

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

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

I'm Janet Jalil and in the early hours of Wednesday the 13th of September these are our main stories. Rescue teams are facing a huge challenge to deliver aid to parts of eastern Libya hit by catastrophic floods.

The US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has ordered an impeachment inquiry into President Biden. The former World No. 1 tennis star, Simona Halep, has been banned for four years for breaching anti-doping rules.

Also in this podcast...

It's back. It took 1,300 days, but here it is and I will hand it over in a few moments to the museum director.

A stolen Van Gogh painting is recovered by an art detective.

Libya, a country that's already been devastated by a decade of conflict, is now dealing with another disaster.

A powerful storm has burst dams, triggering floods that have swept away buildings and cars and killed more than 2,000 people in the east of the country.

The floods around the port city of Dona have been likened to a tsunami

and with at least 10,000 more people missing, it's feared that the number of dead will rise much higher.

Hisham Chicoat is an eastern government minister who visited Dona, a quarter of which has been wiped out

and where more than a thousand bodies have been recovered.

The massive neighborhood has been vanished and destroyed.

A large number of victims, the number is increasing each hour.

It's a calamity by all means.

We were there yesterday, we were shocked by the view.

I mean, it's a tsunami. As simple as that, you know, it's a tsunami.

The Libyan journalist Noura El-Jerbi, who lives in Tunis, has 35 family members who were all living in the same apartment building in Dona.

I couldn't reach them for around 48 hours and even now I didn't reach them.

I reached out to the rescue team where they went to the place and they checked.

The house has been destroyed but my family managed to get out before things get worse.

They are safe now, as I told. I didn't hear from them directly.

They are in a shelter place but they are in shortage of food, they are in shortage of medical aids, they are in shortage of clothes and the situation is not very the best, but at least they are still alive.

I have one aunt who is still missing with her son.

We don't have any news about her, she lives in another different building and we still couldn't reach out to her or even get any news about her.

Aid supplies have been flown into eastern Libya from Egypt and Turkey

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

and other countries are rushing to help.

But the scale of the challenge in this divided nation is huge.

Our Middle East regional editor, Mike Thompson, gave us this update.

The latest development is what you mentioned there about aid arriving

and it must be such an enormous relief to the person we just heard from there with her family.

So many members of the family in the same block and up to now there's been no help that could get to people.

It still hasn't arrived with anybody but at least it's in the country, Turkish and Egyptian help.

There's been a big pledge from the internationally recognized government in Tripoli.

It's pledged more than \$400 million to help rebuild Derna and Benghazi

and the UN is mobilizing on the ground.

So at least although there's utter chaos and terrible destruction, help is there.

It is starting to trickle through.

And you've touched on it there that there is this division in Libya between different administrations which must be complicating the aid effort.

Absolutely, Janet. Yes, I mean you've got two governments.

One in the East, the government in to Brooke Benghazi.

Then you've got the government in the West, the internationally recognized government.

And they're two rival institutions.

There's two prime ministers in the country and there's constant infighting between them.

And when an election was due to be held at the end of 2021, which could have brought unity in a unified government,

no one could agree on who was eligible to stand and the rules of the election.

So that never happened.

So you can just imagine with all that, trying to coordinate actions is going to be very difficult.

Although I do sense that there's a spirit there to definitely try on both ends of the country.

Because perhaps given the huge scale of this tragedy, this could be an opportunity for it to help reunite Libyans.

Indeed, that's true because we've seen already this donation I mentioned,

that's 400 million from the West to the East.

And yesterday, the administration in Tripoli talked of the unity of all Libyans in this crisis.

So, you know, maybe a terrible event like this could actually help bring some kind of togetherness to this long divided country.

Mike Thompson.

Next to Morocco and hopes are fading of finding earthquake survivors in the remote Atlas Mountains as rescue efforts are now continuing into their fifth day.

With nearly 3,000 people now known to have died, the government has been criticised for only accepting help from a handful of countries

and ignoring offers from others like France or Algeria.

The French President, Emmanuel Macron, addressed the Moroccan public about Friday's earthquake in a video message.

