

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Putin deploying nuclear weapons to Belarus

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Hello, I'm Oliver Conway. This edition is published in the early hours of Sunday, the 26th of March. Vladimir Putin says he's deploying tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

The US says it sees no indication Russia is preparing to use them.

After another day of mass protests in Israel, the Defence Minister has called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to freeze planned changes to the legal system. And tornadoes have killed more than 20 people in the US state of Mississippi. Also in the podcast Art or Pawn, the image which cost a head teacher her job. And the book began really as not a book. I never dreamt that it would ever be one. It was a series of drawings and conversations I used to send to friends.

We meet the creator and author of the Oscar-winning animated short film The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse. Since the start of his invasion of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin has repeatedly invoked the threat of nuclear weapons to try to deter Western support for the Ukrainians.

Now the Russian leader has announced he is deploying tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

President Putin said the Belarusian president had offered to host the nuclear weapons in the same way that American allies do for US missiles. Our Russia editor Steve Rosenberg sent this report

from Moscow. Vladimir Putin had indicated a few months ago that some Belarusian military planes had been re-equipped to potentially carry nuclear missiles and that Russia was training Belarusian crews. Now he has said that again, adding that by the first of July, Russia will finish construction of a storage facility in Belarus for tactical nuclear weapons.

But he gave no details of when those weapons would be transported there. If they are, he made it clear that Moscow would not be transferring control of such arms to Minsk. As Western nations continue to beride military support to Ukraine, the Kremlin, with this idea of stationing tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, is sending a signal to the West. Don't forget that Russia is a nuclear power. Steve Rosenberg in Moscow. Well, staying with Russia, the Wagner-Merseny group was originally

made up of battled, hardened veterans. But last year, it recruited thousands of Russian prisoners into its ranks. They were thrown into fighting in eastern Ukraine, used in human wave attacks in the battle for Bakhmut. Thousands are thought to have died with others reportedly executed for desertion. But those able to survive for six months are, in theory, now due to be pardoned. And the head of Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, says thousands have now finished their tour of duty. To date, more than 5,000 people have completed their contract with Wagner and have been pardoned and released. The percentage of people who committed repeated crimes during

a month is around 0.3 percent. This is 10 to 20 times less than the standard figures before the

start of the special military operation. I can say with confidence that we have reduced crime in Russia by 10 times. Military analysts say the departure of these ex-convicts from the battlefield is likely to weaken Wagner, which is now banned by the Kremlin from recruiting more prisoners. I heard the details from our Europe regional editor, Danny Eberhardt. There was a report by US military intelligence in December that 40,000 people at least had been recruited. It's very hard to verify these things. What we do know is that Wagner, probably from the late spring, were recruiting prisoners already, certainly through the summer. And a very interesting video emerged in the middle of September, where Yevgeny PregoZHin himself was seen in a prison making direct appeals to the prisoners to join up. And he was speaking a very direct language. Yevgeny PregoZHin himself is a former prisoner. He spent nine years in detention in the 80s in the Soviet Union for theft and fraud. And they've been a useful force, a paramilitary force, for the Russians in eastern Ukraine. They've certainly had some successes on the front sheer numbers. And also, they take a lot of risks. As a consequence, their casualty rates are very large. These people, remember, Oli, are often very poorly trained. They have a little option when they're told to go on an offensive, even if they are poorly equipped at the same time. And we know what the future holds for Wagner. If they have indeed pardoned these 5,000 men, that's 5,000 less people involved in the fighting, many more might have died, and they're not allowed to recruit any new prisoners.

Basically, the pardoning process, we don't know the full details of. It's a state secret in Russia. In terms of what awaits Wagner, with these tensions with the Russian military, we've seen, for example, many complaints by Yevgeny PregoZHin about the level of equipment they've received and the level of back-up support. It's a very strange force. It's often billed as a mercenary force, but there's clearly also a state connivance. It's useful for the Russian state to have a force that it can deny it has anything to do with to carry out its aims. Our Europe regional editor, Danny Eberhardt.

For three months, Israel has been convulsed by huge protests against plans by the new hard-line government to curb the power of the courts. On Saturday, thousands of Israelis once again took to the streets of Tel Aviv. The prime minister, Benjamin Nahonyahu, has insisted that he intends to press on with the judicial overhaul. But now he is facing dissent from inside his own party. Speaking in a televised address, Israel's defense minister, Yohav Galant, called for the changes to be paused. That intervention prompted the far-right police minister, Itamar Ben-Gavir, to call for Mr Galant to be sacked. Our Middle East editor, Sebastian Asher, told me more about the defense minister's intervention.

