

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Finland joins Nato

Hello, this is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service, with reports and analysis from across the world. The latest news seven days a week. BBC World Service podcasts are supported by advertising. This is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service. I'm Janet Gillian at 13 hours GMT on Tuesday the 4th of April. These are our main stories. Finland becomes the newest member of NATO. An unprecedented day in US politics as Donald Trump prepares to become the first former president to face criminal charges. An investigation is underway after a train crash in the Netherlands kills at least one person. Also in this podcast, Richard Branson's rocket company files for bankruptcy and there was a sense of release and that's maybe the arc of that piece. A change of rhythm for one half of the electronic band Daft Punk. Until recently, it would have been unthinkable. But Finland has just become NATO's newest member with its flag joining 30 others outside the Alliance headquarters in Brussels. Finland's foreign minister has handed over the formal accession papers to the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, the keeper of the Western Alliance's founding treaty. Mr. Blinken said it was ironic that it was Russia's all out invasion of Ukraine last year that had prompted Finland to abandon decades of neutrality. I'm tempted to say this is maybe the one thing we can thank Mr. Putin for, because he once again here has precipitated something he claims to want to prevent by Russia's aggression, causing many countries to believe that they have to do more to look out for their own defence and to make sure that they could deter possible Russian aggression going forward. Finland's membership means NATO's border with Russia will be doubled. NATO's head, Jens Stoltenberg, told reporters it was a historic day. This is important for NATO, it's important for Finland, it's important at least for the Nordic region and the Baltic region. And then also of course Finland brings high-end capabilities, substantial forces and also advanced defence industry into the Alliance. And of course, not so many years ago we thought it was unthinkable that Finland would become a member. Now they are full-fledged member of our Alliance. The move is a blow for President Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine was partly down to his fears of NATO expansion. The Kremlin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, warned of Russian countermeasures without giving details. The Kremlin believes that this is another aggravation of the situation. NATO expansion is an encroachment on our security and the national interest of the Russian Federation. We talked about this and this is how we perceive it. And naturally, this forces us to take counter measures to ensure our own security both tactically and strategically. Shortly before the ceremony, we spoke to our defence correspondent, Jonathan Beale, about the significance of Finland joining NATO. 74 years ago on this day, the founding Treaty of NATO has signed the Washington Treaty. Then it was just 12 members. Now there will be, in the next hour or so at this ceremony, that will happen in front of me, the Finnish flag raised making 31 members. There could be also, of course, Sweden, which applied at the same time as Finland to join the Alliance. It's still waiting for Turkey and Hungary to approve their accession. But it is an important moment, not least strategically, because as you said, this doubles the size, more than

doubles the size of NATO's borders with Russia. Finland having an 800-mile, 1300-kilometre-mile border with Russia. And it's exactly what President Putin said he didn't want and has got. He wanted less NATO on his border. He argued that was part of the reason for going into Ukraine. Concerns about Ukraine becoming a NATO member. What he's got is a lot more NATO on his border as a result of Finland's membership of NATO, which is being confirmed today in this ceremony. The band is getting ready behind me to play the Finnish national anthem and the NATO hymn.

It is an important day for the Alliance. An important day for the Alliance, a big blow for Russia. Not surprisingly, the Kremlin has branded this as an assault on its security and has warned of countermeasures. What could they possibly be meaning by that?

Well, they've already given a hint that they will boost their military presence near Finland's border. I mean, NATO would argue that Russia has been increasing its military presence in the high north, which has caused concern not just to countries like Finland, but also existing members like Norway, of course, Denmark in that region, Sweden, of course, we're still waiting to see when Sweden will be a member. The hope is it could join here by the time of the summit in the summer. But I think the truth is that Russia doesn't view Finland's membership in the same way as it would have viewed, for example, Ukraine's membership of NATO, which never happened. It clearly does not view Finland in the same way. And the reality is that Russia's military focus and its military resources at the moment are pretty much, apart from its strategic forces, in other words, its nuclear forces, focused on the war in Ukraine. So I think, to be honest, this isn't going to change the shape of Europe hugely in the sense of, yes, there'll be tensions, but I don't think anybody's suggesting that this is going to increase anything other than tensions at the moment. Our defence correspondent, Jonathan Beale.

It's also a historic day in the United States, but for very different reasons.

Good morning. That is a live look at the skies over New York City this morning, where former President Trump is waking up and starting this historic day.