He said that Paris was ready to provide help in the recovery if King Mohammed VI accepted France's offer.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

For now, it's ordinary Moroccans who are providing most of the help. Karin Tobi sent this report from one of the many villages destroyed by the quake. This is the village of the Wartarga. There were about 100 homes here. People have been digging through the rubble since the deadly earthquake hit on Friday. Now that the rescue teams have arrived, the search continues for any bodies. Days after the earthquake, there is no more hope to find any survivors in this village. Its rescuers are looking for three bodies, a grandfather, a father and a toddler. They are doing so with their bare hands. This is also how Eda Abdullah Hussain searched for his wife, son and daughter, whose bodies he recovered hours after the earthquake hit. My wife was here. There was my daughter. She was like this. And over there, my son. I dug with my own hands and with the help of some people here, we pulled their bodies out. I lost my children. I lost everything. I appeal for the authorities and His Majesty the King to help me. May they rest in peace. Amen. The only people trapped under the rubble who survived were those rescued by the villagers. The night the earthquakes struck. There were five of us. We went from one home to another, calling the residents by name, from door to door. We only focused on the houses from which people answered. Where we didn't get a reply, we moved on. We had to. Residents of the town are now refugees living on the road. During the day, they take shelter from the sun in the shade of a tree or under a makeshift tent. But at night, the bitter cold reminds them that winter is coming and they have no shelter. Karin Torbe in Morocco. Next to the United States and the most senior Republican in the U.S. Congress, Kevin McCarthy says he's ordered House committees to begin a formal impeachment inquiry into President Biden. Mr. McCarthy said his party had uncovered what he called serious and credible corruption allegations. He accused the president of lying about his family's business dealings. The American people deserve to know that the public offices are not for sale and that the federal government is not being used to cover up the actions of a politically associated family. Now, I would encourage the president and his team to fully cooperate with this investigation in the interest of transparency. Mr. McCarthy has been under pressure from far-right members of his own party to open impeachment proceedings. The White House has dismissed the Republicans' push for an investigation as baseless and politically motivated. My colleague, Evan Davis, spoke to our Washington correspondent, Sean Dilly, and asked him what the claims are against President Biden, especially in relation to his son, Hunter. These largely revolve around Ukraine where Hunter Biden, the president's son, was working for an energy company, Eurythmus. Republicans have suggested for some time that Joe Biden was involved in those business dealings at

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

a time when Joe Biden was vice president to Barack Obama at a time where Joe Biden had a role in tackling corruption within the Ukrainian system. This has always been denied fervently by Joe Biden, but Kevin McCarthy, the Republican Speaker of the House, has essentially pointed to three committees, the oversight, judiciary, and the ways and means, saying that he is now directing rather than what had been expected to seek a vote of 218 Republican party members, directing an impeachment inquiry. Now, it's really important to bear in mind the context here is there have been three attempts to impeach presidents. In 1868, President Johnson, Bill Clinton, 1998, Donald Trump was impeached twice, but as it needs a two-thirds majority of the upper house of the Senate, it's rather academic because it's a 51 to 49 Democratic party majority in that upper house. Let's go through this. This is actually not going to get anywhere is the conclusion of that. But is it going to absorb a lot of bandwidth in American politics over the next weeks and months? Yes, potentially the context is really important to understand this is both parties, Democratic Party and the Republicans are accusing the other of weaponizing institutions. In Donald Trump's cases, supporters of the former president will say that Joe Biden has caused the Department of Justice to indict him over serious allegations. That doesn't quite stack up, of course, because he's also been indicted in New York and in Georgia. These are state authorities, not Department of Justice. In this case, Kevin McCarthy has a reputation of speaking out both in favor of Donald Trump. He's very much on the right of the Republican Party and against Joe Biden. He's been hinting that he would like an impeachment inquiry for some time and looking at these kind of three committees that have been or subcommittees that have been investigating things. By the concession of these committees, there really isn't anything to conclusively suggest there is actually any evidence. The arguments on the part of the Republican Party members who advocate this is simply that there should be an inquiry now to hear that evidence. Sean Dilly, when you go to look for information on the Internet, which search engine do you use? For almost all of us, it will be Google. But how did it achieve this overwhelming dominance? That's at the heart of a major court case which began on Tuesday in Washington in which the US government has taken on the tech giant accusing it of abusing its power and stifling competition to secure its position as the world's go-to search engine. If the US Department of Justice wins its case, it could transform not just Google, but the whole big tech sector. A correspondent, Namia Iqbal, attended the trial in Washington. So the first big monopoly case of the tech era. It's the first one in decades. Last time this happened was in the late 90s concerning the Internet Explorer for Microsoft. And it's worth mentioning that this is a bypass as an issue. So many US governments including Donald Trump's and now President Biden's government have tried to reign in big tech. And so this is a big test for them. And as you mentioned there at the heart of it is how did Google

