

## [Transcript] Global News Podcast / Officers consolidate power after coup in Niger

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 Paul Moss and at 1300 Hours GMT on Thursday the 27th of July, these are our main stories. Military officers in Niger look to consolidate power after toppling the president in a coup. We find out more about Ukraine's stalling counter-offensive and El Salvador's politicians bringing controversial new measures to curb gang violence.

Also in this podcast, we will be ready in the coming months, in the next three to four months, to provide Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea, with 25,000 to 50,000 tons of grain each.

President Putin says free food is on its way to Africa.

It's a sign of Niger's importance that within hours of a coup being launched, their political figures from around the world have weighed in, calling for democratic rule to be restored. The United States Secretary of State, the United Nations Human Rights Chief, the European Union, all want to see the elected president restored to power.

The whereabouts of Mohamed Bazoum are unknown. Other Nigerian politicians have been blocked from reaching the capital's parliament building by armed soldiers. And the head of Niger's armed forces has now said he supports the coup. So why does the world care so much about a relatively empty country, much of its desert and which makes little contribution to the global economy?

Well, Niger is in a strategically important spot, touching both predominantly Arab North Africa, but also bordering on West Africa, where Islamic insurgents are prevalent. It is perhaps for that reason that both the US and France have military bases in Niger. I spoke with our Africa regional editor, Will Ross, and started by asking if the coup now seems to have succeeded.

It does appear so, yes. I think there was a period when the ousted government was sort of clinging on to the idea that possibly the armed forces would not back those who had carried out the coup. And in fact, the foreign minister had even said there was this coup bid, but the whole army wasn't involved and appealed to the population to resist it. But since then, as you say, the head of the armed forces has said in order to avoid bloodshed between elements of the armed forces,

it's put its support behind the whole coup operation. So it looks as though it's a done deal. And now all the kind of voices around the world have focused more on trying to get the ousted president released, because we think he's still being held by the presidential guard. I've seen some people describe him as the last pro-western leader in that region who's happy to support Western powers trying to suppress those Islamic insurgents. So what is the effect going to be on that fight against Islamic insurgency if Mohammed Bazoum is out of the picture? Well, it depends what comes out of this coup and how long the transition is, whether the people in charge of the country now have vastly different views from Mohammed Bazoum and his government. But certainly at the moment, if you look across the Sahel region, you know, Mali, which is where a lot of the violent extremism sprang from, it fell out with France. It's now kicking out the UN peacekeeping force. And there aren't really that many allies for the west that is supposed to be trying to fight against these Islamist militants. There aren't many allies left. So we'll have to see what the position is of this new military government that's going to be in charge and whether it's going to stick around as others have in the region and quite stark to look across the African map now and see, you know, all the way from Guinea on the Atlantic coast

through

now Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Burkina Faso, all of those countries now being run by military men. Will Ross. I mentioned that the US and France both have military bases in Niger, this being a strategically important part of the world. But in fact, of course, European and other western powers are vying for influence across the African continent, as they always have. And Thursday sees Russia once again trying to assert its presence on the scene. Vladimir Putin is hosting a summit of African leaders in his native city of St Petersburg. One potential headache for this get together, though, is the issue of food. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has drastically reduced that country's exports of grain and other crops, causing a worldwide shortage and prices to rise. Then last week, Russia pulled out of the deal, which had allowed Ukraine to send food exports through the Black Sea. However, the Russian president has told African leaders he'll send thousands of tons of free grain to the continent within months. We will be ready in the coming months, in the next three to four months, to provide Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Eritrea, with 25,000 to 50,000 tons of grain each, and will ensure free shipping of this cargo. So will that be enough to satisfy African leaders, whose populations may now include more hungry mouths? Andrew Harding is our Africa correspondent,

and he's not convinced. The grain issue is messy right now. The African continent is a whole, very dependent on Ukrainian and, to some extent, on Russian grain. There had been a deal, as you know, through the Black Sea to allow Ukrainian exports that had been re-continued after negotiations,

