

[Transcript] The News Agents / So, how do you catch a prisoner on the run?

This is a global player original podcast we understand he was dressed as a chef so yes he was wearing red and white check trousers as a white t-shirt and brown boots it does sound very much like that was kitchen wear that he was wearing and that was what he was last seen in clearly he might be wearing something different now which is why we've provided the public with photograph of Danielsley. Imagine being dressed pretty much like Ronald McDonald and still thinking you can make a run for it the prisoner 21 years old who may by the time you're listening to this have been caught managed to make his escape by clutching on to the underside of a truck in Wandsworth prison when he was working in the kitchens there and today we're going to be asking how he did it and what happens next welcome to the news agents the news agents it's Emily and it's Lewis and later on in the show we are going to be talking about what is perhaps the biggest piece of our post-Brexit architecture with Europe that is coming back into place we are joining or rejoining the horizon program Europe or indeed the world's biggest collaborative international science program worth a hundred billion euros a year we're going to be rejoining we'll be talking about how that is going to be a template for our further engagement with Europe in the future. But we're going to start with the escape of Dan at Leafer and not just what it says about this extraordinary manhunt that it's kicked off to find a man who were told poses a low risk to the public and yet is literally charged with terror offenses we know that this has caused a certain amount of mayhem in government in the prison world because questions are now being asked about why on earth this man this terror suspect was being held in Wandsworth prison which was not that high security where he was allowed to work every day it seems in the kitchens and had the latitude to be doing whatever he was doing for an hour before anyone even realized he was gone and people are now starting to ask why he wasn't being held in a more secure jail and what on earth the ramifications are for a government that can't even keep hold of its convicts and its prisoners it's literally a metaphor for things starting to fall apart but today we also want to dive into the mechanics of how you escape by holding on to a truck of what happens when you get out of the gates and what the police and security services and investigators and surveillance operators will be doing to try and track down a man who for 24 hours has been on the run

well Johnny is now is a former prisoner a Wandsworth prison prisoner and we should put this in context because Chris Atkins is also a former nominated filmmaker and he's just brought out a book time after time which is actually it discusses a prison break in Wandsworth but if we can use you Chris to take us inside Wandsworth prison and to talk us through the whole mechanics first of all of how you would be working in the kitchen and how much access and freedom you would have to do your own thing it's weird stories like this they suddenly shine a light and sort of the hitherto sort of unseen world of the prison system which most people get no access to whatsoever they're like sort of hermetically sealed units and the reason they keep it sealed is because

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they're so dysfunctional they're so chaotic they're so underfunded they're so poorly run but i think most people if they witnessed what was going on inside Wandsworth on a daily basis you'd be absolutely horrified that what well the the fact is that this came out the other day that there was 1500 inmates and there were seven officers to look after them overnight this came out in the house of commons question last year it's the fact that the officers are minimum wage and they get nine weeks training they hire school because no one wants to do the job it's such a pawling conditions it's such a terrible place to work so stressful huge numbers of them sign off with mental health problems huge numbers of them sign in sick which is why the officer numbers are so low they have a certain number of officers supposed to be on shift a third of them don't turn up and they'll even take people with criminal records astonishingly into the prison service now they have nine weeks training minimum wage and i was in a surreal position i was a serving prisoner that these kids would come up to me looking like a someone dressed as a prison officer for halloween you know they just looked like they just found the costume and and they would ask me what time to open up for lunch they'd ask me how the uh the routine wow how old were they 18 19 wow something didn't look like they started shaving lewis so you're in for for fraud right attack for yeah yeah yeah and they start treating you like you're the responsible adult absolutely i used to walk around and people used to call me gov because they thought i i worked there i got many many jobs because the way to get out your cell is to get a job it means you get more privileges and you get to phone home and shower and do all stuff like that so i did dozens of jobs and one of the craziest jobs i did was the register so each day i was given a printed list of paper and i would tick prisoners off as they left the wing when they're going out to do jobs in education now i was in sight for crime of dishonesty i could have easily have ticked someone off saying they were present when they're actually halfway to france but because i so short staff they rely on prisons like myself to keep the place ticking over so did you know the kitchens i didn't know the kitchens yeah and how much access have you got to come and go from the kitchens to the the full court of the prison it was a very privileged job so they rank jobs by the risk that prisoner can manifest if something goes wrong after i've been there nine months i was very well trusted i could pretty much go anywhere i wanted within the prison the kitchens were seen as very sensitive because one they're outside the main block of the prison so if you can imagine the old spider design of a prison you have the circular center it's the ponopskin if you want to look it up and then you have the wings radiating off it in the old days you'd have the kitchen at the center after strange ways they changed that why because the prisoners got control of the kitchens they could feed themselves