Former President Trump faces a judge after being indicted. A live look at Trump Tower this morning, where Trump stayed overnight ahead of his arraignment later today.

As we record this podcast, Donald Trump is set to become the first former US president to face criminal charges. He's due to appear in court in New York following an investigation over hush money he paid to a porn star, Stormy Daniels, just before he won the 2016 presidential election. His response to the charges against him was typically defiant. No president in the history of our country has been subjected to such vicious and disgusting attacks. Well, extra security measures are in place in New York, where demonstrations are expected outside the courtroom. The former president's opponents and supporters gathered outside Trump Tower as he consulted lawyers there ahead of his court appearance.

If in fact he has committed his crimes that he has been indicted for, then justice has to be served. There's a rule of law in this country.

If he goes to jail for this absurd charge, then our country is over. The United States of America is dead. I spoke to our correspondent, Gary O'Donohue, who was among the throng of journalists outside the court and asked him what the atmosphere was like there. Well, I'm just about 50 or so yards across the street from the courthouse and the world's media is here, as you can imagine. Otherwise, it's pretty calm. There's a couple of choppers in the air circling. I suspect they're probably news choppers, feeding back live pictures of the scene.

We're not expecting the president here probably for maybe four hours just over that. And then when he comes, he'll go into the building across the street. He'll be fingerprinted, taken up to the 15th floor, Jeanette, which is where the courtroom is. And the charges will be read to him and he'll be asked to enter a plea. So he'll be once again the center of attention, but not in a way he would have wanted? No. I mean, I don't think, I mean, the reporting we've seen and certainly all the indications are that Donald Trump doesn't really, he doesn't relish this. He doesn't relish being charged with a crime. I mean, who would? But also, I think him and his campaign do see some opportunities here. It's certainly fired up his base. We know that. It's put him out front in the polls amongst Republican voters. That's for sure. It's really strengthened his position there. And of course, it's muted all those other senior Republicans who are still pretty frightened of him. And that includes a whole bunch of those who may or may not run for the Republican nomination for the White House next year. So there are upsides and downsides to this for Donald Trump. But clearly, if you might end up in prison, that's a pretty big downside. Yes, although my understanding is that even if he's convicted, he could still try to make a run for the White House, which does seem incredible. And you could say there's upsides when it comes to firing up his Republican base, but not perhaps when it comes to the wider electorate. Yeah. How it would play in general election is a very different matter. You're absolutely right. I think in the Republican primary, it's a strength. It's a much more difficult question when it comes to general population. But as for running as a felon, the Constitution doesn't stop you doing that. In fact, there was a chap back in the 1920s or just before that, perhaps, who ran for the White House from prison. It's the socialist candidate, but I think probably two or three percent of the vote. Gary O'Donohue outside the New York courthouse, where Donald Trump is due to appear shortly. There were warning signs that the rocket company Virgin Orbit, owned by the British billionaire Richard Branson, had been struggling. Its first ever mission to launch satellites from the UK failed earlier this year. And last week, the company announced it was laying off 85 percent of its workforce. Now the California based firm has filed for bankruptcy in America after failing to secure new investment. Our business reporter, Sean Farrington, looks at what went wrong for Virgin Orbit. The Virgin Orbit, with the company that it has at the moment and has been set up, I think it's probably fair to say as the business, yes, the dream is over. It may be that the essence of the business can continue. And the dreams of the individuals that work there, of course, their expertise in that area, it's an area of massive growth globally, where many are trying to get more things into space all the time. It's such a sad sort of demise, really, because going back to, well, I remember the morning when we were all waking up, if we didn't stay up overnight to sort of see, did the rocket work or not? And then we found out it didn't. And speaking to people there and the mood of people at the UK Space Agency and those that worked at Virgin Orbit was one of, you know, yeah, you're going to have some bumps along the road. And okay, we've learned a lot from this failed mission. But we go again. That's what the space, I was just looking at the Space Agency comments from the time they're deputy director there.

It's like, we'll try again. And of course, the UK Space Agency can do that. But for Virgin Orbit, I think it was a week ago, they were saying we could now workforce by 70, 80%. We aren't able to get the funding we needed to continue at the level we have been with suspending activities.

All these reports were around. So the fact they've gone, they've filed for bankruptcy isn't really a surprise given what's happened in recent weeks at the business.