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

become so big?

Well, the claim that the Department of Justice is making is that Google illegally used its market muscle to stifle the competition and restrict choices for people.

And they claim they've done that by making deals with companies like Apple and Samsung.

So that basically when you go on your mobile phone or when you go on your tablet, you've kind of got no option but to use Google.

And that means no one else has a chance like Microsoft Bing or Duck Duck Go.

And in court, the Department of Justice used some pretty astonishing figures.

According to a data analysis firm, Google has amassed 90% of the search engine market here in the US and 91% globally.

Google is defending itself, of course. And we've been hearing the opening statements today saying, look, these deals with these companies were not exclusive.

Users can change the default settings if they want. And if they don't, it's because Google offers the best kind of search results compared to other search engines.

And also Google is saying, look, in a wider context, we are competing with Amazon and TikTok and other platforms so they don't believe that this 90% figure is true.

It's going to be a very long trial and it's going to be a pretty messy one as well.

And if Google are found guilty, what could the consequences be?

Well, that's what's at stake really here because it's serious business.

Google could end up having to restructure, could pay damages.

Google might not be the main default search engine that we have.

I mentioned there the Microsoft case back in the late 90s.

And Microsoft essentially broke up into two and it allowed the emergence of other big tech like Google.

So it's all very ironic. The cycle is repeating itself.

And I think what it would be is proof that the government can take on tech giants in these big antitrust cases.

Namia Iqbal.

In a surprise move, the energy company BP has announced that its chief executive, Bernard Looney, has stepped down after failing to disclose past personal relationships with colleagues.

Mr. Looney has led BP since 2020. Here's our business editor, Simon Jack.

This is a bombshell announcement at the very top of one of Britain's biggest business and most globally recognized businesses.

Bernard Looney has been at BP all of his professional life since the early 90s.

What's emerged is that in May of last year, an anonymous source informed the board about allegations about his personal conduct with colleagues.

Now the board looked into that at the time.

Mr. Looney admitted he had a small number of personal relationships.

They looked into that and found there had been no breach of their company's conduct.

However, in the last couple of days, it's emerged that very recent allegations of a similar nature have emerged.

And Mr. Looney has admitted that he wasn't fully transparent with the board at the time of that first review.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

And so he has resigned with immediate effect.

Now he has been credited with putting BP on a course to a greener future.

Although criticised in some quarters for dialing down those ambitions at the same time making enormous profits here.

But of course it's not the first high-profile dismissal we've seen at a time where there has been increased and some would say overdue scrutiny of senior executives' relationships in the workplace. Simon Jack.

A Dutch art detective nicknamed the Indiana Jones of the art world has recovered a painting by Vincent Bangok

which was stolen over three years ago from a museum in the Netherlands while it was closed during the Covid pandemic.

Arthur Brandt worked with the police to negotiate the safe return of the 19th century painting worth millions of dollars whose whereabouts had been a mystery until now.

He said it was one of the greatest moments of his life.

Paul Moss reports.

It wasn't the most sophisticated crime.

The thief used a sledgehammer to smash through the glass doors at the Singer-Laura Museum near Amsterdam and ran off with a painting under his arm.

A man known as Nils M. was arrested and subsequently convicted of the theft.

But nobody knew where the picture had gone until now.

Arthur Brandt is a self-styled art detective with a track record of recovering missing works.

He was contacted by a man who, he says, wanted to hand over the painting because apparently it was a headache to hold on to.