It had been billed as a special statement just two days ago. There had been a statement he was due to make, and that was called off. He was called in by Mr Netanyahu. And after that, he canceled the statement, and Mr Netanyahu then made his own televised address, essentially trying

to reassure the Israeli public that he was doing everything he could to try and get a solution that would satisfy everybody. That didn't seem to change anybody's opinion. So there was anticipation that maybe Mr Galant would this time actually put his cards on the table and give his resignation, walk out of the government over this issue. The reason why is that he's the defense minister. The reservists in the army have been saying more and more that if this overhaul goes through, it evades anti-democratic, they won't serve. And the reserves are the heart of Israeli society historically and even now. So that's a massive threat. And in his statement, this is what he

said. He said he'd never encountered the intensity of anger and pain as he's seen. He said that he will not give his hand to this process. And he called for the legislation process to stop. He didn't call for an end to a judicial overhaul. He said this is needed. So that is where he stands at the moment. He's opposed to the way things are going, but he's not walking out of the government yet because of the issue itself. But he is issuing a challenge to the prime minister. And it's the first sign of cracks appearing in that hardline coalition. It is. And it is a relatively big crack. But we're seeing the 12th week of these massive protests. It's the rift in Israeli society, which is what scares people. The president, Isaac Herzog, has warned on several occasions that this is a threat, existential threat to its democracy. And he's offered what he says is an answer. He says that he's worked on a solution or compromise, which the opposition said they accepted when Mr Netanyahu has refused this. So at the moment, the government, Mr Netanyahu

seems set on pushing this through. They are committed to this policy.

But briefly, looking at these pictures, still people on the streets as we speak, do you think he will eventually have to back down?

Who knows? So much political capital has now been put to this. And as we're saying, this is the third month. There are 195,000 people reported on the streets of Tel Aviv. But we have seen that again and again. So he's resisted pressure so far internationally as well. The question is, how much longer does he think he can risk all of that pressure?

But what he has to worry about is splitting his own cabinet. He managed finally to end years of two and throwing one election after another coalition that couldn't stand.

He got a coalition that was big enough together to finally come back fully into power.

That's what he doesn't want to lose. And that was Sebastian Asher.

My city is gone. The words of one mayor and the US state of Mississippi as residents assessed the damage caused by several powerful tornadoes. At least 25 people are known to have been killed.

Thunderstorms also battered areas with hailstones the size of golf balls.

President Biden has called it heartbreaking and said victims would be given emergency support.

Chantel Hartle reports.

As daylight came, so too did the realization of the scale of destruction.

Despite weather warnings, few could have predicted these storms would leave a trail of damage stretching more than 160 kilometres. The force of the tornadoes was strong enough

to tear roofs from houses and even flatten neighbourhoods in several parts of western Mississippi. The town of Rolling Fork, home to around 2,000 people, is unrecognisable.

Drone footage shows buildings reduced to rubble and mangled cars flipped on their side.

One resident said a tornado struck a relative's house, a wall collapsed,

trapping several people inside. Bruce Williams is a sheriff in nearby Silver City.

Around 8.20 we had the tornado sirens going on, warning people to take cover.

It happened so fast. Right now we've got multiple homes damaged in the Silver City area.

We're going to have makeshift shelters at the multi-purpose building and buildings on it, and at the school. Right now we're going to have the school buses here to bus people out

that vehicles were damaged in the tornado that needed a ride.

This man in Winona described the moment tornado ripped down trees around his house.

We got to get ourselves into the middle part of the house and we did and we got in there and obviously it was coming right behind us because as soon as we got in there we heard a big boom

and didn't hear anything else for a little while so we walked out and then just came out to about 10 trees down in our yard.

Search and rescue teams continue to look for survivors as more people are thought to be trapped in their homes and shelters have opened. Although there's been a brief respite from the storms during the day, weather forecasters say more severe thunderstorms could be on the way for Sunday. These deadly tornadoes in the deep south come after a winter of extreme weather in this part of the US and with the tornado season not officially expected to peak for another few months, there are worries this deadly weather could become even more common.

Chantel Hartle reporting.

Last Monday the International Monetary Fund approved a \$3 billion bailout to help Sri Lanka battle its worst economic crisis since independence. Some see it as a lifeline for a country hit hard by Covid, soaring prices and inflation of more than 50% but the loan comes with a set of demands on austerity and governance and many are worried about whether the money will

make any real difference to the daily lives of ordinary Sri Lankans as Archana Shukla reports from Colombo.