But we know it's one of Richard Branson's sort of, well, you call it a hobby, it's been a bit more expensive than that. It's unlikely that he's just going to disappear from the whole venture altogether. What he does next will be very interesting.

Sean Farrington. Now, remember this.

The French electronic music duo Daft Punk left their many fans devastated when they announced their breakup in a YouTube video two years ago. For most of their nearly three decade long career, Daft Punk hid their identities under robot style helmets. Now one of the pair,

Thomas Bangalter, is writing music again, but for the ballet and without his helmet.

And he's releasing a classical album. Our music correspondent, Mark Savage, went to meet him.

Over two decades, Daft Punk broke new grind in dance music, fusing modern technology with the golden era of disco, house and synth pop.

But after they broke up, Thomas Bangalter pursued a new challenge, composing a ballet.

I was really inexperienced, but my first exposure to ballet was in my childhood.

My mother was a ballet dancer. I know when Paul McCartney started making classical music he famously couldn't write down any musical notation. He couldn't read musical notation.

Did you have any of those obstacles to overcome or had you got the grinding in music writing?

I had taken piano lessons for a few years and I went back in this crash course of

Berlioz and Rimsky-Korsakov to read from these masters and understand these rules that I wanted at the same time to follow and to not follow and to break. One of the pieces you've released in advance is La Couchmo, which in English is childbirth. To what extent did you draw on your own experiences as a father to write that piece? Not so much as a father. I saw it more as a metaphor for how I approached this project when somehow I was maybe a little bit scared of whether I would be able to write that ballet and towards the completion of it there was a sense of release and that's maybe the arc of that piece.

It feels like with Daft Punk and on into this ballet there is a continuing movement away from computers and technology and towards organic and analogue science. Yes, I'm interested in the

technology as a tool but I'm somehow terrified of the nature of their relationship between the machines and ourselves. And then at some point this afternoon the public announcement of the split of Daft Punk, which is a huge deal. Daft Punk's split came out of the blue in February 2021. Wordlessly and enigmatically they simply posted a video in which their two robot characters said goodbye and one of them self-destructed.

Why end the project? Neither me or Guy Mann imagined that this actually would last for so long, you know. I met him when I was 12 years old. We started Daft Punk when I was 18.

We ended Daft Punk when I was 46 so this has been a very significant part of my life and there was just an alignment of circumstances for us to write the end of that story and to start these new parallel creative adventures. You must be relieved not to have to be trapped inside that helmet for two hours on stage ever again. I mean as much as I love this character the last thing that I would

want to be in the world we live in in 2023 is a robot. One-time Daft Punk robot Thomas Bangolta talking to Mark Savage. Still to come in this podcast?

A miracle baby who survived a devastating earthquake in Turkey is reunited with her mother.

Abnormal transactions. Some kind of cyber attack on a bank. Tens of millions of dollars. Something

I don't think anybody has seen before. It's a cyber criminal group. From the BBC World Service

The Lazarus Heist is back for season two. It was really like in the movies.

Find out more at the end of this podcast.

Welcome back to the Global News Podcast. The Dutch king Willem Alexander has visited the site of a rail crash in the Netherlands which left one person dead and dozens of others injured.

A passenger train travelling between Leiden and The Hague derailed after hitting a construction crane in the early hours of Tuesday morning. The Dutch building firm BAM says the person who died was the crane driver. Dramatic videos have been posted online by people who were on board

the train. Are you okay? Yes, I'm okay. Are you okay? Yes. Come. Let's go out. First out. Yes, okay.

First out. Let's try that. First out. Okay. Let's go. Okay. How to open the door. Come, over here. It's closed. Okay, open it. Our reporter Anna Holligan is at the scene of the crash.

I'm just looking at the carriage that has gone down the side of the embankment. You get a sense of the fear and the confusion that would have been on board. Some of the power lines have come down on top of the first class carriage. On the bottom level, most of the windows are shattered all around me now. Emergency teams, you might be able to hear a drone overhead. The latest, we've just heard from the construction company. It was one of their employees who died. Although we've also heard from pro rail who run the tracks, they say they are 100% certain that this construction

train that was carrying the crane wasn't on the tracks at the time. Now, bearing in mind, there's a construction site not far from here. Two of the tracks were closed. The other two were in use. And I've been speaking to people who live round about. You mentioned King Willem Alexander visited