Shortly afterwards it was delivered to Mr. Brandt, covered in bubble wrap, he says, and carried in a blue IKEA bag.

He posted a video on social media shortly afterwards.

Stolen three and a half years ago on Van Gogh's birthday, it's one of the early works by Van Gogh, it's back.

It took thirteen hundred days, but here it is and I will hand it over in a few moments to the museum director.

The museum says Parsonage Garden at Noonan in spring will go back on public display next year.

But history suggests it won't be the last Van Gogh painting to go missing.

Twenty-eight have been stolen and then recovered over the past few decades.

An unusual, but perhaps rather direct form of compliment to the Netherlands's most famous artist.

Paul Moss.

Still to come?

I didn't get spat on at the start. This bird has a really good aim and it spat on my first right in the cheek.

Despite coming under attack from an unfriendly seabird, a seven-year-old boy has successfully climbed one of the UK's tallest sea stacks.

Heat waves, floods, droughts, wildfires.

Catastrophic consequences from climate change.

What's going on? Is this real?

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

The climate question is the podcast exploring our planet's changing environment and what we're doing across the world to adapt and respond to it.

The future is ahead of us, a very sensitive to the choices that we make today.

If we don't start fixing it, we're going to be victims of it.

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Welcome back to the Global News Podcast.

The United Nations is warning of a new crisis in Bosnia, three decades after the war that followed the breakup of the former Yugoslavia.

The Bosnian Serbs, who launched the original war in 1992, are threatening to succeed from the country.

And these threats have increased in the past couple of years after the UN-appointed high representative, the international official in charge of monitoring the peace, banned genocide denial. This was in response to Bosnian Serb leaders' persistence in describing as a myth the genocide of 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Zebranica in 1995.

Our special correspondent, Virgil Keane, reports from Bosnia on how the struggle over the past is threatening the stability of the present.

I've come into a warehouse in Tuzla, Bosnia.

And I'm walking past row upon row of steel shelves.

And on these are placed white canvas bags, which contain skeletal remains of people who were murdered during the genocide.

And above them brown paper bags, in which are placed the belongings, which have been found in different mass graves.

One name crops up again and again.

Srebrenica.

I am Dragana Vucicic, senior forensic anthropologist. I work for international commission on missing persons.

Eighty percent of the missing from Srebrenica have been found so far.

But still we have to do a lot.

A thousand people is still a lot.

A lot of families.

A thousand families wait for our phone call.

Identifying remains and connecting them with living relatives is the primary task.

But there is another imperative.

Dragana is Serbian and believes her own people in Serbia and Bosnia must face the truth of the past.

I think it is very important for society that we need to face with the past and we need to find out what really happened in the 90s in this region to change our history.

Bosnia has many sites which are infamous in the history of genocide.

But none, perhaps more, than here at Srebrenica.

I have come to meet a survivor of the Srebrenica genocide.

A man who is devoting his life to fighting lies and denial.

I met Nejad Avdic standing amid the white memorial stones to the dead at the Srebrenica cemetery.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

Among them his father and grandfather.

Why do you stay here?

After everything that's happened, given the threat that exists now, why do you stay here?

Living here, struggling here against that, that is therapy for me here.

Maybe for your, it is history.

But living here is a struggle on a daily basis against that.

Against denial?

Against denial and against everything.

Against the glorification of all criminals, against everything.

But now the Serb extremist leaders responsible, Radevan Karicic and General Mladic, are being celebrated by current Serb leaders like Milorad Dodik, president of the semi-autonomous Republika Srpska.

We must remember these men and keep our memory of them, regardless of whether they tell us we are glorifying, says Dodik.

I'm about 15 miles outside the town of Sokolac, in the heart of the Republika Srpska.

And this is, how can I describe it, except a carnival of Serb nationalism.

It's a night when hundreds of young people from the surrounding area have come out.

I met General Vinko Pandurovich at the nearby memorial to local Serbs, among them family members, killed in the war.

He served 10 years in a UN jail for aiding and abetting crimes against humanity at Srebrenica.

He failed to stop atrocities and punish the soldiers responsible.

Like other prominent Bosnian Serbs, he won't call what happened in Srebrenica genocide. Instead, a massacre for which he wasn't responsible.

