

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / France cuts all development aid to Niger following coup

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 Alex Ritzen and in the early hours of Sunday the 30th of July, these are our main stories.

France cuts all development aid to Niger as African and Western powers unite in condemnation of Wednesday's military coup. What we're seeing is a significant ratcheting up over the last 24 hours of international efforts to try and reverse the coup. The son of Colombia's president is arrested on charges of money laundering and corruption and Kenya offers to lead a multinational force to Haiti where clashes between criminal gangs and the police have displaced tens of thousands.

Also in this podcast, Russia's Wagner mercenary group is accused of smuggling illegal migrants into Poland and... I think it's a reflection of immense political will and commitment. The biggest one is really people on the ground who are working on a day-to-day basis in terms of protecting tigers and conserving its habitat. After decades of decline, why India has a good reason to celebrate on World Tiger Day, stay tuned to find out.

Until just a few days ago, Niger was regarded as one of the few stable democratic countries in Africa's Sahel region. No longer. A military coup on Wednesday ousted the democratically elected leader. The country, once seen as a key partner to the West in the fight against Islamic insurgents, has now gone down the same road as its neighbours, Mali and Burkina Faso. African and Western powers have united in condemning the coup. On a visit to Australia, the US Secretary of State

Anthony Blinken added his voice to the chorus of disapproval. Let me be very, very clear about this. Our economic and security partnership with Niger, which is significant, hundreds of millions of dollars, depends on the continuation of the democratic governance and constitutional order that has been disrupted by the actions in the last few days. That assistance, that support, is in clear jeopardy, which is another reason why they need to be immediately reversed.

Well, France has now notched things up a gear by suspending all development aid to Niger, and the EU has withdrawn its financial and security cooperation. Professor Nick Westcott is a former British ambassador to Niger. What we're seeing is a significant ratcheting up over the last 24 hours of international efforts to try and reverse the coup. At the outset, there was some hesitation because they didn't wish to impose two severe sanctions immediately, but I think now in consultation with African countries, we've seen the EU give a very tight deadline, 15 days for the return to civilian rule, and the US and the EU are coming in saying, we will stop our support. So are the coup leaders taking any notice? Our correspondent Chris Iwaka is monitoring the situation from neighboring Nigeria. This is something that's going to pile lots of pressure on the coup leaders and maybe lead to some action on the part of the mutinering soldiers. Then we have also seen the African Union giving the strongest reaction so far, asking the soldiers to go to the barracks and all insisting that the outside president, Mohammad Bazoum, should be released and the soldiers should allow constitutional democracy to prevail in the country. So you have all these international countries threatening sanctions. Is it possible that the coup leaders are going to simply look towards Russia for support? Well, it's very difficult at this moment to know the direction of the coup leaders. In an address to the nation on Friday, General Abrahmani Chani gave reasons why they virtue the government. He said that it was not to allow the country to degenerate into a form of

anarchy because he felt that the approach the President Bazoum was using in fighting insecurity, especially Jihadist extremism in the country wasn't working. Now, because he is also part of the government, many people are taking this explanation with a pinch of salt and remember that Niger has

been landlocked and poor. One of the poorest actually in the world is still the seventh producer of uranium. And of course, many countries are interested in that mineral. So when the neighbors Mali and Burkina Faso sever ties with the West and have now created a kind of link with Russia and the Wagner group, it is really likely that based on the support that the people had given the soldier so far and also within the flag and even asking Russia to intervene in the situation in that country, there is that possibility that we might be seeing some form of external influence. But this has not been fully disclosed yet. You mentioned the coup leaders citing the struggle against Islamic insurgency as one of their reasons for mounting this. Of course, the US had 1100 troops on the ground in Niger. France has 1500 troops on the ground in Niger. What's going to happen to them? Well, that's the big question. We have seen what happened in Mali, for instance, where they decided to sever ties and ask the troops of the United Nations as well as France to leave the country. So I think the Western allies risk the same situation. So everybody will be watching what's going to be the outcome of a meeting that will be held in Abuja on Sunday hosted by the Nigerian president to try to react and see how to chat the way forward in the crisis in Niger. Chris Iwaka. A year after Colombia's first left-wing government was elected, President Gustavo Petro's oldest son has been arrested on charges of money

