

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

There were parallel representation when it came to people with disabilities.

On the Podium is the podcast with Olympians and Paralympians past and present telling their inspirational stories.

It comes so far, the first person people think of when they think of strength could be a Paralympian.

Listen now by searching for On the Podium wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

You're listening to the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service.

Hello, I'm Oliver Conway.

We are recording this at 13 hours GMT on Thursday, the 24th of August.

A day after Russian mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin was apparently assassinated in midair, we ask why the Kremlin is still keeping quiet.

China's dream of building an alliance to challenge the West gets a boost as the BRICS nations invite another six countries to join.

And there is strong resistance among the public towards Japanese seafood as these fresh fish are all from the sea and everyone is worried about the fish being contaminated.

Concern in some Pacific nations as Japan begins releasing wastewater from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant.

Also in the podcast, flash floods in the Caribbean as tropical storm Franklin hits.

And...

Join me in making a commitment that on day one you would pardon Donald Trump, I'm the only candidate on the stage who had the courage to actually say it.

That is how we move our nation forward.

Republican presidential hopefuls take lumps out of each other in a TV debate, but the frontrunner is absent.

After his mutiny in Russia two months ago, there was much amazement that the Wagner mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin had been allowed to live.

A day after his plane came down 300km from Moscow, though, it is looking increasingly likely that Vladimir Putin has now taken his revenge.

The first reports of the crash came in on Wednesday evening as the Russian president attended a concert marking the anniversary of a famous Second World War battle.

Mr. Prigozhin's ally said the private jet with seven Wagner leaders and three crew on board had been shot down by Russian air defences.

An echo of Wagner's attack on Russian military aircraft during the coup attempt.

The Wagner boss has wrongly been reported killed before, so can we be sure he is now dead?

Nina Khrushcheva is a professor of international affairs in New York and great granddaughter of the former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

We know Prigozhin uses doubles, so there's not clear whether it was Prigozhin or somebody who registered as Prigozhin.

Apparently there was a phone found, his phone found next to the plane, but if anybody knows how to evade Putin's revenge, probably Prigozhin would know best.

Another theory is that finally the revenge has come to him, but the question is why would it not be somewhere close to military actions in one of these countries in Africa where

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

Wagner is.

On the other hand, knowing Putin, he likes these big bangs, he likes to show that his personal enemies do not escape.

But more than 18 hours on, we still have no confirmation from the Kremlin.

Why not?

I asked our security correspondent Frank Gardner.

Well, I'm not sure that the Kremlin has worked out how to handle this, the widely held assumption in the West, certainly, and indeed I think probably among some of Wagner's own members is that this was a hit by the FSB, that's Russia's domestic intelligence agency, who is fiercely loyal to President Putin, and that this was a revenge dish served cold by President Putin to punish him for the mutiny, the mutinous march of June the 24th, where Prigozhin sent 5,000 troops towards Moscow and essentially challenged the entire Russian state.

We haven't yet seen any proof that Prigozhin's body has been found.

We know that 10 bodies were recovered, they've been identified.

We know that his name was on the manifest, he was expected to be on that plane.

There is still an outside chance that he dodged it at the last minute, but since Russia is in charge of this investigation, they're keeping a pretty close lid on it.

And what happens to Wagner now?

We know they've been squeezed by the Russian military, losing their heavy weapons, and also there's some suggestion that the Russians are trying to take over their operations in Africa.

Yeah, I think Wagner is finished as a force as it was, but the challenge for the Kremlin is how to capitalize on the progress that Wagner has made in extending Russia's interest in Africa without preserving them as a future challenge to the Kremlin.

So Wagner had been very successful in establishing a pretty unpleasant and kleptocratic business arrangement with a number of regimes in Africa that essentially see them provide some pretty brutal security services in exchange for mineral rights, gold, diamonds, etc.

The Kremlin won't want to lose that, but I'm seeing reports that Russian intelligence was already looking at ways of replacing Wagner in Africa with a rival mercenary force, possibly sharing some of the lower level troops, but certainly replacing commanders, because the Kremlin simply cannot risk a future challenge to its rule in the way that what happened on June the 24th.