How on earth can your conscience be clear when you are a Serb?

How on earth can your conscience be clear when you've been convicted of crimes against humanity in a atrocity like Srebrenica?

Simply put, a person just has to accept the things as they are.

If you cannot change them, then let it be.

This thing I cannot change.

I accept that it exists. I live with it.

It's a warm summer afternoon here in Sarajevo.

To my right is the Suad and Olga Bridge,

named after two women who were shot by Serb snipers at the very beginning of the conflict in 1992.

Talk to anybody who lived through that period,

and you realize that normality is simply a veneer.

They are haunted not just by what happened in the past, but about the rhetoric of the present.

Elmana Mamisevich is a professor of law at the University of Sarajevo.

Her father, grandfather and grandmother were all killed during the conflict.

It's very dangerous, especially for the survivors of genocide.

Everything looks very familiar.

The dehumanization, the celebration of war crimes and war criminals that caused unimaginable suffering for the victims of genocide and survivors.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

VERSIONS OF HISTORY

Versions of history, the manipulation of history, have long fuelled conflict here.

That is why truth matters so much now in Bosnia.

That report by Fergal Keane.

The beautiful Italian city of Venice is one of the most visited in the world, and soon you'll have to pay a little bit more to enjoy it.

The trial of a fee for daily visitors has been approved to try to control tourism.

The charge of five euros, approximately five dollars, will apply to all day trippers over the age of 14.

They'll have to pay and book their entry to the city in advance.

Beatrice Guzadi is a journalist in Venice.

Does she think this is going to work?

Absolutely not, I have to say.

Unfortunately, people have not welcomed this five euros fee to enter very well.

They feel this makes the city in a position that it looks like a theme park, which is not something people are very proud of,

because there are so many people and there's a community living here, and they don't feel like this is going to work.

Also, five euros is the price of a meal deal,

and I don't think personally it's going to be a deterrent enough for people coming in.

They're not going to just say,

oh no, I'm not going to come into Venice because there's a five euros fee.

But on the other side, the preventive booking system,

this is something that it's been proposed by citizens many years ago now, already in 2016 and 2017,

and it was never taken into thoughts by the government,

and now they are thinking about it, which is already something,

but obviously it needs to be put in place on the right way

and needs to be regulated and controlled by the authorities as well.

Journalist Beatrice Guzzardi.

The former tennis world number one, Simona Halep,

has been banned for four years for breaching anti-doping rules.

The two-time Grand Slam champion tested positive

for a prohibited substance the US opened last year.

Halep, who's 31, has said she will appeal.

I asked our tennis correspondent, Russell Fuller,

why such a severe penalty had been imposed.

The independent panel, Jeanette, took into account two different findings,

and they found that Simona Halep had committed a doping irregularity one for testing positive for Roxadou Stat,

which is sometimes used to treat anemia,

but has been on the anti-doping list for many, many years

when she returned a urine sample at the US Open 12 months ago,

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

and secondly, that there were irregularities in her biological passport. That's something that all athletes at the top levels of their sport have to sign up to, and it allows the authorities to monitor their blood to give them an idea of when doping might be taking place. They decided that the irregularities in her biological passport were likely to suggest that doping had taken place at some point in 2022. And as a result of having been found guilty effectively on those two counts, she's received a four-year suspension. And this could potentially spell the end of her career. Yes, if she's unable to play again for three more years, it would be incredibly difficult for her at the age of just 35 to come back and try and compete at the highest level. Three more years, because one year has already been served while she was waiting for this hearing to take place. The other factor is that she is planning to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which is where any tennis players who receive a verdict like this would need to appeal, too, if they want to take it any further. And she says, I refuse to accept this decision. She says she's shocked and disappointed. She does say that she adjusted her nutritional supplements ahead of the 2022 hard court season, which is where she returned this positive test. And the tribunal did accept that she had taken a contaminated supplement, but they decided that that would not have resulted in the concentration of rock-sadoo stat that was found in her urine sample. Russell Fuller. What comes first in the process of songwriting? The words or the music? Well, in the case of one of the world's most successful artists, Elton John, it's the words. But they've always come from someone else, his longtime collaborator, Bernie Torpin, a new autobiography from the man behind the lyrics in hits stretching back over 50 years, reveals what inspired Bernie Torpin. He's been speaking to our reporter, James Alexander. It's a pop partnership that started back in 1967. Elton John was a jobbing pianist from the London suburbs. Bernie Torpin was an aspiring poet from the Lincolnshire countryside. Together, they've written some of the most famous songs of all time. Elton and Bernie met after both answering a record company advert,

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

looking for new talent.