but now the Russians have pulled out and seem to be trying to essentially blockade Ukrainian grain exports. That's very bad news for African countries, particularly in places like Somalia, where they're facing near famine conditions. The Russians are saying, look, we'll give you free grain, or at least some free grain, and certainly lots of Russian grain to make up the shortfall. But the likely impact on global grain prices is going to be to push it up dramatically, and that is going to affect a lot of people across Africa. So I think there will be some pretty difficult discussions in St. Petersburg between President Putin and certainly some of the more outspoken African leaders you decide to show up. Andrew Harding. Ukraine's armed forces tend to talk up their successes, and like most armies, perhaps, play down their difficulties. But one of the generals in charge of Ukraine's counter-offensive has admitted that, so far, Russia has prevented his troops from advancing quickly. General Alexander Tanavsky said that Russian forces had created multi-layered minefields and other fortified defensive lines, which were proving tough even for Western tanks and armoured vehicles to cross.

From Ukraine, our defence correspondent, Jonathan Beale reports.

Hidden in a forest, evidence of Ukraine's stuttering offensive in the south.

A makeshift repair yard, trying to salvage not all Soviet equipment, but recently donated Western armour, now scarred by battle, including broken tracks and buckled wheels. Among them, half a dozen U.S. made Bradleys stopped in their tracks. This repair yard tells you one of the reasons why Ukraine's been struggling to make advances, a destruction caused by Russian minefields.

And this Bradley you can see, the tracks on one side are completely off and there's a blown-off wheel, which clearly had a mine, I think. Mine?

47th Brigade is one of Ukraine's new units, largely trained and equipped by the West.

But after several of its leopard tanks and Bradleys were destroyed or damaged in the first days of the offensive, it's now also using its older, less expensive equipment. This old T-64 tank was being used last night to clear a Russian minefield, not far from here. And one of the rollers that are designed to set off the mines was completely blown off, one of the crew members was injured too.

Most of the advance is having to be conducted by infantry. It's slow and proving hard to hold ground. This Ukrainian unit, under fire, had to withdraw when one of their comrades was injured. It's been tough to watch the battle from the sky too.

Here building a new drone, the man they call Doc from a reconnaissance unit, has witnessed a new Russian tactic. He shows me a video of Ukrainian troops advancing towards a Russian trench. As soon as they enter, they're met by a massive blast. The trench was empty, but rigged with explosives. Ukraine has a new weapon too. That's hidden in this tree liner.

US-supplied Paladin self-propelled guns, which were the first time we're seeing using cluster munitions against Russian infantry, they say. The cluster shells scatter scores of small bombs over a wide area, and are now being used to try to dislodge Russian infantry and artillery. The Ukrainian general, overseeing the struggling Southern offensive, defended their use. Oleksandr Tarnovsky says he's now facing a more difficult enemy. I don't underestimate the enemy. They've created all the conditions that prevent us from moving forward quickly, but their weakness is they don't care about their people. They don't care about losing 10, 100, or a thousand soldiers in one task. And this is very bad.

General Tarnovsky says his troops are still advancing, although even he admits it's slow work. He says he still has his main strike force in reserve. But he's trying to advance where well-prepared Russian defense lines appear to be the strongest.

Jonathan Beale in Ukraine announced to a conflict of the past about three million people were killed during the Korean War, many more injured. But tens of thousands of South Koreans were taken prisoner by the North and never released. Well, it's 70 years since the Armistice which brought the fighting to an end with both North and South commemorating the occasion.

Our sole correspondent, G. McKenzie, has been talking to one of the few people who managed to escape the North and to the relatives of those who never made it home. At the age of 92, Idae Bong doesn't relish getting out of bed. As he readjusts his pajamas, his left hand reveals three missing fingers. His injury is not the result of the war he fought, he tells me. But from the 54 years he was forced to work in a North Korean coal mine, it got caught in a coal processing machine. Lee was one of an estimated 80,000 South Korean soldiers captured by the North during the Korean War.

The Armistice is signed and cameras record the moment of history.  
It's now been 70 years since an Armistice brought an end to the fighting,  
but the two sides have never signed a peace treaty,  
meaning the war lives on and tens of thousands of prisoners in North Korea have never been returned.