that's where it went on for weeks so after strange ways one of the things they did is they moved the side of the kitchens out of the center and they built new buildings for them and if you look at it on the onesworth map you can see it there's a new structure of course much closer to the prison gates so you should only have very very trusted inmates working there now this guy was up on terror offenses he's facing decades inside very very serious crimes he shouldn't have been anywhere near the kitchens you've got knives there you've got hot water and boiling oil and god knows what they hadn't been there that long he hadn't been there that long i was there for months before they let me know the kitchens so what you've got is an absolute failure to risk assess the guy there are prisoners there who were seen as so high risk they weren't allowed out their cell others so high risk they weren't allowed off the wing others so high risk they could do a job but maybe just a bucket and a mop for them that risk assess process has collapsed in this case and the kitchen door is close to the prison gates is that what you're saying it's closer to the prison gate than than the wings how far i was just there now i should do a piece for itv news and i could actually see it you actually see the edge of the kitchens over there look he didn't jump the fence he didn't need to he by the sounds of things he strapped himself to the underside of a van so there's a bit of planning needed but not very much the van drives in through the main gate it goes up there would be deliveries people be taking produce on and off he'd be one of the prisoners i suspect who was helping unloaded and then the van should have been driven out and inspected they're supposed to go under it with mirrors and look at the underside clearly that didn't happen why staffing cuts it sounds to me from what you're saying that in a way it's surprising more prisoners don't escape such as the paucity of resources now in the system were you surprised when you heard i wasn't i've said i've surprised it doesn't happen more often and i i would say this i've written my book time after time which is out to date amazingly enough and there's a it's a very evolved in this yeah people think it's all part of my PR and when the media rounds are over i'm going to let him out of my wardrobe but no in time after time i look at why people go back to prison again and again and again because the big problem is country isn't so much crime you have a problem of reoffending so 80 of all offenses are reoffences they've been committed by people who've done it before so rather than looking individual crime i'm trying to look at the pattern of why this terrible recidivism problem keeps going on and one guy looked at and he's had been convicted over 74 offenses called simon mclellan and one of his earlier offenses was he escaped from winchester jail and in a very eerily similar circumstances to this he basically

