

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Stoltenberg: Ukrainian counter-offensive gradually gaining ground

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You're listening to the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service. Hello, I'm Oliver Conway. This edition is published in the early hours of Friday, the eighth of November. The head of NATO says Ukraine is taking back land from the Russian invaders, but more slowly than hoped.

No one ever said that this was going to be easy. But the Ukrainians are making progress. Some hundred meters per day.

More than 60 civilians and soldiers are reported to have been killed in an attack by Islamist militants on a military camp in northeastern Mali. One of Donald Trump's former aides, Peter Navarro, is found guilty of contempt of Congress for refusing to answer questions about the storming of the US Capitol.

So in the podcast, new data reveals the volcanic explosion in Tonga last year produced the fastest underwater debris flows ever detected. And...

Add Sotheby's for the baby grand. Final warning, sold to you. Thank you very, very much indeed. One million for...

Freddie Mercury's piano sells at auction for \$2 million.

Ukraine's much heralded counteroffensive is now into its fourth month. But the Ukrainians haven't been able to match the success of last year when they pushed the Russian invaders back from Kiev, Kharkiv and Herzog. The slow pace of the current advance has led to speculation that Ukraine's allies may get impatient and cut off the flow of military supplies. But speaking at the European Parliament on Thursday, the NATO boss Jens Stoltenberg said support would continue whether Ukraine was winning or losing.

No one ever said that this was going to be easy. But the Ukrainians decided to launch the offensive because they are going to liberate the land. And they are making progress. Not perhaps as much as we hoped for, but they are gaining ground gradually. Some hundred meters per day. Meaning that when the Ukrainians are gaining ground, the Russians are losing ground.

The Ukrainian forces say they have broken through the first and strongest line of Russian defence in the southern Zaporizhia region. But they are still a long way from their presumed objective of reaching the coast, and thus cutting Russian forces in two. For an assessment of how they are doing, I spoke to defence analyst Jonathan Marcus.

I think the important thing to look at is not so much the movement of lines on the ground.

It's the damage that both sides are doing to each other's forces and to their equipment.

And whether Ukraine now can cause sufficient damage to the Russian forces opposite them

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to be able to deepen and widen this breakthrough. It has been slow. They've taken on an extraordinary

task. They are trying to attack heavily fortified positions. The Russians had months to prepare these. There are at least three lines of defence they have to get through. And they are attacking the strongest area of those defences without many of the key bits of equipment that an equivalent Western army would have. And frankly, most Western armies would have trouble as well. But progress is being made. And I think as somebody once said about going bankrupt, first they went bankrupt slowly and then very quickly. Well, you might say if the Ukrainians are to succeed, they may be succeeding slowly now. Their hope is that they will then achieve some sort of tipping point and they will be able to make a larger breakthrough more quickly. There are occasional reports of Russia making small advances of its own. And then there's also reports that it may be preparing for a big counter offensive in the north. How do you think things will play out in the next few months?

Well, the Russians clearly are mounting an offensive in the northeast of the front, if you want to call it that. I think most experts wonder quite what the strategic aim there is other than perhaps to draw off Ukrainian forces and to compel Kiev to put reserves into that sector rather than their drive southwards towards the sea. As to a much larger Russian offensive being prepared, it's very hard to know where those forces or the equipment or the ammunition would come from and can't rule it out. But I think at the moment it looks as though the Russians are pretty heavily committed.

Jens Stoltenberg mentioned the huge Russian minefields that they've planted, slowing down the Ukrainians. Does that mean that any advances are going to be slow or could different weapons such as the F-16s help the Ukrainians move faster?

No, obviously F-16s would be great, but you have to have fully trained pilots capable of integrating them with Ukraine's air defences and so on. That will take time.

I think the thing is that there isn't a wonder weapon. The key thing is not so much weapon systems. It's the capacity of sticking power, morale, having the ammunition and the reserve forces to keep up this pace of operation. And that's the real battle between the Russians and the Ukrainians. And it's on the resolution of that equation. The immediate future of this war will rest.

Jonathan Marcus, Defence Analyst from Exeter University.