And what does all this mean for Russian morale amongst its fighters in Ukraine and their supporters?

Because Prigozhin was very popular, as was the Russian general Sergei Sorokin, who was sacked as the Air Force Chief also on the same day that Prigozhin disappeared.

Well, both those two were already out of the picture before this happened.

So after the mutinous march in late June, it was announced that Wagner were withdrawing.

In fact, they'd already pulled back from Bakhmut and said, right, it's over to the regular Russian army now.

We're going to pull back, but we'll come back if needed.

They then moved out largely across the border into Russia.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

Some of them went to Belarus, some went to Africa, but they are no longer a force in Ukraine.

When it comes to general Sergei Sorovkin, he is perhaps the only really effective senior Russian general to operate in Ukraine.

He is the guy that is credited for building Russia's incredibly strong defences in the south of that country, the ones that are proving a major obstacle to Ukraine's counter-offensive. It's known as the Sorovkin line.

I mean, although he has a nasty reputation, he's known as General Armageddon for the fact that he flattened Aleppo when Wagner and Russia were operating in Syria.

He was brave enough and a good enough soldier to go to the Kremlin last year and say, look, we need to pull our forces out of Kherson, although we can't supply them.

In the end, he lost his job and he's now been held, reportedly under house arrest, under suspicion of helping Pregodin do his march on Moscow.

To answer your question, I mean, none of this is good for Russian morale.

It shows that all is not well back home.

Ukraine will be pleased by this.

I don't think anybody in Kiev is going to shed any tears over the purported death of Pregodin because he led some of the fiercest battles against Ukrainian forces.

And let's not forget Wagner accused of human rights abuses, not just in Ukraine, but also in Syria and in a number of African countries.

Our security correspondent, Frank Gardner, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa already account for 40% of the world's population and a quarter of its GDP.

Now their BRICS grouping is getting bigger and richer by recruiting another six nations - Argentina, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

It is a boost for China, the BRICS most powerful nation which wants to build a counterweight to the West.

Iran hailed its invitation as a success for its foreign policy.

At the summit, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the world's current governance structures needed to be updated.

For multilateral institutions to remain truly universal, they must reform to reflect today's power and economic realities and not the power and economic realities of the post-Second World War.

I asked our correspondent at the meeting in Johannesburg, Nomsert, Maseko, what these six additional nations will bring to the bloc.

They're going to be bringing oil, which is why I think that there was so many negotiations in terms of ensuring that these are the type of countries that the BRICS bloc does actually admit.

And foreign ministers of these countries are going to develop a BRICS country model that will establish how the expanding BRICS will be working together.

In fact, the president of Brazil, Lula da Silva, said that the interest of other countries to join BRICS showed how relevant its pursuit for a new world order was also becoming.

And Ethiopia has also made it into the group of big players, which was somewhat of a surprise.

And also, we do know that there was criteria that was sought and used by the original five

members, and that was, you know, adherence to human rights and sanctions.

So it remains unclear at this stage exactly how some members of this group, the new members, particularly, were allowed in.

Yeah.

I mean, why no Nigeria, for example, or Indonesia, which would fit in to the group very easily?

Well, the understanding is that Indonesia pulled out at the last minute, but we still don't know the reason why that was the case.

And we were given an indication that when the BRICS bloc does meet in Russia next year, there is a possibility of further expansion with possibly the addition of Africa's biggest economy, Nigeria.

In his comments, President Lula also said that globalization had failed.

Do we know what this new expanded BRICS, what its vision is?

Well, the vision of this new BRICS bloc is to ensure that they become a force that can be reckoned with in terms of geopolitics and that they can actually stand up against the West and lessen the power of the US dollar and its use.

Nomser Masako in South Africa.

Twelve years after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Japan has begun pumping more than a million tons of wastewater into the Pacific Ocean, a mix of contaminated groundwater and water used to cool the broken reactors.

It's being treated before being released into the sea.

The UN nuclear watchdog says that on-site tests have confirmed that levels of radioactive tritium in the water are safe.

But not all of Japan's neighbours are convinced.

China has suspended all Japanese seafood imports.