exploited the incompetence of the system and he escaped by pretending to be his own twin brother simon was facing about four five years for gbh so he got his brother to get arrested for drunken disorderly his brother came in and they ended up sharing a cell together and they switched places it's like something out of a 50s farce isn't it alec guineas or something and and he walked out the front gate and when they picked him up as they inevitably do they normally get them he was prosecuted for a prison break and they had to drop the charges why because they're non-identical twins and the judge saw the photos of the two of them together he said this is prison incompetence this isn't a prison break and drop the charges and somebody who's facially blind i have a lot of sympathy with people not recognizing brothers one of the many reasons that you're not involved in that prison system of course i know i describe it as like a dystopian faulty towers the chaos of madness was going it kept me going in there my first book a bit of a stretch was all about my time in prison and the dark humor was was just so off the chart it just that actually kept kept my spirits up it was so funny what was the thing which surprised you most about the experience and the security and the resources we used to describe some of it but it seems to us it almost sounds unbelievable it sounds incredible it's astonishing i mean on a serious note the thing that surprised me most is i went to prison having never ever been near a prison before i think it was all going to be like porridge basically it was all going to be full of people like fletch and cobber and you know the arm robbers and all the sort of old school crims not in the slightest it is people mostly with very very severe mental health problems or people with horrendous drug addictions or both and those the people who are filling ones with who are filling our prison system it is people who are ill rather than people who are necessarily bad and when they go to prison all those problems are just made worse they're not given mental health treatment they're not given any drug therapy they're given drugs because the places are washed with drugs and they come out and they re-offend all over again so that was the thing that really shocked me was how it's not your kind of classic gangsters there are some in there but they're few and far between it's just very very damaged individuals who've been let down by the system by this a lot of them have been in care since childhood they've been abandoned by the education system and they get washed up in our prisons you sound like a man who's glad to have been to prison I mean did you get did you get more out of that than you thought it was it put it this way it was an eye-opening experience and like i quickly learned that the way to deal with it was to see it as a journalist with remarkable access that's how i got through if you really want to know and i thought right i haven't got a camera

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but i have a pen and paper because i'm a documentary maker by trade so i'm going to write down everything i see and i almost became obsessional i had pages and pages of a4 notes they look like the writings of a madman because i'd write in block capitals for some reason and so i kind of documented everything i saw they always text that way my friends thought i'd gone mad because i was writing letters home to them in capitals and they thought oh god chris lost his mind so i kept a diary and i thought i have a platform when i get out i can talk about it i can come on shows like this and say look what is happening inside our prisons is brutal and it's inhumane and it's turning people into worse criminals you know people commit more crimes because they go to our prisons how do you think inmates inside would have reacted to this with glee i suspect we we had this thing in well they'll be delighted that one of their own got out of course whenever we were in wandsworth and whenever we saw wandsworth on the news i suspect sometimes on newnight with one of you guys reporting and you would say how we now go to one of the most dangerous and and dysfunctional prisons in in the country and you do a shot of wandsworth and everyone start cheering and sort of kicking their jaws so they watched newnight in wandsworth prison god yeah there's nothing else to do probably where most of our audience came from wasn't there anything on a Thursday night but whenever there was a right or there was ever any reporting on the prison it was like seeing your house on the marathon you know you go oh look there's us yay wandsworth going it was never for a good reason it was always terrible and they'll be thrilled he's got out absolutely they'll be they'll be cheering him on because i can thank you so much for coming in thank you thank you for watching us all those years yes i feel like we're letting you down now by the time you're listening daniel califa who we should just say denies all the charges against him may have been caught but we're talking to you at 238 and it's been 24 hours of him being on the run and we're starting to ask what on earth the system is for hunting down and escape prisoner so we thought we talked to nick oldworth former national counterterrorism coordinator who nick i think i'm writing saying led the operational security responses to the terrorist attack in london in 2017 nick there are a couple of things that we just can't get out of you know the mind one is this image i mean we haven't seen an image but that idea of somebody crawling under the van and leaving the prison gates on the underbelly of a truck in a kitchen uniform now that wasn't just done on spec was it he would have had to wreck that or work with somebody or a truck driver to do that do you think yeah look i mean we're not so serious it's almost comedic isn't it it's like a