The military authorities in Mali say at least 64 people have been killed in an attack by Islamist militants on an army camp in the Gau region in the northeast of the country. Most of the victims are believed to have been civilians. With the details, here's Julian Bedford. There's been growing pressure on the military in Mali to act since one of the country's best known cities, Timbuktu, came under an Islamist blockade late last month. They've subsequently carried out a string of air raids on jihadist targets, but have failed to drive back the rebels who seem to have drawn confidence from the junta's expulsion of French and UN peacekeepers. The UN has two bases close to Timbuktu and are in the process of handing them over to the Mali army and their new allies, Vargh the mercenaries from Russia. This latest attack only confirms that the Islamists are able to strike at will at the military infrastructure and the hundreds of civilians who shelter within.

Julian Bedford reporting. Another one of Donald Trump's former advisers is facing jail time

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in the latest fallout from the storming of the US Capitol on January the 6th, 2021. Peter Navarro, who advised President Trump on trade and also served on the COVID-19 task force, was found guilty of contempt of Congress for defying a subpoena from the US House of Representatives

committee that was investigating the attack. The court rejected Mr Navarro's argument that he was covered by Donald Trump's executive privilege. Speaking outside court, Mr Navarro said he would appeal.

This is the first time in the history of our republic that a senior White House adviser, an alter ego of the president, has ever been charged with the alleged crime.

Another Trump ally, Steve Bannon, was also found guilty of contempt of Congress but is currently out of jail pending appeal. Mr Navarro could face up to a year in prison when he's sentenced in January. I heard more about the case from our correspondent in Washington, Gary O'Donohue, starting with why the Congressional Committee had subpoenaed Mr Navarro in the first place.

They wanted to ask him about something called the green base sweep, which for aficionados of American football is a sort of tactic for an end run. But it was his phrase for their plan to overturn the election results in Congress on January the 6th when the riots happened. And he's boasted about it, he's written about it in his memoir, and it was about rejecting those electoral votes from the six states that Joe Biden won, that they wanted to claw back and go through a long process like that. So they wanted to interview him about that and get documents about that. He refused, he claimed he was protected by executive privilege, which actually Donald Trump has never claimed for that process. And that defense was thrown out so it was a really short trial. It lasted two days. The jury were out for about five or six hours deliberating. He offered no evidence in his defense and he could be looking at jail term. Yeah, I mean, he was defiant outside court and he suggests it could go all the way to the Supreme Court. So is this a constitutional matter? He's hoping it is and that's why they will appeal and it'll have to go through the appeal court circuit in DC and then possibly you could be given leave to appeal further up than that. But this defensive executive privilege, he couldn't run it because Donald Trump had never claimed executive privilege over that material. So it's a bit of a difficult one for him and of course it won't do him any favours, I think, in the appeal court that he didn't offer any kind of other defense. I mean, literally his lawyers said nothing, apart from cross-examining some of the prosecution witnesses. So we'll see what the grounds for appeal are as things stand. He's not going to prison any time soon. As we've seen from Steve Bannon, he's still out pending his appeal and I suspect he'll be treated the same. Peter Navarro was there throughout the whole administration. Steve Bannon, you know, was there for seven months, but Peter Navarro was there throughout. So another one of the president's men, Holly.

Gary O'Donoghue in Washington. The Indian authorities have come in for criticism over some of their efforts to spruce up the capital, Delhi, ahead of the G20 meeting this weekend. India wants to use the summit to highlight its role on the world stage, but conservationists have accused the Indian Archaeological Department of Vandalism after footage showed decorative writing on a Mughal-era mosque had been plastered over. And as our South Asia correspondent Samira

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Hussain reports, some marginalised communities in Delhi have also accused the government of moving them out. India's capital city has been getting a makeover. Streets are being cleaned. Decorative statues have been erected and G20 posters, many with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's face, on billboards. As world leaders arrive, this is India's moment.

To the world, India is promoting itself as a leader, making the G20 manner to Indians.

Hi, I'm Mehag Gakar and I'm from Delhi. G20 means a lot to me as an Indian and it is the biggest achievement I feel for the government.