Mr. Lee is one of the very few who managed to plot his own escape.

We gave our entire youths to that coal mine, we had no rights.

You must have missed home terribly.

Who wouldn't? I was all alone and scared.

At what point did you give up hope that anybody was going to come for you?

North Korea was saying it didn't have any prisoners of war.

It seemed as if the South Korean government didn't want to make any efforts to retrieve us.

In the North, the soldiers and their families were designated outcasts  
and left to perish in the mines.

It's unknown if any of the prisoners are still alive, but their children remain.

I meet Che Ayin.

She was six when her father was killed in an explosion at a North Korean mine,  
but it wasn't until after his death she learned he was a South Korean soldier.

Suddenly the years of being beaten at school made sense.

She'd been punished by association.

When I found out I hated him, she tells me.

I blamed him so much for making us all suffer.

Only when she escaped to South Korea did she realise her father was a war hero.

Back at Mr Lee's and he shuffles through to the living room.

By the time he arrived home, already old and frail, his parents had passed away.

They'd been told their son had been killed in action.

I pity my friends that couldn't come home.

The war hasn't ended.

We need to be reunified.

We are one people.

We cannot be divided.

The absence of peace between the North and South

have left Lee and the families of these soldiers struggling to find peace of their own.

Jean Mackenzie in Seoul.

As the heat wave continues across the Mediterranean,

there's been lots of focus on elderly people as likely victims.

In Italy, a bed-ridden man in his 90s was burned to death in his home,  
unable to flee from the approaching wildfires.

Others, less dramatically, simply die because their bodies can't cope with the extreme temperatures.

But now the United Nations Children's Agency, UNICEF, has warned that  
half of all young people in Europe and Central Asia

are regularly exposed to severe heat waves,

and they say children are also particularly vulnerable to their effects.

Our correspondent, Imogen Folks, is in Geneva, where UNICEF is based,

and took me through what their new report is saying.  
Parts of Europe, Switzerland where I am, the Alpine region,  
they are heating up faster than the global average.  
Parts of Spain, Greece, Italy, parts of Central Asia.  
Now, here, we are having more heat waves and more often.  
That means that in this part of the world,  
half of all children are now exposed to frequent extreme heat.  
The average globally is a quarter of all children,  
so I think what UNICEF is pointing to is the fact that this needs to be addressed  
and the vulnerability of children's health in this extreme heat.  
And why is it that children are vulnerable,  
not just the numbers, but that their health is particularly vulnerable  
when it comes to high temperatures?  
Well, children are smaller.  
Their core temperature heats up faster and higher than adults would.  
And it's when your core temperature goes up above the average  
that you start to be vulnerable to things like heat stroke,  
to things like strain on your heart.  
In addition, a dehydrated child will deteriorate.  
We see that whenever there's an outbreak of cholera or dire, for example,  
in a refugee camp, children deteriorate much, much faster.  
So they are especially vulnerable when the temperature shoots up above 30,  
getting close to 40 degrees, even here in the Alpine regions of Europe.  
They are very, very vulnerable.  
We see now, even where I live, children being kept indoors  
in the hot hours of the afternoon.  
That's not a lie for them.  
UNICEF is saying government's health services need to look very hot  
at how they incorporate protecting children's health into their climate mitigation.  
Imaging folks, anyone traveling through Taiwan's main airport this week  
might have been just a little alarm to find it apparently under attack  
with planes and helicopters sweeping in.  
In fact, this was just a practice run  
with the country's armed forces mocking up an attack by China.  
But it was just part of a whole series of military exercises in Taiwan this week,  
the biggest for nearly a quarter of a century.  
They reached their climax today with a mock invasion of beaches  
close to the capital Taipei, which were repelled by defending forces.  
Our Asia correspondent, Rupert Wingfield Hayes, is in Taiwan  
and watch the invasion take place.  
A beach in northern Taiwan is under attack.  
Invading forces from China have landed and are attempting to secure a beachhead.  
But Taiwan's own troops are fighting hard.  
The invaders are being driven back.