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scene out of paddington but it is serious because we expect our prison estate to be secure i mean what we're dealing with here as i understand it is a former soldier and of course we train our soldiers to be smart resilient brave people and there's no reason suggest that once they stop soldiering those qualities disappear and so i think it is certainly not beyond the realms of probability i think rather than possibility that this is something that he has self-initiated that he has been working in the kitchen he has spotted a weakness in their security and has possibly exploited it but of course that doesn't mean to say that he has done it on his own and one of the really urgent things that will be investigated now will be first of all has there been help during the escape has there been helping planning the escape very importantly has it been helped from the inside of the prison service to make that happen as well so all those things will be under investigation but they will be concurrent with trying to find this guy and one of the things that will be quite simple will be to spot this vehicle leaving spot the direction that it's traveled and effectively using the very comprehensive cctv network in london follow that vehicle's route and a lot of that cctv is recorded and stored and it would not surprise me if we didn't already have an image of this guy having left the bottom of the vehicle or getting to another vehicle or whatever it might be yeah absolutely sense then where do you think he's gone well i think if you work on the principle that he's done this of his own volition he's not going to hang on to the bottom of a truck for very long so i suspect that he will have dropped off the bottom of that truck and then just made off into what in minutes i mean in like 300 meters or you know how i would have thought so i would have thought so just think about that hanging on to the bottom of the truck for speed hump will probably scrape you off so i would be very surprised if he stayed on there for very long at all you know within meters of the gate i would have thought but i'm hypothesizing because i've not seen the vehicle equally i'm also not familiar with whether he's improvised any sort of attachment to help him do that that's possible and of course you know the current investigation will pursue all those lines of inquiry but you know one of the things i always find quite interesting is like i data crime writer and she will tell you that it's an absolute nightmare writing books now because of cctv it takes the mystery out of everything and particularly now that we also have not only cctv but we have video cams in cars doorbell cams and you name it it becomes we are surveillance city we are surveillance more than any other Europe more than any other place in europe you know london so we were all remembering of course the happy valley moment where james norton disappears out of the court and turns himself into a cyclist

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right because he's got his getaway you know sort of you know news agents and all you need i guess is my point is all you need is to not look like yourself you don't really need to hide you just need to have a cyclist helmet on or something right yeah you know how many chefs go to work in london of course of course today how many utility workers how many service sector workers do we see walking over london you know it's very easy to blend into a busy london borough very easy people don't return ahead for people who just look like they are normal workers now if he's wearing something that is ostensibly visible as prison service uniform i think that perhaps changes slightly but you know we're also a bit of a society doesn't ask enough questions these days finally how easy would it be for him to get out of the country because that's presumably his aim or objective right how easy will that be for him so i don't mean you've traveled recently but personally even the passport i find it quite hard to get out of the country sometimes so it's not easy to get out of the country it's easier if you're supported and there have been lots of cases of fugitives being flown from private airstrips out of the country and then we you know we chase them across europe quite often but without support really difficult because you do need a passport to get out you do need the passport to get into whichever country of origin you're going to we are very effective at searching at borders aviation borders in particular maritime borders are as challenging things like euro tunnel euro star great processes down there you know i have a relationship a commercial relationship with some of these sectors and you see how they conduct their activity it is very very difficult and but he could stay inside the country but get outside by going to an embassy that was something that you yeah so i think it's interesting isn't it so there are dynamics here around this individual and you know without talking about the case the official secrets act charges that you face is our in relation to passing information to iran now government rather sensitively no longer refers to iran as a hostile state it refers to i think it's a state with hostile actors within it but what's the possibility of this individual moving to an embassy and seeking asylum we've certainly seen that happening in london with julien assange um so you think he could be going straight to the iranian embassy i would rule it out and i've got no doubt at all that the metro and police service want to rule that out either fascinating nick thanks so much so emily started the show talking about the political impact or referring to it and there has been a pretty unfortunate symmetry in the way government ministers have been talking about this escape with how they were talking about the concrete crisis in schools