Hi, I'm Somya. We are the ones hosting it. That sense of collectiveness is what India is about and yes, I'm very excited for it.

A new convention centre has been built for the occasion and just a few hundred feet away are walls made of green, corrugated steel put up just before the G20. Hiding behind the walls is an India visiting world leaders will not see. Small concrete homes alongside open sewage drains, narrow alleyways, impoverished communities are not being cleaned up like the rest of the city. Instead, they are being kept from site. Saddam has lived here all his life. He says being hidden makes him angry.

To me, it looks very beautiful. They have transformed Delhi, but in making it beautiful, it seems we are stains like craters on the moon. They have made us a stain, which is why they have hidden us. So they might as well remove us from here.

I'm walking through an area that looks like nothing but dirt. I see broken bricks. I see rocks, broken pieces of concrete, someone's shoe. It seems like it just tossed away remnants of people's lives. Well, that's because just two months ago, people were living here. There were people's homes and even a community school, but it was all demolished. It's now been raised to the ground and turned into nothing.

It says the homes were illegal. The G20 just happens to be taking place across the street. But it's not what Maya was told when her home was destroyed. They broke our homes and made us homeless. They said they wanted to clean up the area for the G20. They said move from here, they removed us all.

Maya, ending that report from Delhi by Samira Hussain. In the past few weeks, thousands of Haitians have been displaced from their homes by rampaging gangs in the capital, Porto Pras, with no functioning government and an under-resourced police force. It seems there is nothing to stop the violence escalating in the Caribbean nation. The BBC spoke to one woman who described what happened to her last month when she was at home with her toddlers.

The gang members forced me to flee. They'd invaded our neighbourhood and they threw a molotov cocktail into our house. I grabbed my two youngest children who were with me at the house and we jumped over the wall to get away. And there was a man behind us and he got hit by a bullet. Luckily for us, we weren't hit by any bullets and we were able to get away. The fighting had initially started on November the 10th. By the time it got to August 13th, police officers in our neighbourhood who were trying to control the gangs couldn't do so any longer. They were running out of bullets and had to give up. We ran to a nearby TV station. The station opened up the gym for all of us refugees. At the gym, I ran into some of our neighbours and they asked me if I'd heard news about my family. I told them no and they told me to sit down and have some water because they had some sad news

for me. That's when they told me that my mother's house was burnt down and that my family members had most likely died in the house. My mother, my stepfather, my 18 year old son, my brother, my sister and two family friends who live with them. There is nothing that can replace the scar that's on my heart. I just want to have news from my family members. We're living like animals but actually there are some animals that are better off than us. I'm alive but it's as if I'm not really living.

One woman's account of the terror brought by Hattie's gangs. My colleague Tim Frank spoke to Dave Fiss Amé who returned from the US to be a youth worker in Port-au-Prince. The last time we heard from him in January he said the situation was terrible. He told Tim what things are like now and warning you may find parts of this interview distressing. I've compared this gang phenomenon with a body that has cancer and no action is taken to remedy that illness then they'll spread to other parts of the body until the person with the illness dies and that's pretty much what Hattie is telling right now. Each day, each week, each month that goes by the situation just gets worse and worse. We have neighborhood brigades who have to check your vehicle to make sure that you're not carrying guns or other items to help the gangs in their fight. On many occasions I've gone through these barricades and you've found bodies burning and these folks were killed with machetes and their bodies were being burnt and these barricades. So that's a common sight that I'm also familiar right now. Is anybody at the moment talking about the possibility that some sort of international force might come in and help the authorities try to regain order? Well that's something that's been discussed in the media and within different international bodies like CARACOM and the UN but nothing's come to fruition so far. The way things are right now I firmly believe that the only way is with some international military support and if we wait until it's too late for that support to come maybe thousands more folks will be killed by the gangs. Dave Vissame talking to Tim Franks from Port-au-Prince in Hattie. For many years there's been an implicit bargain in China. The communist authorities will ensure the nation's prosperity and in return the people won't challenge the party line. But even as the Chinese economy falters rules governing people's lives in China are becoming increasingly strict. The latest proposed law would ban outfits that are quote detrimental to the spirit of Chinese people and hurt Chinese feelings. I heard more from our Asia Pacific regional editor Celia Hatton. The idea is that anyone who's found wearing such clothing is liable for 15 days in detention or a fine of about \$700. Really what's key here is the language being used in this law. Hurting the feelings of the Chinese people. This is a catchphrase that everyone in China knows. It dates back to 1959 actually and it's been used increasingly often usually when China wants to criticize something that another country's doing that it doesn't like. The United States or Japan are the prime targets of the hurting the feelings of the Chinese people catchphrase. What's interesting is that this phrase is being applied to Chinese people themselves and that's where it's quite interesting. Taking action against people for what they wear does seem quite extraordinary. Yeah that's right. Some people have already been detained for wearing clothing that the police don't like. Last year in the Chinese city of Suzhou a woman who was wearing a kimono Japanese traditional dress was detained by police. We don't really know what happened in that case but because she was wearing clothing associated with Japan and there's long been tensions between China and Japan that was seen as something that the police were unhappy with.