Life has been stagnating for Sri Lankans for almost a year. The government now hopes the IMF loan will put the economy back on track. I'm hopping onto this train to meet the local people. It's buzzing but inside this compartment we can almost feel a sense of anxiety among ordinary Sri Lankans about the future. Manili Appa, a retired school teacher, tells me she's not convinced. Poor people stay poor. These people are suffering every day. So I don't think that people in the country will benefit because of the IMF loan.

Dayani, a housewife, who's traveling to her hometown, tells me she has no faith in the promises of a revival.

We spend most of our hard-earned income buying food. We've stopped traveling and cut our power usage. We have stopped enjoying our life. This government tries to suppress those who speak against them. See, everyone is afraid to talk to you. Jax and electricity tariff hikes taken recently by the government to boost its coffers have hurt even the dollar-generating export units. Madhura, a textile importer, tells me he has closed his businesses because of losses. I used to import textiles but have closed my businesses. I'm in severe losses and don't see a government plan to help us. As the president rose to present the IMF deal to the parliament, he said he was confident IMF-mandated long list of reforms will deliver.

Because of this agreement, financial discipline in our country will become legislated. Stringent new laws for the prevention of corruption will be introduced. As I walk around talking to people here, one thing is clear. The IMF loan might encourage investors but there is still a crisis of confidence. Many people here say there doesn't seem to have been enough explanation to the public

on why these hard-hitting economic reforms were needed.

Achana Shukla reporting from Sri Lanka. He coined Moore's law, the prediction that computer processing power would double every year. Gordon Moore, the co-founder of Intel at one time the world's largest semiconductor maker, has died at the age of 94. He is seen as a giant in the technological transformation of the modern age, helping companies bring ever more powerful chips to smaller and smaller computers. Harvey Feinberg, president of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, spoke to Julian Waraker about him.

Gordon Moore was a towering figure in Silicon Valley, in business, and in philanthropy. I'd like to think of Gordon as someone who had both vision and a very practical way of getting things accomplished. We feel very fortunate at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to be able to live out the legacy of the vision that he and his wife Betty set forth about 23 years ago when they established the foundation. Intel's work was all about embedding microprocessors into what have become everyday items, and this was truly groundbreaking at the time.

It was transformational. It's hard to overstate the impact that the technological developments that Gordon and his colleagues pioneered have made to our lives every day. Indeed, the world was changed by Gordon Moore and by his associates and by those who followed them in Silicon Valley.

At the same time, he always had a vision for making lasting change for the good in the world. He did that through his business and then more recently in the last several decades through his philanthropy. Putting significant sums of money into education, among other things. Indeed, his major interests were basic science and environmental conservation. Over the last two decades, the foundation has invested more than five billion US dollars in these efforts for philanthropy and advances in the quality of life around the world. The foundation today has over eight billion in assets, and Gordon set it up so that it would proceed over time to continue to meet the most important challenges of the day.

Despite all of those achievements, I read that he was really quite a modest man.

I'd like to say I never met anyone with a smaller ratio of ego to achievement than Gordon Moore. He also had one of the highest ratios of value per word uttered. He was a rather taciturn man, but when he spoke, it was with great wisdom and always with care and insight into the problem at hand. Harvey Feinberg on Gordon Moore, who's died at the age of 94. Still to come.

Oh, I've had some people have said that I'm not a singer.

How to sell a house that no one seems to want.

Over the past few days, France has been gripped by violent protests over President Macron's decision to push through controversial pension reforms, and there are more planned for next week. But on Saturday, the west of France saw separate demonstrations about the building of reservoirs for agriculture. Crowds threw missiles at the security forces who responded with tear gas and water cannon. The protest organisers said that while the whole of France was mobilising to defend pensions, they were standing up to defend water. Our correspondent in Paris, Bethany Bell, told me more about the demonstrations in western France.

This was a separate protest. It was a protest very specifically about water usage by these big agricultural producers. But of course, there were these scenes of police cars being set on fire, demonstrators throwing stones and Molotov cocktails. And we were told by the authorities that at least one demonstrator and one policeman have been seriously hurt.

But what was interesting today was to see how some of the demonstrators today in western France were quick to link their struggle with those nationwide protests that have been going on against President Macron and his unpopular pension reforms. So there is a sense that this is a very angry society in terms of the opponents of President Macron, and it's being extended beyond the anger about the social reforms that he's trying to bring in. And it's embracing other causes as well. And this could pose a problem for Mr Macron if something develops like the

yellow vest movement that we saw a few years ago.