This fishmonger in Beijing says there are serious safety concerns.

There is a significant decline in sales compared to before.

In the past, including during the pandemic, we used to kill three to five tuna a week, but now we sell very few fish and we do not import from Japan anymore.

We import fish from Australia, New Zealand or Spain instead, but the quality of the fish is not very good, not as good as Japanese fish.

There is strong resistance among the public towards Japanese seafood as these fresh fish are all from the sea and everyone is worried about the fish being contaminated.

In the past few hours, there have been protests outside the Japanese Embassy and the South Korean capital Seoul.

From Fukushima, here's our correspondent, Shaima Khalil.

Treated radioactive wastewater is being released into the ocean.

Now, we're not very far from the nuclear power plant.

We can just about make out the chimneys.

The wastewater is being pumped into a tunnel under the sea about a kilometer long and then being released into the ocean.

This is a significant day because it is the start of the process, but it is a very long process that's going to span many decades.

They're predicting 30 years may be longer.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

Within the first two weeks, so from now until two weeks, they're predicting that they're going to release about nearly 8,000 tons of this wastewater.

Now, it has caused a great deal of anxiety from the moment it was announced and of course on a day like today.

The science says it's safe.

The government says it's safe.

TEPCO, the company running the plant says it's safe.

They've been processing this water, diluting it, removing more than 60 radionuclides.

One remains, which is tritium.

It's very hard to remove from water, but they say with the dilution, the fact that it's in the ocean, the concentration levels are going to be well below safety standards.

That does very little to reassure people here in Fukushima and around the region.

It's interesting.

We're not very far from a fishing port and the one fisherman that we wanted to speak to said, look, we've been told not to speak about anything today, but we've been here many, many times and those who we've managed to speak to are really worried.

They say we've suffered a great deal of reputational damage, perception of Fukushima fish and it's taken us years to convince people to have our seafood.

This release is like a second disaster to us.

Many people are worried about what to feed their children and of course it's not just here in Japan.

China is angry.

It's criticized Japan for using the Pacific Ocean as its personal sewer.

South Korea, even though they've supported this plan, it goes against the public sentiment.

People there are very angry and Hong Kong has issued a ban on Japanese seafood.

Shaimahalil in Fukushima in Japan.

Tropical storm Franklin has hit the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, home to the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

The Dominican Republic's Center for Emergency Operations said there was a high risk of dangerous flash floods with 25 provinces under a red alert.

It's prompted a rush of international aid.

The UN World Food Program has stationed emergency response teams and food in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

My colleague Victoria O'Connor spoke to the WFP's Dominican Republic country director Gabriela Alvarado in the capital Santo Domingo.

At the moment the situation is still very fluid.

While the tropical storm has indeed left the Dominican Republic, so it's upwards towards the Caribbean, there's still quite a bit of rain happening.

So the assessments are still ongoing, we're still working very close with the government, but the last 24 hours have been extremely intense.

There's about 22 communities without communication, which we're prioritizing.

Unfortunately, there's been one death reported and these are one of the things that we're of course, the government is prioritizing on to make sure that we avoid as many casualties

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

as we can.

Talk us then through how those damaged infrastructures are hampering your humanitarian efforts. Every time that we have, let's say no communication, so if telecommunications is impacted, it's difficult to see what are the areas that are really needing that support.

If the roads are affected, it's very difficult to carry out not only assessments, but also searching rescue efforts.

So what are your first priorities now?

The priorities are ensuring that we can continue our logistical operations with the government, making sure that they can reach those places when and where required, telecommunications to make sure that there is connectivity.

And then we're also quite working very closely with the civil defense and social protection because we're trying to find out not only what the immediate needs are, but also we need to make sure in the medium or the short medium term, how can we reach large amount of population that will be affected.

You mentioned that, Gabriela, that the hurricane season is approaching, there is still more to come.

How are the island nations preparing for this?

Probably the peak season for Hispaniola tends to be in September.

I know with climate change, things are changing things or that shifts quite a bit and sometimes we might get it a bit earlier, a bit later, and we've been working or strengthening the government support systems, especially at the coordination level.

So how can, let's say, the first responders better work together with the social programs?