Bernie says it was the start of a purely platonic, 55-year bromance.

We hit it off immediately, I mean, and became sort of surrogate brothers to each other.

He was certainly like my big brother, and, I mean, because he was more...

...versed in the topography of London at the time and was playing in a semi-pro band, and basically rescued me from a strange situation when I first met him in the studio because I was almost thrown out because they didn't think that I belonged there, and I was just some sort of interloper.

But I'd been sent there to London and I'd been sent to London and I'd been sent to London and I'd been sent to London and I'd been sent to London and I'd been sent there to meet with him.

So he sort of rescued me just in time, you know, came in and said, is there a Bernie talk in here?

And I sort of rushed out and went, yeah, it's me, it's me, it's me.

Anyone who's seen the Rocket Man movie will remember that great scene where you and Elton have met and moved in together and you're sharing a rickety bunk bed writing all day, and that's how you come up with your song in the book, you suggest that's pretty much how it happened.

Yeah, absolutely, because you see us at the breakfast table, you see me writing, which is exactly how it happens, you know, I write the lyrics first and the melodies come later and when Elton picks it up, he said, I don't know if anybody caught this in the movie, he says, this has got egg on it.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

It actually did, it had, like,
a coffee ring on it
and a splash of egg yolk, you know.
And then he just took it into the living room
and started working on it.
When your song came along,
we went, yeah, this is different.
This is really something special.
I mean, we didn't really know
how special it was at the time
and how special it would become.
One thing that really comes out of the book
is your lifelong love of America,
your fascination with American culture.
You moved there in the 70s,
you've lived there ever since.
Right.
Do you think having that space between
you and Elton, who
mainly lives in England,
is partly why your partnership has lasted?
We don't live in each other's pockets,
but we're able to
communicate and talk about
our families and
swap ideas and talk about music.
There's an intense love between the two of us
and I take great pride in our canon.
I don't like questioning why,
it just works.
And that was Elton John's lyricist,
Bernie Toppin.
A seven-year-old boy from the US
is thought to have become the youngest person
to successfully climb
the Old Man of Hoy in Orkney,
one of the UK's tallest sea stacks.
Sea stacks, in case you're wondering,
are columns of rocks that rise out of the sea.
Judy Frankel reports.
He landed on all sides by a sheer drop to the water below.
Woo!
I'm seven years old!

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Rescuers try to get aid to eastern Libya after devastating floods

Yep, and you've climbed
Man of Hoy!
That was hard training!
Cody's dad, Bill, said he was beside his young son
on a separate rope, giving him a device,
but that he did it all by himself.
When we got to pitch two,
it was definitely difficult,
and I told him,
I'm not going to help you.
I'm not going to break this so-called record
you need to climb this on your own.
I'm not going to push you up.
I'm not going to give you any more than advice
on how to climb it.
He cleared the move, and the rest was easy sailing.
The dizzying heights weren't the only thing
Cody braved during the perilous climb.
He was also attacked by a nesting seabird
known to vomit in self-defense.
I didn't get spat on at the start,
but then, when we were repelling,
I went down to repel,
and, like, this bird has a really good aim,
and it spat on my first right in the cheek.
At least he didn't poop on me.
Cody, who started climbing at the age of two,
has now set himself a fresh target
of climbing some of the other ten tallest sea stacks
around the coastline of Scotland.
So, lots more to come, it seems.
That report was by Judy Frankel.
And that's all from us for now,
but there will be a new edition of the Global News Podcast later.
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This edition was mixed by Caroline Driscoll,
the producer of Celine McChefrey,
the editor is Karen Martin.
I'm John Atchaleel. Until next time, goodbye.