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earlier in the week so michelle donald and the science secretary told sky news earlier today she said prisoner escapes like this remain very rare just like concrete collapsing in schools is very rare or you're very unlikely to be affected by it if you're a school child and again i mean or whilst both of those things are true it doesn't do much for a government when it is in a position of ending the week which is supposed to essentially be a relaunch week having got to the end of it and been unable to assure the public that all school children will be safe and protected from literally falling concrete around their heads and that all prisoners can be guaranteed to remain locked up like that is a problem it started to remind me of when you get to the sort of cascade of kind of catastrophe sort of day after day after day do you remember gordon brown back in 2007 he had that week where you know he canceled the election that never was and then day after day it seemed like there was it was going to be like the plague of locusts by the end of the week you know midweek they lost the tax disk which contained the records and tax records of 14 million people you know it was like disaster after disaster and it just gives the impression of a government which is losing control and they've got to again have a better narrative other than oh this doesn't happen very often i think there is no way that you can turn a man on the run into something that doesn't sound like utter chaos even if it wasn't directly the fault of the prime minister or of the government the way that kia starmer is playing it today is by calling it a pattern of behavior and it's just what you're saying as soon as you start to make as it were a listicle you can create the sense in the public's mind that this is more of the same and what he's done is he's pointed to the fact that we've had 10 justice secretaries i'm going to say that again we've had 10 justice secretaries over the last few years so how on earth do you get stability how on earth do you know who is being held where how on earth do you decide which prisoners should be allowed to work in kitchens and which should be held at category b prisons versus category a prisons if you're constantly shuffling the personnel who are in charge of this and i think that kind of takes you to the heart of what you're saying which is a government who just constantly feels now it's on the back foot things are happening that it can't quite lock down yeah and although of course it's not the prime minister's fault or justice secretary's fault directly this guy is escaped and there obviously will be bigger questions for the prison service and ones within particular there is a real public policy question which is this question that Emily you've already referred to is why was he a category b

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prison rather than a category a and there have been people familiar with the prison service taking to the airwaves this morning saying well you know what the capacity issues within the prison service are well known i mean we've had real examples in the last few months and years of you know prisoners having to be kept in police prison cells rather than actual prisons such are the capacity and over capacity problems within the prison service so that is a really legitimate question to be asked of the government and of course it hasn't really i mean we're only on thursday in terms of the week from hell for sunak there's more news this morning as well about another mp resigning and another critical by-election to come in probably just six weeks time or so which will create another big political headache for the prime minister that's all coming up after a break my brother-in-law died suddenly and now my sister and her kids have to sell their home that's why i told my husband we could not put off getting life insurance any longer an agent offered us a 10-year \$500,000 policy for nearly \$50 a month then we called select quote select quote found us identical coverage for only \$19 a month a savings of \$369 a year whether you need a \$500,000 policy or a \$5,000,000 policy select quote could save you more than 50% on term life insurance for your free quote go to select quote dot com select quote dot com that's select quote dot com select quote we shop you save full details on example policies at select quote dot com slash commercials this is the news agents welcome back so as we were saying there is yet another and it's very exciting this by-election which has been announced today and this follows the other two of course which are coming up one in rather glen which is first in scotland crucial labor smp battle and the other in mid-bed for true of course nadine doris old seat alas not lady doris but maybe one day this one is in tamworth and this relates to chris pincher who in a way you'll remember was basically the straw which broke the camel's back of the johnson government because it was the allegations about him and a particularly unfortunate evening in the carton club and his groping a young conservative male aid which eventually started the chain of events which led to borris johnson's resignation he has been fighting or taking it to appeal a privileges committee inquiry into him or standards committee inquiry into him i should say which he has lost and so he's decided rather than inevitably having a recall petition which would be triggered against him he's decided to throw in the towel which will lead to a another by-election in his tamworth staffer to constituency