Why is there so much anger in France at the moment? I mean, many other countries talking about the pension reform have a retirement age, well, 64 or higher.

I think there's a lot of anger among protesters about the way President Macron handled this, some are saying that he has a very top down way of governing. And the unions have complained that he has not been willing to sit and negotiate with them over a possible compromise. And even people, one man I spoke to today who said he was fed up with the protesters, he said they were getting in the way of early of everyday life. But he said, you know, at the end of the day, it's always the rich that went out, and that's what governments are. So there is this sense, I think, among many of the protesters, they're angry with his style of government as well. And also the way he tried to bring these reforms in that it was anti-democratic, they felt. President Macron himself says that these reforms are necessary for France's economy, and that there's hope that they'll kind of kickstart it and try and bring things like, after previous reforms were brought in, there were drops in unemployment. But certainly, I think his style of government is upsetting a lot of people here.

Bethany Bell in France. India's main opposition leader Rahul Gandhi has promised to continue speaking out against the country's controversial prime minister. Mr. Gandhi was disqualified from parliament after receiving a prison sentence for defaming Narendra Modi. He says the move was politically motivated. He was being silenced for asking, quote, tough questions about Mr. Modi's relationship with a controversial businessman. Sanjay Dasgupta reports.

Rahul Gandhi's dramatic disqualification from parliament came as a shock, even for those who have long claimed that in Narendra Modi's India, democracy is stung with authoritarianism. Mr. Gandhi himself remains defiant. This morning, he lost no time to point out that democratic values were at stake. My job, as I see it, is to defend the democratic nature of this country. And I will do whatever I have to do, whatever I have to do, to defend the democratic nature of this country. The ruling BJP said the decision to disqualify Mr. Gandhi was in accordance with parliamentary laws and criticized the Congress party for questioning the verdict. But this has been seen as a bold attempt to winnow out Mr. Modi's potential challenges ahead of general elections due next year. And as one prominent Congress leader has pointed out, Mr. Gandhi's disqualification is echoing around the world. It is generating wall-to-wall coverage in the Indian media. With it has come the obvious question. By this one move, has Mr. Modi's party unwittingly given a new lease of political life to Rahul Gandhi, who after all had been comprehensively defeated in the last general election? Sanjay Desculptor. A high school principal or head teacher in the US state of Florida has been forced to resign after a parent complained that she showed students pornography. So what exactly was it that was so offensive? Charlotte Gallagher takes up the story. Michelangelo was the first superstar artist. His statue of David, the most famous statue in the world, personifies the aesthetics of high renaissance art, the politics of renaissance. Yes, the pornography that cost a principal her job was a photo of one of the greatest sculptures of all time, Michelangelo's David. People queue for hours to see it at a gallery in the Italian city of Florence, marvelling in its wonder. But thousands of kilometres away in the US state of Florida, David has had rather a different reception. A class of 11 and 12 year olds was shown a picture of the sculpture in a lesson about renaissance art. The statue depicts a naked David, the biblical figure who kills the giant Goliath. But one parent complained the material was pornographic,

and two others said they wanted to know about the lesson before it was taught. Hope Karsgir, who was the principal of Tallahassee classical school, said she was then given an ultimatum, resign or be fired. She believes it was because of David. The chair of the school board, Barney Bishop III, told a US website that in previous years parents had been told that pupils would be shown the sculpture, and it was an egregious mistake. This hadn't happened this year. Adding that parents are entitled to know any time their child is being taught a controversial topic and picture. In the background to all this is moves by the Florida Governor, Ron DeSantis, to expand a law that would ban public schools from teaching sex education and gender identity. Teachers who violate the law face being suspended or losing their teaching licenses.