the scene. But first, he went to thank the locals because in the early hours of the morning, when this happened, they opened their doors and they allowed emergency workers to use their living rooms to care for the people who didn't need hospital treatment. But among those who went to hospital was the train driver. He's been treated for broken bones. Yes, really coming together of the local community to help those injured by the train crash. And I think the sense is particularly acute in the Netherlands because it has such a good safety record. Precisely. Yes, that's exactly what people here have been saying. This is not the kind of thing they expect to happen in the Netherlands. And one of the gentlemen I was just speaking to who whose house overlooks

the tracks here, he is ex-military and he was saying it was like being woken by a long extended explosion. It wasn't what you would expect when two trains hit each other. It sounded different. And just looking at the carriages in front of me, there are reports there was a fire and indeed where the two carriages are split in half, one still on the tracks, one going down the embankment. It looks as though there are burn marks there. And just in front of me, it looks like forensic investigators in white suits have just arrived. They're putting down a kind of pathway to allow the emergency vehicles to get to the train because the next task, of course, will be to work out how to remove this wreckage from the tracks. Trains aren't expected to run here for at least a few days.

Anna Holligan in the Netherlands. The U.S. has said it carried out a strike in Syria, killing a senior leader of the Islamic State group. It believes it was responsible for planning attacks in Europe. The U.S. Central Command says Khalid Aid Ahmad Al-Jabouri died in an undisclosed location on Tuesday. With more, here's Lipika Pelham. The U.S. Central Command has said

that the killing of the senior IS leader, Al-Jabouri, will now temporarily disrupt the organization's ability to plot external attacks. It said Al-Jabouri was also developing the leadership structure for the IS, which the U.S. says remains strong and capable of conducting operations within the region with the desire to strike beyond the Middle East. Long-time IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a similar U.S. military raid in 2019. Baghdadi detonated a suicide vest after being cornered in a tunnel with three children. There's been no word about the latest attack from Syrian officials. A U.S. statement said no civilians were killed.

Despite their territorial defeat in March 2019 to a military operation by the Syrian Democratic Forces backed by a U.S.-led coalition, Islamic State militants have continued to carry out hit-and-run attacks on civilians and military targets in northwest Syria.

The U.K.-registered media company Yala News claims to offer impartial information, but now an investigation by the BBC has found it is spreading Russian state disinformation to millions of people on Facebook. Experts say the company could be, quote, laundering information on behalf of Moscow, a new tactic in Russia's information warfare. Hannah Gelbert reports.

On Facebook, Yala News looks like a slick operation. It posts glossy videos every couple of hours, stories about global politics with emotive captions in Arabic all set to this dramatic music. It claims to offer impartial news and reaches millions of people in the Arab-speaking world. But there's a theme. Most of its stories are distinctly pro-Russia, and many are completely false, like this one. It has text that comes up over a montage of photos of sick birds.

It claims the U.S. is using birds as bioweapons to distribute deadly diseases as they fly into Russia. The U.S. government says it's total nonsense, made up by the Russian government. And there are lots like it. Stories that echo articles published by Russian state media just hours earlier, including false stories about Ukrainian soldiers fleeing the front line or President Zelensky surrendering to Russia.

At the start of the invasion of the Ukraine, I was tasked with looking at what sort of disinformation we were seeing in Arabic on popular social media platforms.

Mustafa Ayad works at the Institute of Strategic Dialogue, a think tank.

He found a number of Facebook pages recycling stories from Russian state media sites, including Yellow News. Their videos are getting more views on Facebook than Russia Today Arabic. Russia Today Arabic, which has 17 million followers.

But something about the page didn't look quite right. It linked to an unfinished website, with a postbox address in central London, and a CEO from Syria.

It just looked incredibly suspicious. I think it's a means by which to distribute pro-Kremlin content to a different audience. Belen Carrasco Rodriguez, from the Center for Information Resilience in the UK, agrees.

They are just like playing the role of Kremlin loudspeaker.

She says Yellow News could be laundering Russian disinformation.

Information laundering is a bit like money laundering. It's the process of using a third party

to wash information from an unverified source, so it gets more widely shared and accepted. It's something Russia's been known to do in the past.

It is important to hold people accountable for the information that they share, and even if they are directly connected to the Kremlin or not, they are doing what they are doing. So the harm is done.

This is a quiet residential side street in Bloomsbury in central London.

Opposite me, there's a row of terraced townhouses. The one in the middle is painted white, and that's the registered address of Yellow Group, the company behind Yellow News.