where there is a conservative majority of about 20 000 but which label will be the hot favourites to take the seat so yet another headache for rishi suena yeah it was interesting the arguments he was making because unlike sort of many others at the time he didn't actually deny his actions he was quite apologetic and i think he didn't remember he blamed the booze didn't he he said that and then he said that the suspension was disproportionate and then he tried to argue that he hadn't damaged parliament's reputation because the events happened at a private members club it was very tenuous argument i have to say but the idea being that he wasn't really there in his capacity as an mp he was just there at a private members club but anyway the independent expert panel sort of stroke their chins thought about this for a while and said i'm not sure about that we think that the appellants arguments are misconceived or erroneous and the sanction is far from being arbitrary or disproportionate it is interesting though that pincher has this place in history as being as you say the straw that broke the camel's back i mean when we look back i don't think we will think that was the thing that brought borris johnson down i think that will be the thing that kind of kicked him out the door finally and actually pincher has become i think slightly totemic in this as not exactly for his own actions if this makes sense but for what people knew about his behavior but were not prepared to say in other words people turning a blind eye to the pincher like behavior that was going on in parliament that then became intolerable or impossible to stomach johnson lied about look at as a leadership role and i think that was why pincher and johnson's fortunes became so meshed but i love the way you say we've got two by elections of course because actually we've just had three yeah and at some point you've got to say you know the trickle down effect is not really what you want in your possibly or almost certainly final year of being prime minister before the election because it is naturally very hard for the party of government the party in power to win by elections we know that it is more unusual for them to hold on to sit or to win seats when if you like the current or the tide is against you and so to have this endless drip drip effect of people leaving many of whom are leaving and writing terrible letters when they go aka nadine doris makes it much harder for rishi sunak to turn around and say don't worry i've got a grip on all this we've got plenty of others well and indeed it's so much worse as well for sunak to have them not just happen on the same day i mean in a way doris has really wounded him for a final time in that you know had she gone

when say nigel adams went to sell bmp you can contain the damage you can put it all in one day you split the day in three yeah exactly by having a drip drip drip so you've got october the 19th will be midbeds and then you'll have this probably they'll move through it i would imagine sometime in november early november mid november that you'll have this by election so three weeks or four weeks maybe between them that again it allows the labor party to do is not only have two potentially exceptional news days two terrible days for sunak where he's got to justify the fact that he's not turning it around even in these really safe conservative seats i mean in both cases we're talking about majorities of nearly all over 20 000 you know these should be safe as houses seats but also that the labor party is able to split its resources it can focus on one seat entirely for that period or on a bit of a roll having had some momentum look we did it in mid beds if we can do it in mid beds with a 25 000 majority which we've never held before my work of course we can do it in tamworth we had it as recently as 2010 so it's really bad spare of thought as well for poor old eddie hughes who is a government minister and currently a walsall mp now hughes is doing what is called in politics the chicken run which is that i mean fairness to him his a walsall seat is being abolished as part of the boundary changes and he may well have lost it anyway so he's decided he has actually been adopted as the parliamentary candidate for tamworth for the next election but unfortunately he can't just do the chicken run now because that would mean that you just trigger another by election in walsall so he's having to hold on as he's made clear on facebook today he's having to basically hold on and the conservatives are going to have to choose another candidate in tamworth for this by election of course theoretically if they were to win it that means well you know he's going to have to find another seat or he'll be seatless but you know i think we're at that point in the electoral cycle we've talked about it before i think we're at that point where probably i'm not sure the government could win a by election anywhere right now which is or it has and you contrast that with ruth glenn which is going to be a far more competitive battle between labor and the smp which kind of shows you the two contrasting fortunes of the two governments at the moment the smp are down but they're not out they're still competitive the conservatives are down and they feel like they're completely out which is why if you knew that there was quite a lot of bad news coming down the track at you you would be extremely excited as the prime minister if you could announce today something which is i think we can say unblemished good news and this is that this country britain is going to rejoin the e u science program called horizon brexit sort of stuffed our membership of so many e u projects and communities and sort of collaborations