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And just last month people who were attending a concert given by a Taiwanese pop star anybody who was wearing clothing with a rainbow symbol on it mainly associated with the LGBT community they were told to turn their shirts inside out so this rainbow clothing couldn't be visible.

Frankly Chinese police have a lot of power already so I don't think this law really changes that much it just kind of makes things sort of more explicit in a way it's warning to people not to wear certain clothing but it's also quite vague. You don't know exactly what clothing is being banned and that's really for the authorities where the magic lies in this law.

Are they just being able to feel that they can really crack down on people and really kind of upon this idea of a model citizen or are they operating from a position of weakness they're worried about their crumbling economy and they want to use this as a warning to anybody who might start thinking about airing grievances as a way to crack down on them even more.

Our Asia Pacific editor Celia Hatton and still to come on the Global News podcast.

One player going to die and they're going to see her.

The Russian tennis star Daniel Medvedev complains about the heat at the US Open so what can be done?

People in Lebanon have finally been able to see the Barbie film after weeks of controversy.

The release was delayed as the culture minister tried to get it banned for quote promoting homosexuality, insulting men and degrading mothers.

Lebanon once prided itself on its cultural openness but the controversy over Barbie has highlighted what some say is a growing intolerance by officials of the LGBT community.

Andrew Peach spoke to Justin Shilad at the Free Expression think tank, Penn America.

The direct quote from the culture minister Muhammad Martata is that contradict faith and morality and promoted homosexuality. That was in the government's words why they were trying to ban the film the first place. More broadly speaking, I think that the

ban before it's overturned was indicative of a crackdown on the LGBT community in Lebanon but also on dissent and any sort of non-conformity or marginalized communities overall.

I haven't seen the Barbie film. My teenage daughter's been to see it and like many people her reaction

to this was I don't quite see what the theme is in the movie that is supposed to be promoting an LGBT lifestyle in the first place. It's hardly the overriding theme of the thing.

It's on its face a very stupid decision and yet diabolically clever at the same time.

The knee-jerk reaction of a lot of people is going to be okay you have banned this film about as I understand it plastic toys come to life and living out their lives in this fantasy world.

Why is this worth the government's time, attention, and energy? And you think about it more broadly in the context of this crackdown and dissent and it starts to make sense.

So this ban against the Barbie film in Lebanon was first proposed earlier in August.

During that same month we have seen violent attacks against bars and Beirut hosting drag shows.

Stand-up comedians hauled before military interrogators for jokes that they have told in some cases years previously. Interrogations against journalists. We have seen really a pretty broad sweeping crackdown against anyone who might question the government or against anyone who might belong to a vulnerable or marginalized community.

Justin Shilad talking to Andrew Peach. Should elite sports stars be expected to compete in extreme weather conditions? Temperatures at the US Open Tennis Tournament in New York hit 35

degrees

Celsius on Wednesday and the Russian player, Daniel Medvedev, said the heat and humidity was putting players' lives at risk during his quarterfinal victory over Andrei Rublev.