This address on Old Gloucester Street is one of the most popular addresses used to register companies in the whole of the UK.

We found 65,000 different companies registered here.

12,000 of those are still active.

But many of them, like Yellow Group, don't actually have any staff or officers here.

Our investigation found that Yellow Group actually operates out of Syria, which is a longtime ally of Russia.

We tracked down the company's CEO, Ahmed Mumine, a Syrian businessman living in Dubai.

He told us Yellow News is impartial, and insisted that he isn't funded or influenced by the Russian or Syrian governments.

A spokesperson for Metta, which owns Facebook, said it's working with third-party fact-checkers to fight the spread of misinformation on its platforms.

But even with initiatives to crack down on misinformation and state-sponsored content, it's interesting to see how posts in languages other than English, like the stories on Yellow News, can easily slip through.

That report by Hannah Galbart.

In a couple of so-weeks time, Muslims will celebrate the religious festival of Eid al-Fitr to mark the end of Ramadan, traditionally a very lucrative time for business.

But a huge fire in a clothing market in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka has destroyed most goods there, leaving shop owners destitute.

It took hundreds of firefighters around six hours to put out the fire.

At least eight people were injured, and the market, the Bongo Bazaar, has been completely destroyed.

Akbar Hussein in Dhaka told us more.

This is a huge fire which broke out early in the morning.

It is suspected that some, you know, short circuit from the electrical line, it, the fire might be originated from there.

And this market, in a very congested, crammed area, and more than 4,000 shops, small shops, big shops are there.

All are clothing shops.

And this market is a popular destination for cut price, western fashion brands.

And they are produced in the cities, government factories.

But these clothes, they fail to meet export standards.

So finally, these clothes, they go to that market.

And you can buy, you know, clothes, different types of clothes with a cheap price.

So the whole area, you know, you can understand when there is a huge area with clothes that is

flammable.

So once fire originated in a small shop, that it can easily, you know, travel the whole area.

Yeah, and there are reports the firefighters have been attacked.

Why?

The shop owners, they are very, very frustrated, devastated.

I have spoken to them and they say that, you know, the biggest festival in Bangladesh for Muslims, Eid al-Fitr, is now just three weeks away from now on.

So now it's a shopping spree going on.

So many shop owners, they have invested millions of taka, local currency.

I have spoken with one shopkeeper.

He told me that he invested 1.5 million local currency, which is around 10,000 pound, for Eid business.

But he lost everything.

So that's why, you know, the businessmen, they are so devastated.

And they say that the authorities, they fail to give them safety, fire safety, and the firefighters.

And the government doesn't have enough equipment to fight with the fire.

That's why fire was engulfing the whole area.

That's why, you know, the firefighters are attacked.

Akbar Hussein in Bangladesh.

Now, we return to a story that you will no doubt remember hearing previously on the Global News podcast. In February, a series of catastrophic earthquakes caused huge devastation across parts of southern Turkey and Syria. More than 50,000 people are now known to have died, and countless others have been left homeless.

But amid all the trauma and the sorrow, there were moments of joy.

Like this one, when a baby who'd spent five days trapped in the rubble in the Turkish province of Hatay was discovered still alive.

It had been presumed that the baby girl's mother, Yasmin Begdas, had died during the quake.

But now a DNA test has matched the three and a half month old baby with her mother.

She's been recovering in hospital. Let's hear the moment she got to hold her baby again.

The

Turkish family and social services minister, Derya Yannick, said the fact that the child had survived and had no health problems was truly a miracle.

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, you can send us an email.

The address is globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk. You can also find us on Twitter at Global NewsPod.

This edition was mixed by Alicia Thursting, the producers were Shantel Hartle and Alfie Habishen. The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Janet Julio. Until next time, goodbye.

Below the regime denies any involvement,

evidence suggests that North Korea's hackers are getting better and better at doing it.

What they did was also quite sophisticated. Not something anybody has seen before.

The Lazarus Heist, season two from the BBC World Service.

I was put in handcuffs, both my feet bound and my hands taken to an interrogation centre.

We were genuinely very frightened.

Search for the Lazarus Heist wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

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The Financial Times follows the money to find business stories in unexpected places.
We found a surprising one in the porn industry.

I'm Alex Barker, co-host of the FT Pushkin podcast, Hot Money.

Through the series, we reveal the real power behind this secretive global business.

You can check out our podcast and read selected articles for free at ft.com.com.