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and now after two years we get to go back in
and you know it's being hailed as a boost for research and relations
with brussels and gives you funding to help collaboration between
countries and if you want to collaborate successfully on science
then you really need to have the collaboration you need to have
the funding the problem i'm guessing with this whole thing
is that much as we love the fanfare and the solution that isn't it great we've
all got this and you look down the list and you know michelle donlan who's the
science technologies secretary now is going it's great news it's wonderful
news we're back in it's great news it's wonderful news what you have to
there for admit is that it was really bad news
that we were forced to quit and it was a really bad move
that we had to leave what could only ever be seen as a helpful and
collaborative program that allowed science and
british research to flourish and so i guess the inexorable logic
of this is that if this is a much better move
then why on earth did we put ourselves through
such a cataclysmic shock that took so many of these collaborations away
yeah and obviously in that time as well
uk scientists who as you said i mean they're thrilled about this announcement
they've been pressuring the government on it month after month after month
basically since brexit happened because it is a huge scheme you know it's the
biggest collaborative scientific scheme in the world it's nearly a hundred
billion euros but of course we've missed out on
three years worth of grants scientists can apply for it
today so there's a literal cost to it it's also going to be more expensive
for us and it would have been had we retained our membership in the first
place and i think that is why actually i think horizon
is a really good kind of parable a microcosm for where
uk-e-u relations are going which is that slowly but surely especially under an
incoming labor government which doesn't have any of the internal
fractures and fishes about this ideological fishes about it the
conservatives do we will slowly but surely
re-engage and reapply to all sorts of different programs which are in essence
always were advantageous for us to be a part of but the difference is
is that we will be doing so not on our terms
not as being able to dictate the terms or at least be a key part of
negotiating the terms but they will be in so many ways imposed
upon us each in different occasion we will find the terms are that little bit
worse than had we stayed in in the first place well i think you'll negotiate as
part of the council of ministers the word that you'll hear a lot is bespoke
yeah which sounds like you've just had the finest tailor made suit
fitted but actually what it spells out is we'll pay a bit more
there will be things going on that we're still not part of but we have to frame

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as if we've chosen not to rejoin that stuff
rather than you know the doors of shut or the cost is prohibitive or whatever
because this is a new framework and i suppose the last thing i'd say on this
is that when you hear the rhetoric coming from Rishi Srinak which is still
about small boats and it's about the sort of
culture wars and having to appease the sort of hard right of his party
it is interesting that yesterday he's gone off to India to sort of
Wudnarendra Modi and he's looking for trade deals there
back at home he's actually having to get on with the stuff
that just starts to make people's lives easier yeah and Sunak
in fairness the only reason this deal has got over the line is because of the
Windsor framework so we wouldn't have been the EU had made clear and we
should say by the way EU member states still have to approve our
reapplication as it were but there's no way this would have happened under a
Johnson government because Johnson wouldn't have signed the Windsor
framework and they had made clear the EU that there was going to be no agreement
on horizon unless there was some sort of solution I mean it hasn't been a
complete solution but at least some sort of progress
this is sort of patching up cultures isn't it it's putting little sticky bits
on the tires inside your bike to just get the thing to turn again
and that's the next 20 to 30 years
my brother-in-law died suddenly and now my sister and her kids have to sell
their home that's why i told my husband we could
not put off getting life insurance any longer an agent offered us a 10-year
\$500,000 policy for nearly \$50 a month then we called select quote select quote
found us identical coverage for only \$19 a month a savings of \$369 a year
whether you need a \$500,000 policy or a \$5 million policy select quote could
save you more than 50% on term life insurance for your free quote go to
select quote dot com select quote dot com that's select quote dot com select quote
we shop you save full details on example policies at select quote dot com slash
commercials this is the news agents
before we go we're going to take you to Mexico which is
pretty unusual we don't cover a lot of South America but something is
happening there now which lies in such a stark contrast to its neighbor across
the border we thought we should flag it up to you because Mexico has just
decriminalized abortion in a landmark supreme court ruling it's
literally the mirror image of what happened in America
under the overturning of Roe versus Wade a year ago
yeah this decision comes two years almost two years after the court
unanimously ruled that penalizing and abortion
is unconstitutional that was obviously hailed as a watershed
moment for Mexico but not least when you consider just how
Catholic and religious and Christian in so many ways Mexico still is
nonetheless it mirrors a wider move across

