment. When I was living and working in China I covered a flood in Henan in Zhengzhou back in 2021 where 14 people drowned in an underground metro carriage. And part of the reason for that was essentially there's a man made problems in that city itself and it was dealt with very quickly by the authorities there. Is there any sense in media coverage or beyond that on social media platforms that part of the problems they're facing in these massive Chinese cities and beyond is partly man made. Oh absolutely yes. I mean you know even though the media has been so focused on the northeastern recent weeks I've seen media coverage of cities like Xi'an in the north for example where there's been infrastructure damage in urban regions. Also today I've been reading a report on how an underground garage was flooded in Hongzhou a city in the east. So you know there's social media frustration from people that you know these are meant to be areas where you hear that you know China is ahead of the game when it comes to dealing with floods especially as we're entering an era of climate change and you're going to be hearing more and more about these in the future. And just finally on that issue of climate change does climate change in this being the impact of climate change for which China is obviously partly responsible at the moment. Does that feature in state media coverage or does that feature kind of down the cold face as it were in terms of those people who have lost their livelihoods lost their cars. Do they talk about climate change as well. Well one thing I always find really interesting is when I'm reading Chinese media you will often never see if there's a domestic story any mention of climate change whatsoever. Normally you'll see the words climate change in reference to events like fires and floods that happen in the west particularly. So you'll often see messaging on how when it comes to climate change there's a global responsibility whereas when it comes to China and stories of tackling floods tackling heat waves for example you'll see instead

this message of pulling together the community pulling together technology moving quicker and quicker. So real focus is on the positives and this this other story of climate change very much being an other issue that affects the west more than anywhere else. Kerry Allen. Now the culture minister in Lebanon Mohamed Murtada has asked censors there to ban the film Barbie saying the billion dollar movie promotes homosexuality and transgender culture and undermines the family. The film may now be pulled or have scenes cut from it as Tom Bateman explains.

Barbie's digs at patriarchy obviously fell flat at the summer residence of Lebanon's Maronite Patriarch or local leader of the Eastern Catholic Church. He'd hosted a meeting of cabinet ministers after which the culture minister asked censors to ban the movie. The news may be surprising from Beirut a cosmopolitan city in an often conservative region and the LGBTQ movement has won considerable

victories in Lebanon including the Arab world's first Pride Week in 2017. Tom Bateman on banning Barbie. Now we're going to mark the death of a musician who for many many years didn't know how successful he was. Sister Rodriguez the American musician and subject of the documentary Searching for Sugar Man has died. He was 81. Originally from Detroit in the U.S. his music resonated far away from his hometown in a country deeply divided by racism prejudice and violence but for a long time he didn't know that he'd struck a chord in South Africa. I spoke to our entertainment reporter Stephen McIntosh. Sister Rodriguez is a really interesting singer in the sense that he released his first albums in the early 1970s and yet he didn't have much success when they first came out particularly in the U.S. and he was born in Detroit. He was a Mexican American singer because the songs didn't have that much success they ultimately they ultimately led to him being dropped by his record label but then a really interesting thing happened. Over the following couple of decades he developed this cult following in South Africa and that's where he enjoyed the most success. Now I mean infamously he didn't know about this did he but just explain why he became so popular in South Africa unbeknownst to him. Well it ultimately stems back to bootlegged copies you've got to remember this is back in the days when tape to tape or a cd to cd recording was really very popular there was a lot of piracy around so these albums one of his albums in particular was just kind of being copied and passed around the country and he was developing this following and it was kind of adopted if you like by young people as a kind of protest as part of the anti-apartheid movement. His popularity was growing and yet you know as far as he knew he'd been dropped by his record label two decades earlier he didn't know that he was enjoying all this success in South Africa he just went back into construction work and was living a life of relative obscurity back in America. So it was politics and it was the apartheid era at the time and a protest against that by young black people in South Africa that was the reason for his success at the time but let's let's talk a bit about the music I mean what kind of music was it? The closest comparison and perhaps it's an obvious and perhaps lazy comparison but it's a fair one is Bob Dylan. It was kind of like a mixture of blues folk their voices actually were quite similar and it was just this quite soulful folksy music I mean the albums are very good you know this is high quality music it was just underappreciated in its time if you like and he didn't enjoy anything like the success that Bob Dylan enjoyed so once he did eventually discover his success in South Africa which he did because his daughter came across this website dedicated to him in 1997 that's how he found out is it online and you've got to remember in 1997 this is the days of the internet really in its relative infancy to be honest but his daughter came across this website found that he had this huge following in South

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Fatalities in Hawaii as wildfires engulf Maui

Africa he then ended up going on this tour decades after these albums were first released in South Africa and that ultimately became the subject of this documentary about his life searching for sugar. So it literally was that was it you found out online and then suddenly an explosion he's touring South Africa I think he toured Australia as well and you're going from a kind of a famine to a kind of a feast. Exactly yes that's a really good good description he was going on tours in South Africa not just South Africa I should say you know there were pockets of support for him in Australia and New Zealand as well so he was doing all these tours then the story of his his fame being discovered if you like was made into this documentary in 2012 searching for sugar man and then it happened all over again his career enjoyed another resurgence.

The sounds of Sister Rodriguez and that was Stephen Macintosh on the life of the musician who's died he was 81 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 globalpodcastatbbc.co.uk this edition was mixed by Caroline Driscoll the producer was Liam McChefrey the editor is Karen Martin I'm Robin Brandt that's it goodbye