laundering and illicit enrichment. Nicholas Petro's ex-wife claimed that he received large amounts of money from drug traffickers for his father's election campaign. But instead, her former husband used it to pay for a luxury lifestyle. President Petro denies receiving any of the money. Luis Fajardo is in the capital Bogota. It's a very big story in Colombia, as you may imagine. It's the first time ever that the son of a sitting president is arrested under suspicion of graft. The belief is that Nicholas Petro, who was an important person during the presidential campaign that led to the election of President Petro in 2022, he now faces accusations of having received illicit funds. And this is a very big scandal in Colombia, particularly if you take into account that President Petro, who was the first ever left-wing president elected in Colombia, he had campaigned specifically on a promise to clean up the system to fight against corruption. And now he faces a very big corruption scandal in his very immediate family circle. Yeah, because these allegations came from his former wife, who has also been detained. That is true. The couple became estranged shortly after the presidential election. And she accused Nicholas Petro, the son of the president, of having received funds from illicit sources. Of course, now she herself is facing accusations, formal accusations related to this entire scandal. Any reaction from the president?

The president himself tweeted this morning, saying that he was, of course, saddened by the personal crisis involving his family. But he insisted that he would not interfere with the judicial investigations against his son. He has said that justice has to take its decisions without his interference, without the interference of the government.

What have people made of what he's said? Because on the surface it sounds pretty good, doesn't it? A proper separation of the legal system and politics.

It is still very damaging, I would say, for President Petro politically. Of course,

the central allegation is that his presidential campaign received funds from illicit sources again. He has insisted that he had nothing to do with it personally, he says. But it is a very damaging accusation anyway for the president. And that's what his political rivals have been saying in the last few hours, that this president who had promised to bring corruption to an end in Colombia. And now he faces this very big scandal affecting his campaign and his immediate family.

Luis Fajardo in Bogota. The Kenyan government says it's ready to lead a multinational force to Haiti. Clashes between the police and criminal gangs have displaced tens of thousands of people in the troubled Caribbean nation. With more details, here's Richard Wheatley.

Haiti has been in a political crisis since the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in 2021. Gangs control around 80% of the capital. And violent crimes such as kidnappings and armed robbery are common. Earlier this month, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for the creation of a multinational force for Haiti. Now Kenya has offered to take the lead, offering a thousand police officers to help train local law enforcement. The Kenyan foreign minister said it would be part of their plan to stand in solidarity with people of African descent across the world. The mission is subject to a mandate from the UN Security Council and formal authorization from the Kenyan authorities. Richard Wheatley. An Iranian official in charge of enforcing religious codes of conduct in one of the country's provinces has been dismissed pending an investigation into a sex video that purports to show him having sex with another man in his office. The video has been widely shared on social media in Iran. Its authenticity hasn't been confirmed. So who is the man at the center of this story? Rocha Asadi from the BBC's Persian Service has been speaking to Paul Henley. His name is Reza Sakati. He's the director of the government office of culture and Islamic guidance in northern province of Iran called Gilan. His job is to promote Islamic ideology, promote hijab. And homosexuality is illegal in Iran. The charge, if this is the man in the video that we're talking about and it has not been proven, obviously the charge is of hypocrisy, is it? Yes, that's right. It can be punishable by death, by the sharia law. That's why many users on social media are angry because they think that the officials are treated differently comparing to other people who are accused with crimes relating to homosexualities. The video, it's showing explicit footage of two men having sex. But the faces of two men are not that much recognizable, saying that the office itself, many people been into that office and they say that this is the office of this person and access to this office is not that easy. But all in all, we cannot say for sure that's the same person on the video. And we don't know how this video has come to public light. We know that first time it been published by Gilan Radio Telegram Channel. Telegram is a popular social platform in Iran. And we had reports that the manager of Radio Gilan was arrested after publishing this video. What's been official reaction? Officials at first state silenced and after a while when it was widely circulating and everyone making comments, they said that the person accused has been suspended and they are going to investigate it thoroughly. Have there been cases like this before? Not at this level and not with the footage like this. But we have cases of religious figures who are close to the government has been accused of assault and rape of young boys. And in some cases their profiles were just closed and all the accusations were dismissed. Clearly it's a big enough story that it can no longer be ignored by the authorities. It's a very difficult position for the authorities because if it's proven, if they say yes, this is the same person,

then it is punishable by death. Many people in Iran in the past has been hanged because of their homosexualities. So it's going to be very difficult for the officials. They either have to deny it and if they approve that this really happened, they have to make a sentence.