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Latin and South America to more liberal policies on all sorts of social issues which as Emily said contrasts starkly with what has happened in the United States now to put this in sort of political context for you Mexico's coming up to an election in which two leading candidates the presidential candidates are both female so there are some who are questioning whether this is basically you know a cynical way of attracting what you might call the woman's vote but Mexico is a highly dangerous country I mean for many people we know about how much of Mexico is enthralled to drugs cartels and all the rest of it but it's particularly it's a very dangerous country for women and so this kind of move almost seems as if it might be reaching out to those who are saying we just need to take some control back of lives that seem kind of out of control and at the moment in 20 states 11 of the country's states do permit abortion in sort of certain circumstances 10 can still fight to say no on a sort of state-by-state basis but they will now have to abide by the Supreme Court's decision and campaigners say they will fight to get the law changed in every single state well joining us now is Elena Rodriguez Falcon she's an academic she's a campaigner for women's rights and she is in fact the winner of the Every Woman 2020 award which has put women in technology at the forefront of her campaigning and Elena just tell us about this overnight decision did it come as a surprise to you and to the people of Mexico? Well Mexico has been working really hard to get gender parity and equality for many many years but just until yesterday there were about 10 states in Mexico that had decriminalized abortion there are 20 odd more states that hadn't done that so to me it is a bit of a surprise that it happened quite quickly. So just unpack that for us you've got two presidential female candidates but this was presumably done by an independent supreme court I mean do you think it was politics behind this decision yes? Mexico has been working towards gender equality for a long time but it is not barbie land only 120 years ago Mexican women didn't have a right to vote and the UN has rated Mexico as one of the most violent countries for women in the world. Elena do you think that this is the end of the matter I mean obviously some people listening to this might be surprised and to the extent that you know Mexico remains a deeply Catholic country president López Obrador has said that the supreme court decision should be respected but do you think that more conservative forces within Mexico will let the matter rest here or will there be an attempt to a backlash? There will be a backlash I don't have any doubts about that Mexico is a deeply

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Christian country mostly Catholic country and I haven't spoken to my mom about it because this happened overnight and my mom is very liberal I'm a gay woman so she's very liberal and yet the matter of abortion is something that troubles her. I mean when you just look at not just Mexico but your neighbors in Latin and South America when you look at Colombia and Argentina and Uruguay and Guyana who have all moved to either legalize or decriminalize abortion they're going in one direction perhaps you'd call it a progressive direction and you look at what's happening across the border in the US which is the complete unraveling of that movement what do you think? Countries are evolving in different ways Latin America has been behind women's rights for many years and I think we are catching up I do feel that religious bodies are gaining support and therefore I think there is this movement backwards Latin America whilst Christian I think is becoming more liberal and with so much violence towards women I think there has to be some balance and I suppose we may well end up in the absolutely extraordinary situation that I think you know a few years ago no one would have seen coming of seeing American women from the southern United States in particular where it is especially difficult to access an abortion post the overturning of a row traveling to Mexico to get their health services and to secure an abortion which is legal I think that's completely possible things happen already in that vein people travel to Mexico to get cheaper healthcare and surgeries and particularly selective surgeries I think that's quite dangerous but I can see that happening myself as well Elena thanks so much for joining us just great to have your thoughts on the news agents today that's it from us back tomorrow yeah unless we find the prisoner lurking in the news agents HQ mits in which case we will interrupt whatever we're doing John is away for the next two weeks we do we've got a spare seat and he's obviously a very very versatile kind of guy very much so bye for now bye bye the news agents with Emily Maitlis John Sobel and Lewis Goodall this has been a global player original podcast and a Persephoneka production