The BBC's David Law was commentating on the match.

These two players are walking around. They look dazed. They're really walking so slowly between the points. That's the voice of Daniel Medvedev picked up on the courtside microphone right in the corner talking about the heat here and using the words one player is going to die.

BBC commentary team but what are the effects of extreme temperatures on sports people?

Mike Tipton is a professor of human physiology. From cramps to exhaustion and it's not just physical impacts that end up with heat stroke which is a major medical emergency. It also affects decision making which is where you start to see people making bad decisions, dizziness, lightheadedness and that's despite all the mitigations that are in place. You get to the point where we're going to just see more and more of this because of climate change.

For more on the impact of the heat at the US Open I spoke to Nigel Adley.

Well like the rest of the United States New York is undergoing an extreme heat wave at the moment temperatures in excess of 35 degrees Celsius and if you've ever walked around the centre of New York

at the height of summer there is also the very high humidity and that is what Medvedev was talking about during his game. He had to take two medical timeouts to sort out issues with his breathing and he was making the point following the game that the conditions were simply too oppressive to play a game of top quality tennis and John McEnroe has been saying as well that he believes it's inhumane to expect people to produce their best tennis in conditions like this. Usually rain is an issue at the US Open tennis played in September. They do have a roof now on the main show courts including the Arthur Ashe Stadium and it has been partially closed to help players deal with the heat during the day but there is no policy to close it entirely to block out the sun and the heat and maybe get the air conditioning going to make life more comfortable for the players

and spectators. Do they perhaps need to have a policy where if the temperature hits a certain level then these kind of measures should come in? There is a precedent set the Australian Open does have a heat protocol now and there were delays during their tournament back in January of this year because it just got too hot on the outside courts and while they could play under the cover in the main stadium courts basically the players were taken off because it wasn't deemed safe for them to play. Medvedev was saying following his game that he appreciates there's an issue there but he doesn't really have an answer to solve it in the evening when it may be cooler there simply isn't enough time to get the games played and also satisfy the TV schedulers. It isn't just tennis that's affected by heat we saw earlier in the year the Tour de France they were spraying the roads with water so they didn't melt and then in football we've had Qatar World Cup moved to the winter to avoid the extreme heat but they're playing football in Saudi Arabia as well. Their season has just got underway in some very hot conditions and maybe the solution

found for Qatar is the way forward because it caused a huge amount of disruption to the schedules across world football particularly in Europe when the World Cup was moved to the winter but it did mean that the stadiums were safe. Football has also instituted calling breaks

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during games now I'm sure we will see plenty of those over the weekend when the European international qualifiers resume because of course Europe is undergoing a heat wave and I'm sure that the players will be grateful for any sort of break during some very oppressive conditions coming up over the next few days. Nigel Adderling. Last weekend an estimated 7,000 people blocked a kilometre long stretch of road in the German capital Berlin as part of a protest come rave. The event which brought together clubbers, climate activists and local residents was permitted by the Berlin authorities as a demonstration against the extension of a major motorway. The BBC's Damien McGinnis was there. Disco balls, smoke machines and stalls selling beer as people dance between the traffic lights and street signs but this is not a party but a protest against the motorway that threatens to run through this Berlin neighbourhood destroying homes, cultural venues and half a dozen of Berlin's edgiest nightclubs. It would be a total nightmare I'm both sad and angry Selena a clubber who lives nearby tells me. She says the motorway would destroy a lot of the underground culture that makes Berlin so unique in the first place. But during a ferocious debate in the German parliament earlier this year conservative politicians argued that the motorway was needed to ease the flow of traffic in Berlin because of its growing population. One of the clubs under threat is about blank where Ellie Stefan works. She argues that the motorway would simply increase congestion. It would destroy the neighbourhood it would bring even more traffic into the city Berlin is already totally stuffed with cars it makes more sense to invest more into public transport. This area still has a similar atmosphere to the wild 90s in Berlin after the fall of the wall when alternative nightlife headed east taking over the crumbling empty buildings of the central district of Mitte. This amateur footage from the 1990s shows Eimer or bucket in German. A crumbling squat turned nightclub. I remember going it had a small red bucket above the door instead of a sign and inside you could look down on the dance floor from the upper floors because most of the ceilings had fallen in. Eimer was closed down more than 20 years ago and the building now houses expensive apartments. Alternative nightlife left Mitte years ago to cheaper less central areas such as Friedrichshain where the rave is happening. Amperia a DJ from about blank performed at the protest. This rave is just part of a broader ideological battle in Berlin over the car. On the one side you have often younger people or green voters the people here who say they want better bike paths more funding for public transport and fewer cars. On the other you have drivers they say they need the car to get to work particularly if you live on the outskirts of the city and they want more rights for drivers and better roads. It's an issue over which elections are fought in Berlin and it divides the city in two. Damian Negenister reporting from the German capital. It lasted less than a day and claimed relatively few lives but the volcanic eruption in Tonga in January last year has already broken numerous records. It produced the biggest atmospheric explosion ever recorded and was the most powerful eruption since Krakatoa in 1883. Now it set another record for its effect under the sea as I heard from our science correspondent Jonathan Amos. To explain to you what that new record is I'll just remind you of one