This, of course, is not a real battle, but a drill, designed to show China and the rest of the world that Taiwan is ready and to silence doubters who say the island has for far too long not taken the threat from China seriously enough.

Alessio Patalano is Professor of War Studies at Kings College London.

He says Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year has been a massive wake-up call for Taiwan.

The war in Ukraine shattered this fundamental assumption that war is a thing of the past.

Once that sort of myth is shattered, then everything else starts to be re-evaluated.

The sense of the war is that the war is a thing of the past.

The sense of urgency is being driven by China's President Xi Jinping.

He has described unification of Taiwan with China as inevitable and has even set a deadline, 2049.

Professor Patalano says China is building a military so overwhelmingly powerful it believes Taiwan will eventually capitulate without a fight.

But the clock is ticking

and a military attack on the island is Xi Jinping's plan of last resort.

Still to come on this podcast.

This day in this place it is always important to remember

that we are all brothers, right, left, secular, religious

and when a terrorist looks through the window he does not distinguish between us.

Anger after a hard line Israeli politician visits one of Islam's holiest sites.

Now, how much freedom and justice would you be prepared to give up on for the sake of security?

That is a very real question for the people of El Salvador.

The country's president Naib Boukeli is accused of playing fast and loose with the constitution and he's also locked up thousands of alleged gang members often on the most flimsy evidence like having a tattoo, but the measure seems to be popular.

Crime has gone down and now El Salvador's parliament has approved legislation that will pave the way for mass prosecutions.

Huge groups of people being tried at the same time.

Our reporter Mimi Swabi told me how this new system will work.

This legislation will basically allow prosecutors to try up to 900 people in one sitting as long as they're suspected of being part of the same criminal group the same criminal gang or from the same geographical area in El Salvador.

Now, these gangs are mainly the MS-13 and their rivals 18th Street.

So the law was passed very easily with 67 votes in favour and only six against.

As lawmakers from President Naib Boukeli's party, his new ideas party, which has the majority in Congress, said that these measures are going to boost order and efficiency.

Will it make any difference really?

That's the big question.

I think it's designed or it's aiming to address a backlog in the legal system.

So official figures say that more than 70,000 alleged gang members have been arrested in the last 16 months.

But the majority is still waiting trials.

That's about 60,000 roughly at the moment as we speak.

There have been opposition politicians and human rights groups saying that these group trials are a risk of depriving those of a right to a fair trial and taking away their individual presumption of innocence, something that Boukeli has denied.

So what are the people of El Salvador think of this?

These tough measures are quite popular.

There's been a significant drop in homicides, in crime such as extortion and drug dealing on the streets of El Salvador.

So communities who are once terrorised by gangs couldn't even leave their homes starting to lead somewhat of a normal life again, which as you can imagine has gone down really well.

But on the other side of that we have international accusations of human rights abuses by the police and army with overcrowding in this new mega prison.

Deaths in custody, reports of torture.

Also been reports of police having to meet quotas for arresting people.

Mimi Swabi talking to Beverly Ocheng.

It is certainly one way to wind people up in the Muslim world.

Israel's extreme right national security minister Itamar Ben Kavir has made a third visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied east Jerusalem.

This is considered to be one of the holiest sites in Islam.

Mr. Ben Kavir's presence a provocation.

But when he toured the site with a security detail he was recorded saying it was the most important place for Israelis who he said needed to show their authority.

This day in this place it is always important to remember that we are all brothers.

Right, left, secular, religious, and when a terrorist looks through the window he does not distinguish between us.

Unity is important.

Love of Israel is important.

And this place is the most important place for the people of Israel to which we need to return and show our sovereignty.

The Kingdom of Jordan has condemned the visit describing it as a flagrant violation of international law.

Growing numbers of Jewish religious nationalists are now visiting Al-Aqsa which is only open to Muslim worship.

Now when you've climbed one of the highest mountains in the world most of us would want a serious break.

Time to recover from the aches, pains, and possible injuries acquired along the way.

Not so Kristin Harila from Norway and her Nepalese guide Tenjin Sherpa.

They've just recorded the fastest ever time for women climbing all 14 of the world's peaks that are over 8,000 meters.