How can the information between the local communities get to the central government and vice versa?

What's your worst worry?

My worst worry would be, I think my worst worry would definitely be not being able to get to the most vulnerable in time.

The longer you take to respond to those that are out of flight and death, it makes them a lot more vulnerable.

The World Food Program's Dominican Republic representative, Gabriela Alvarado.

And still to come on the Global News Podcast, why you might just hear this sound in Northern Ireland for the first time in 200 years.

I could feel stigma all around me.

Nearly died three, four times.

I had this secret.

This is Lives Less Ordinary, a podcast dedicated to remarkable personal stories.

I started having a strength in me.

Each week we hear tales of the unexpected.

Walk in the shoes of some extraordinary people.

Something quite wonderful.

Search for Lives Less Ordinary.

Wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

For some, it might seem like presidential campaigning in the US never stops.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

But the first Republican TV debate last night marked the first big clash of the race. Donald Trump chose not to take part, but is sure to get all the headlines later today when he hands himself into the jailhouse to be booked over allegations of election fraud in Georgia.

Despite his absence, the former president loomed large over the proceedings in Milwaukee. But that didn't stop the eight remaining candidates also attacking each other, as Gary O'Donohue reports.

Eight Republican candidates have qualified and have chosen to be here on our debate stage tonight.

This was the first big chance for these candidates to tell the world who they are in this debate on the Fox News Channel.

But it wasn't long before their loyalty to Donald Trump was put to the test.

If former President Trump is convicted in a court of law, would you still support him as your party's choice?

Please raise your hand if you would.

Six of the eight on stage raised their hands.

One of those two who didn't was the former New Jersey governor and nowadays avowed Trump opponent Chris Christie.

Here's the bottom line.

Donald Trump's former Vice President Mike Pence did raise his hand but said he'd refused to put Mr. Trump above the Constitution when he certified the election amid the Capitol riots.

But no one's above the law and President Trump is entitled to the presumption of innocence that every American is entitled to and we will make sure and extend that to him.

And in a pugilistic style that lasted throughout the night Vivek Ramaswamy, a multi-millionaire entrepreneur who's vehemently defended the former president, challenged Mr. Pence on the question of a pardon if Donald Trump was convicted.

Well Mike, why don't you say this, join me in making a commitment that on day one you would pardon Donald Trump.

I'm the only candidate on the stage who had the courage to actually say it.

That is how we move our nation forward.

While all this was going on Donald Trump was appearing in a pre-recorded interview on social media designed to go up against the debates, which had had 82 million views by the end of the evening.

He was dismissive of the whole field.

And I'm saying do I sit there for an hour or two hours, whatever it's going to be, and get harassed by people that shouldn't even be running for president?

Should I be doing that?

Look at the debate, abortion was always going to be a major issue following last year's Supreme Court decision to overturn a 50-year national right to a termination.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has signed a six-week limit on abortions in his state, but wouldn't say whether he supported a national law.

But just to be clear, Governor, would you sign a six-week ban federally?

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

I will support the cause of life as governor and as president.
Signing for Ukraine is a major point of disagreement between these candidates.
Some favoring continuing support.
Others like Vivek Ramaswami say no in inflammatory terms.
And I find it offensive that we have professional politicians on the stage that will make a pilgrimage to Kiev, to their pope Zelensky, without doing the same thing for people in Maui.
Former UN ambassador Nikki Haley had little time for that, or seemingly for him.
Governor, you're watching America Lessa.
You have no foreign policy experience, and it shows.
And you know what?
It shows.
Thank you to all the candidates on the stage tonight.
This was a largely gaffrey night for these candidates, but it was still the man not in the room that dominated the agenda.
And while some will be pleased that they've managed to raise their public profile, they're still all miles behind Donald Trump in the polls.
Well, Matt Mowers is a former Republican congressional nominee and president of political strategy firm Valkor, LLC.
He was at the debate and spoke about the standout performers on the night.
I think in these moments from debates, what you're looking for is who distinguishes themselves, who stands out, and who's going to be the talk of voters and the media the day after.
And you know, my mind watching it in the arena, three candidates had different moments into very degrees.
One, Nikki Haley, Ambassador to Haley, I thought, did very well, acquitted herself well.
She's been having a challenge getting momentum.
I think after her performance tonight, she's going to get a look from voters.
I think New Jersey governor Chris Christie went there and did exactly what he had intended and needed to do.
Went out there and was the only candidate that actually talked about Donald Trump for the most part.
And then I think the third one, and he certainly took some lumps, was Vivek Ramaswamy.
I mean, here's a guy who was at 0% just a few months ago and now is getting attacked more than Ron DeSantis, who had entered the race as the co-frontrunner at one point and has fallen so far that none of the other seven on stage even thought to bring him up.
It's just a touch where a lot of the Republican Party is these days, folks are looking for outsiders.
And so that's a piece of Vivek Ramaswamy's appeal.
He's also willing to go out there and mix it up, which and get himself in the news and do countless different interviews.
There's an appeal to that as well.
And look, he's a talented guy, but I think he certainly took some lumps here tonight as well.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