other record Oli which was that this volcano produced the highest ever eruption plume so it sent about six cubic kilometers of material rock and ash up into the sky and that material went up to about 60 kilometers more than halfway to space and of course an awful lot of it came straight back down and it went into the ocean like a jet and hit the sides of the volcano 40 degrees slopes and then it started to run out and when you get these flows of material on the seafloor sometimes down canyons landslides underwater but in this case on the sides of a volcano we call them density currents and in this instance they've been able to time precisely how quickly they were moving and they clock speeds of up to 120 kilometers an hour so imagine a wall of rock and ash and water coming towards you at 75 miles an hour on the seafloor and of course that dug out great big channels on the seafloor and it also smothered and killed life everywhere in its path. And is that the result of the power of the explosion or the way that the volcano was structured? It was a perfect storm the amount of material that was chopped up the height of which it went and then the fact that it came down like a jet into the water down the sides of the volcano and then spread out how did they get the speed that's quite an interesting question one of the impacts from this volcano was that Tonga lost its connection to the internet so there are two cables that disperse the internet service around Tonga one of them comes from the global internet and then there's a local cable that goes out to all of the islands that first cable break occurred on the local one so that was within a few tens of kilometers of the volcano so they time from the eruption to when the cable breaks that gives you the speed and they did that also for the international cable which was some 70 kilometers away and yet this debris was moving so fast that it picked up almost a hundred kilometers of that cable and just destroyed it.

Our science correspondent Jonathan Amos. 140,000 people visited Sotheby's auction house in London

over the past few weeks to see hundreds of items that belong to the late Queen singer Freddie Mercury. The first of several auctions has now taken place there with items like his piano and handwritten lyrics selling for millions of dollars. With the details here's Daniel Mann.

Revealing untold insights into other possible directions the song could have taken one page reveals that Freddie originally planned to call the song Mongolian Rhapsody.

It was bought by Freddie in 1975 after an arduous six-month search for the ideal instrument to bring to life his ambitious songs. Bohemian Rhapsody was a marriage of Freddie Mercury's love of opera with rock music which he composed along with many other Queen songs on his cherished Yamaha piano.

And selling it here at Sotheby's for the baby grand final warning at one million four hundred thousand sold to you thank you very very much. The auctioneer Oliver Barker described the lyrics for Bohemian Rhapsody as a modern cultural icon the 15 pages of the song's words and comments by

Freddie and written in his hand sold for at one million one hundred thousand pounds sold.

Two thousand bidders from 61 countries have registered to take part in the auctions with part of the proceeds going to the Elton John AIDS Foundation. In a message read out by Oliver Barker

the singer said I miss Freddie to this day he was a wonderful friend whose music has inspired and thrilled millions and it was a tragedy that AIDS took him from the world much too soon.

A report by Daniel Mann.

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That's all from us for now but the Global News Podcast will be back very soon. This edition was mixed by Alicia Thursting the producer was Emma Joseph our editors Karen Martin I'm Oliver

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