That includes of course Mount Everest.

But their grand finale was reaching the top of K2 in Pakistan, considered perhaps the hardest of all mountains to climb. And they did all this in just over three months, as Liv Pekka Pelham reports. Climbing all 14 highest peaks in a few months is a challenging feat. Around 40 mountaineers have completed it so far. Only a few of them are women. Scaling Mount K2, the world's second highest summit at 8,600 meters, is particularly tricky. Far more difficult than Everest due to its notoriously fickle weather. It has only been scaled by 425 people including 20 women since 1954. This was Ms. Harila and her Nepalese guide Tenjin Sherpa's 14th peak, which they completed in 92 days. Ms. Harila was born in Varso on the barren sea in Norway's northernmost reaches, where the highest point is just over 600 meters. She discovered her passion for climbing only in 2015, when she won a trip to Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The 37-year-old, however, struggled to secure sponsors and subsequently sold her apartment to fund her quest to climb the highest mountains in the shortest time. In her race to set the record, Ms. Harila had to climb 12 of the highest peaks twice, including Everest, Kanchenjunga, Lotse and Annapurna. The pair beat the previous record holder, Nirmal Pooja from Nepal, who topped all the peaks in six months and one week in 2019.

Lipika Pelham.

To the women's world football cup now, where the defending champions, the United States, narrowly avoided an upset in their group match against the Netherlands. It was a close game, with the Dutch team managing to hold the U.S. to a draw, a result which left some fans on both sides pretty upbeat. I think they were a little slow to get started in the first half and the second half. I think they did a really great job and played very aggressively. I mean, it was a well-fought game. I felt we played better than we did in the last game. I was very proud of the second half and I think that there's still more to come. It was a good result. We were still in the pool games, so we've seen them in the final again and then we will show it at the end a better one. Go Holland! Yeah, awesome defense. They were on their top game today, I reckon. USA captain Lindsay Horan came to the rescue of the defending champions, who before this game had won 13 world cup matches in a row. In Thursday's other group games, Nigeria stunned co-host Australia, beating them 3-2 in Brisbane, and World Cup debutants Portugal, East Pass Vietnam 2-0. Now, which famous children's doll do you think has sold out in many countries?

It's perhaps obvious.

Barbie, the pint-sized pin-up style plastic toy, which has had a boost lately from the release of a film by the same name, albeit one with a real-life human actress taking the title role.

Now, you might think that Barbie's makers would be popping champagne corks, or maybe to keep in with Barbie's clean living image, they'd be sipping orange juice.

But in fact, the toy giant Mattel has reported a 13% fall in overall sales in the three months to June.

Indeed, the company's been struggling to get toy sales back to pre-pandemic levels.

And as our business correspondent, Marika Oi reports,

Mattel's now hoping that Barbie will help turn its fortunes round after the recent bad news.

Doesn't it feel a bit like we're all living in a Barbie world?

We've been talking a lot about how the movie has done extremely well,

a record-breaking debut in cinemas, of course, over the weekend,

and its ticket sales for the first weekend are the highest this year,

and in fact, the fourth best ever after two Avengers and one Star Wars movies.

Now, Mattel hasn't actually said if the company can make money directly from the movie,

but it is still counting on the movie's popularity to help drive dull sales for the rest of the year.

And when the company managed to post a surprise profit thanks to strong sales of movie-related toys,

they've decided to expand its range for the rest of the year as well.

Now, Mattel is also releasing several more movies about its other brands like Hot Wheels and Poli Pocket over the next few years, creating what the company's boss calls a Mattel universe, just like Marvel's universe, and they're hoping to use the Barbie movie's success as a template.

But also, interestingly, in this earnings report, the man who helped revive the Barbie brand, the company's chief operating officer, Richard Dixon, he's been poached as the CEO of Gap, so who knows what kind of impact that might have on Mattel as well.

Marika Oi 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 at bbc.co.uk. You can also find us on Twitter, at Global News Pod.

This edition was mixed by Sholota Dajimska, and the producer was David Lewis. The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Paul Moss. Until next time, goodbye.