At the end of the day, folks are looking for someone interesting and compelling to be a president, but they also want someone they believe is up to doing the job. When you're 38 years old and running for your first office ever, and it's the presidency of the United States, that bar is going to be even higher for voters. But look, the fact that he's in the middle of the stage and every other candidate was talking about him and not Ron DeSantis speaks volumes about where he stands in the polls today.

The world's largest computer and video games festival is underway in the German city of Cologne.

Attendees get to play the newest games, meet developers and publishers, and connect with others in the gaming community.

The numbers heading to Gamescom are expected to be even higher than the 265,000 who visited last year.

The BBC's Laura Kress is there.

You catch me, I'm just here at the entrance of the Kohlmesser Centre here in the heart of Cologne.

Over 1,200 exhibitors here from 63 countries.

So this isn't just a German event, people have come from all around the world to showcase your game.

I would say one of the hottest tickets is the Xbox stand.

There's a big, big stand they've got here in Cologne, and they've got a game called Starfield, which is one of their biggest games of the year.

It's all about outer space exploration, and they've built this 300 person theatre where the public can come and watch the first few minutes of the gameplay.

So they're taking this very, very seriously.

Nintendo is here, Xbox is here, Nintendo wasn't here last year.

People were wondering whether they might mention something about their new Switch console, which people are expecting to potentially come out next year.

We haven't heard anything about that yet, but they are meeting with lots of games companies.

This is not just a German Gamescom, this is for 63 countries, over 1,200 exhibitors.

That's a global, global event.

Laura Kress.

Ospreys have returned to breed on the island of Ireland for the first time in more than 200 years.

Two adult birds and their chicks have been spotted in County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland.

Beth Timmins has the details.

This is not the first local sighting of ospreys.

Soaring birds of prey with long hazelflect wings, white feather crowns and distinctive eye stripes.

But the presence of at least two osprey chicks has raised hopes that these raptors can establish a permanent colony in Ireland.

This successful breeding makes them the first known wild osprey chicks on the island of Ireland in modern times.

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Ukraine not responsible for Prigozhin plane crash, says Kyiv

Conservation group Ulster Wildlife are keeping the nest site confidential to protect them. Over their lifespan of 15 to 20 years, these migratory birds can rack up more than 250,000 kilometres of travel, but they always return to the same area every year.

Charles Knight, the environmental farming scheme advisor who found them, said it was a rub your eyes once in a lifetime moment.

Osprey populations were threatened in parts of North America in the 50s and 60s due to the use of pesticides and chemicals like DDT, which thinned their eggshells and killed many birds.

But after these substances were banned, most osprey populations were able to recover.

The birds were thought to have become extinct as a breeding bird in Ireland in the late 18th century due to human impacts.

Scientists say their return indicates a healthy wetland ecosystem, with plenty of fish like pike, perch and trout, to sustain what could be a new dynasty of ospreys.

Beth Timmins there.

And that is all from us for now, but the Global News podcast will be back very soon.

This edition was mixed by Chesney Forks Porter and produced by David Lewis.

Our editors Karen Martin, I'm Oliver Conway.

Until next time, goodbye.