Charlotte Gallagher. It started out as a few comforting drawings for friends which found their way onto social media and generated a huge response. It then became a book which sold 8 million copies and ultimately a film with a star studded voice cast which won an Oscar for Best Animated Short. Quite a journey for Charlie Mackasey, author of *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse*. He spoke to Simon Jack. The book began really as not a book and never he dreamt that it would ever be one. It was a series of drawings and conversations like he used to send to friends and then I posted them on WhatsApp, on Instagram, posted them on Instagram and there was such a reaction. I was approached by a publisher and we made the book. It took a while. The reaction was pretty surprising and very, very lovely and sometime in 2020 I think lots of people were interested in making a film. I used to see the film on my bedroom ceiling when I was to lie there. I used to sort of imagine seeing them move and hear music and things. We all have dreams. I never really thought that it would ever be one. And the characters in the film, you've got *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, The Horse*, are these different parts of the same person? To be truthful it was never very conscious what I was doing and the reason why the characters were so strong and different was they probably do represent different parts of all of us, you know, whether it's *The Mole* who just defaults the cake as a sort of self-medicating thing and *The Boy* just has many questions like we all do and *The Fox* is wary because he's been hurt and we all have bits of us that are hurt and *The Horse* is probably the deepest bit of us. The gentlest part has always been quietly sitting there. Everyone has their theories and I like that. I'm not too prescriptive about it. I just like other people to make up their own minds really. Right at the beginning of the film *The Mole* asks *The Boy*, what do you want to be when you grow up? And he says kind, quite a moving moment. *The Mole* says it's a very good answer and that kindness lies behind everything says *The Mole*, but not everyone has been kind to this. There's been some criticism, people saying it's a bit saccharine for their taste. How did you take that criticism? You can't please everyone, you never could and it's fine and everybody will have an opinion and for those who liked it, I'm thrilled. It's fine to not like it and I tend to remember, you know, the people who it gave meaning to or helped them get through the day because some people just said, I just got to get through another hour and the book helped me do that. One of the themes of the book seems to be resilience. In a way, I just wonder whether you feel more resilient as a result of telling this story. Has the recognition of it and the success of it changed who you are? Are you the same person as before this book started? It's a really good question. I think on one level, I feel completely like I always have been. I'm just sort of muddling along with an old dog and that's where I am. But on another level, I feel the journey has connected me with a lot of people

have been brought in to a lovely community. So that has changed me. You can't not be changed by friendships, you can't avoid it. And those connections have definitely had an effect on me. Yeah, that new community of people includes people like Tom Hollander, Idris Elba, Gabriel Byrne, you got Woody Harrelson, executive producing quite a different world from doing some drawings

on your own in your room. That must have been quite an experience. Did you get to choose who played which character? Yeah, I did. We could choose. But I think I'd always hope that Tom would do it because his voice is so velvety and we had to audition lots of boys with soft Scottish accent. Idris was keen to do it and we're so grateful. I think that's the thing. And Gabriel Byrne, actually, we were struggling with the horse and I decided to write to him. And so, dear Gabriel, I think your voice is beautiful. She fancied me in the horse and I left my phone number never thinking I'd get a reply. And then my phone rang and it was like, Hey, is that Charlie? And I said, Yeah, it's Gabriel. I said, Oh, Gabriel, how are you? And I said, You got my letter. He said, I got your letter. And I said, Do you fancy being the horse? It was a long pause. And he went, Charlie, I am the horse. So I kind of lay on the grass and thought that was the funniest thing. And, you know, deeply moved and great fun. So we had this little team. And ultimately, at the end of the day, there are people like everybody else. They're lovely. I would really, really love it if we could make do other things, obviously, and make another book. Maybe I mean, I'm surrounded in piles of drawings. Charlie Maxey talking to Simon Jack. Now, what do you do if you're trying to sell a home but no one is interested? You can drop the asking price, or you can burst into song about it. One property agent in Central England did both. Claire Cossey performed her own version of the song, The Neverending Story, which recently featured in the Netflix hit, Stranger Things. And as our correspondent, Sean Dilly reports, it seems to be working. You won't see or hear many property promos like this.

But Claire, a former professional singer turned property seller, hopes this will bring in the buyers. Claire Cossey first posted her take on Lamar's 1980s hit several months ago. But when she reduced the asking price for the five-bitroom property on Wednesday, she said her song went viral. It's been overwhelmingly phenomenal. The level of response that I've had was not something I was expecting testing this morning. I've had calls from all sorts of places. Just recently, I've just had one from LA. They want to feature it over there. From New York as well.

I've had it all. I've had some people have said that I'm not a singer, which was funny. Yeah, I've had people criticising everything, really, but I don't care. I think we're going to have you.

The 43-year-old Abba fan's video shows her touring the house in the village of Hotcliffe.

She says she doesn't care if her performance isn't everyone's cup of tea. She just hopes it will help land a sale.

Sean Dilly with that report.

And that is all from us for now, but the Global News podcast will be back at the same time tomorrow.

This edition was mixed by Annie Smith and produced by Emma Joseph.

Our editors, Karen Martin, I'm Oliver Conway. Until next time, goodbye.

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