Raka Asadi from the BBC's Persian Service. African and Caribbean countries have been meeting in Barbados to discuss a collective strategy to seek reparations for the Atlantic slave trade. It included members of the African Union and the Caribbean community, political and economy union or CARICOM. A statement said it marks the beginning of an intercontinental campaign to secure compensation and other reparations for the descendants of slaves. Andrew Peach heard more from the pan-Africanist and human rights activist lawyer Brian Kaguro. It's in the context of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and ongoing pump such as climate-related hum. And we've got representatives from African countries, representatives from the Caribbean coming together. What is the nature of the conversation they'll be having with each other? So the African Union heads of states passed a resolution in their January meeting that the permanent representative council, which is ambassadors representing countries in Addis Ababa, should constitute a study tour through the CARICOM region to the Caribbean and specifically Barbados, because CARICOM has come up with 10 points for reparations, action plan or plan, looking at slavery, looking at colonialism. Has this conversation got as far as talking about amounts of money?

No, no, remember reparations, it's much broader than the question of money. But there is an insistence

from a lot of the communities that are directly affected that the type of finance should look at repair because the hum that most countries that are vulnerable communities are suffering was caused elsewhere by consumption in the more industrialized countries. But it should also be insurance type finance that whether or not you repair these contingencies are going to happen. So that finance that enables countries to respond.

From the way you describe it, it sounds like it could be a very long process.

It's been 600 years long and for some countries 100 years long, this is the time of independence.

I think we're in a global moment where the pony crisis and in particular climate crisis.

But don't forget that in the current conjuncture where the world is talking about really transition or just transition, that most of the minerals that are required, the critical minerals for that transition are found in countries that are also subject to colonialism or communities that were subjected to the slave trade and etc.

So the idea is that you don't end up with a transition that penalizes and gets victims to pay doubly by having to borrow money to adjust or to mitigate the hum cost.

It's interesting you link it to climate issues, Brian, because I guess some listeners around the world might say climate issues, cost of living pressures that so many countries are experiencing at the moment are not more important but more urgent issues for focus right now. The challenge with how the world approaches issues that affect black people, afro-descendants and Africans generally is this assumption that they can always be postponed, that the risk facing other people are more urgent. So this conversation is about those who come from African countries, from the Caribbean, from afro-descendant communities, African communities saying we do

matter in the world after all, we represent more than 30% of the global population.

We're grossly underrepresented and it always seems that anything that affects us

is in the parking lot and superseded by other concerns. But it's about time we collectively are confidently a set that we're important, we matter to ourselves Chris, and we matter to how the world deals with the poly crisis. We're not just incidental to the solutions. You're going to see a 70% reduction in waste on the street right out of the gate and then once somebody gets fined and everybody else knows the problem disappears. Could a canine DNA database company help a German mayor stamp on the problem of dog poo? An explosion at a fireworks warehouse in southern Thailand has killed at least nine including three children. Officials said that more than a hundred others were injured. The blast caused widespread destruction as our southeast Asia correspondent Jonathan Head reports from Thailand. Residents in the border town of Sungai Golok described hearing a huge explosion which shook buildings, shattered windows and collapsed some roofs, sending a massive plume of smoke into the air. Video taken after the explosion showed many buildings ablaze, some completely destroyed, and a substantial area of the town close to the river which divides Thailand from Malaysia in ruins. The local governor said the cause of the explosion was a technical error by welders working on a warehouse where fireworks were stored. Accidents involving fireworks which are commonly used in southeast Asia to commemorate big events are not unusual. And despite public pressure to improve safety, Thailand still has a poor record of accidents on its roads, construction sites and in the workplace. Jonathan Head in Bangkok. Poland has accused Russia's Wagner mercenary group of waging what Warsaw has described as a hybrid war against the country. The Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki claimed that part of this involved illegal migrants being brought into Poland and Lithuania by mercenaries in neighbouring Belarus. Certainly this is a step towards a hybrid attack on Polish territory in order to destabilise the country. Presumably they will also try to infiltrate Poland pretending to be illegal immigrants and this creates additional risks. I heard more about the claims of a hybrid war from our correspondent Ian Warsaw Adam Eastern. What they mean by that is they accuse Belarus and Russia of wanting to destabilise the European Union by helping people, migrants from many Asian and many African countries to fly to Belarus on a tourist visa and then helping them cross illegally over the Lithuanian and Polish borders into the European Union. And what place does Wagner have in this? Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki during a news conference said that his government had information that around 100 mercenaries from the Wagner group had moved closer to the Polish border and the Lithuanian border simultaneously northwestern Belarus and that he believed that these mercenaries will try and help illegal migrants enter Poland. He said they would be disguised probably as Belarusian border guards and possibly that they would also pretend to be illegal migrants themselves and enter the European Union that way. He didn't say where the information had come from but certainly on Friday there was a media report which said very similar things to what he was saying. So what would be motivating the Belarusians and Wagner to do this? If you believe the European Union and the Polish and Lithuanian story that Belarus and Russia are using this new migration route as a way to destabilise these countries, these frontier countries. On the other hand the opposition in Poland has said that essentially

the Polish government is trying to scare people. We've got elections in Poland in October and the opposition say that the government wants to use the issue of security and the threats and is playing up how they are protecting Polish security especially on the border to essentially win votes in that upcoming election. Adam Easton in Warsaw. In the face of the global energy crisis and the growing severity of climate change Emmanuel Macron managed to pull off something miraculous last

year. The French president executed a remarkable U-turn by swapping a plan to close a number of nuclear reactors for a plan to build new ones. The country has been a leader in atomic energy for decades and construction is about to begin on six new reactors known as EPRs. Nuclear power is a divisive issue because of environmental concerns and lingering memories of disasters in Chernobyl and Fukushima. But as John Lawrence reports from the Rome Valley many people have embraced the

decision to increase the number of reactor facilities. Saint-Vulba, its shady plain trees, its cooing pigeons and its nuclear reactors. This small sunny southern French town already has four of France's 56 atomic power stations at a site called Buge and its inhabitants are very much looking forward to having two more. I've always been pro-nuclear. It provides us with electricity while saving us from having to import it. That was President De Gaulle's idea when he decided to make us a nuclear power in the 60s and Saint-Vulba would never have developed without it. Three hours

down the Rhône river it's the same story. A pretty medieval town called Saint-Paul-Troix-Château which has the Trichastain power plant and a uranium enrichment facility to boot. The largest nuclear complex in Europe. They've also got four reactors but also felt that six would be just 50 percent better. I'm 72 and nothing bad has happened with this nuclear reactor so far so I am inclined

to trust that we are relatively well protected when it comes to the nuclear risk and at the same time it is clear that France needs these EPRs because we need the electricity. The mayor of Saint-Paul-Troix-Château, Jean-Michel Catalinois used to work in the nuclear industry. Trichastain's reactors were among France's first built in the 1970s. Their working lives have just been extended 10 years and now won't be decommissioned till the 2030s to the general relief of the population. At least one person per family works in the nuclear industry around here.

Around 12,000 jobs depend on it. The financial benefits for the town are considerable and explain why we have excellent facilities and very low local taxes. But it's not just money. The energy crisis sparked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the growing realization that massive supplies of zero CO2 electricity might actually make nuclear power a good thing for the environment have changed

minds about atomic energy in France as a whole. A recent poll shows the number of French people with a positive view of nuclear power has almost doubled from 34 percent to 60 percent since 2019. Green party councillor Alvin Collin, member of a collective opposed to building new nuclear reactors,

says this is because of media distortion.

Macron is afraid of public opposition to nuclear and has created media hype to make people believe that we can't do without it. But this ignores alternative scenarios suggested by the electricity transmission network that emphasise energy, sobriety and energy efficiency.

Madame Collin's association has now lodged an appeal against the decision to build the new

reactors at Bougé. But hers has become a minority opinion in France. The old red and yellow nuclear non-merci bumper stickers have pretty much disappeared. And near Bougé and Trichestin at least they'd be up for a new one. Nucléaire, oui s'il vous plaît.

John Lawrenson reporting. New figures released by the Indian government show the estimated wild tiger population in the country is growing by more than six percent a year. India is home to about three quarters of the world's wild tigers and it counts them every four years. The latest census recorded more than 3600. Deshan Dorje, the senior Asia director for the wildlife charity WWF, explained what had led to the turnaround in numbers. I think it's a reflection of immense political will and commitment, great leadership and also I think the biggest one is really people on the ground who are working on a day-to-day basis in terms of protecting tigers and conserving its habitat. And the other important element aspect to this is sort of community participation.

I think it's very important to work with the local communities and get their ownership, get their confidence in working together in protecting tigers and their habitat and their prey as well. With more details, here's our South Asia regional editor and Bharatan Etirajan. India once had tens of thousands of tigers but British and Indian nobility and officials hunted the animals during the colonial period. Deforestation, poaching and human encroachment also devastated the population. The tiger conservation program started when it plummeted to less than 2000 in the 1970s. Now the rising numbers are a conservation success but not without controversy. With more tigers competing for the same resources, some animals venture outside protected nature reserves, looking for food, bringing them into conflict with people in nearby villages. And Bharatan Etirajan. A German mayor has suggested that all dog owners in a town near Cologne should register their dog's DNA on a central database so that owners who don't pick up their dog mess could be caught and fined. Some towns in Ireland, France, Italy and Spain and Israel already use or are planning to use dog DNA based stool tracking and it's also being used in parts of Britain and the US but does it work? The American company Poo Prince certainly thinks so as its ad suggests. Here's the scoop on solving your number two problem, Poo Prince. Our patented science uses DNA to keep grounds clean and families healthy. It starts with a simple swab. Bottom line, we're the best way to solve your stinky problem. Jay Rettinger is the CEO of Biopet Laboratories which runs Poo Prince from Knoxville, Tennessee. He told Caroline Wyatt about his company's dog DNA service. We register dog's DNA using a simple cheek swab and then we

have a proprietary waste collection kit that our customers and cities can use to where if they find unscooped dog mess on the ground. They take a small sample, they send it to us, we process that sample

and extract DNA from it, run it in our database and tell them who did not pick up. And who keeps a log of the DNA doggy database? We do and we call it our DNA World Pet Registry. We have it but the

municipalities, our customers, they have access and manage that database for their residents and pet owners. We've got over 7,000 customers across seven countries. A majority of our business is in the U.S. and a majority of our business is made up of private landlords, rental companies, but internationally we do have a growing municipality business where more and more cities are faced with how do we maintain and protect our citizens and keep our streets clean. Do you also sometimes get individuals who want to track down bad owners in their area? It's funny, we get calls every day on individuals who want to know who left mess in their yard, but we stay away from those. We want

to make sure that all samples we receive are obtained lawfully. Chain of custody is very important for us. We don't always know if your neighbor gave you permission to hop the fence and swab their dog. And how difficult is it to test dog poo against a database?

We've perfected the process and because the volume in which we process, we're able to do it really quick, but it is probably several hours per way sample. And can you be 100% sure that a specific dog is the perpetrator or perhaps the poo-petrator? I mean what if it has got a brother or a sister or a half brother or a half sister that shares much of the same doggy DNA?

We can be definitive that that is that specific dog. We use markers that differentiate that dog from any other dog in the world including litter mates. The results that our customers experience are phenomenal. On average we see 96% reduction in waste. As you start to register dogs you're going to see a 70% reduction in waste on the streets right out of the gate. And then once somebody gets fined and everybody else knows accountability is there, the problem disappears. Jay Rettinger speaking to Caroline Wyatt.

And that's all from us for now, but there'll be a new edition of the Global News Podcast at the same time tomorrow. If you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it, you can send us an email. The address is GlobalPodcast at [bbc.co.uk](mailto:GlobalPodcast@bbc.co.uk). You can also find us on Twitter at GlobalNewsPod. This edition was mixed by Chesney Forks Porter and the producer was Emma

Joseph, the editor. It's Karen Martin. I'm Alex Ritzen. Until next time, goodbye.