

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / US drone crashes after incident with Russian fighter jet

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

I'm Valerie Sanderson and in the early hours of Wednesday, the 15th of March, these are our main stories.

The US says a Russian fighter plane has collided with an American military drone over the Black Sea.

The Gremlin says Washington lost control of its unmanned aircraft.

So what does it mean for the war in Ukraine?

And?

First of all, the attack came, the police came in, without any knowledge.

I mean, suddenly we saw news that the police were coming to arrest me.

High drama in Pakistan as the police try to arrest former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Also in this podcast, the US President Joe Biden signs an order expanding background checks on every gun sale.

This executive order helps keep firearms out of dangerous hands.

As I continue to call on Congress to require background checks for all firearm sales.

And why the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard is making Tom Cruise's latest mission impossible.

The skies over the Black Sea are host to numerous drones and military aircraft as the war in Ukraine grinds on.

Now the US says one of its unmanned drones has crashed into the sea after Russian jets collided with it.

Washington says the drone was harassed during a routine mission in international airspace.

The Russians have given a very different account of what happened.

More on that in a moment.

But first, let's hear from the Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder.

Based on the actions of the Russian pilots, it's clear that it was unsafe, unprofessional.

And I think the actions speak for themselves.

What we saw, again, were fighter aircraft dumping fuel in front of this UAV

and then getting so close to the aircraft that it actually damaged the propeller on the MQ-9.

A Washington correspondent, Gary O'Donohue, told us what else the Americans have been saying.

They say that the two fighter jets harassed this drone.

They say for about 30 or 40 minutes, which was an intriguing detail we've just had from the Pentagon,

before actually colliding and damaging its propeller, the Americans say they therefore had to bring this drone down into the water.

They assert that the Russians do not have that drone.

They won't say if they have it or where it is.

And they've also accused the Russians, as you know, of this reckless behavior,

because they say that these aircraft dumped fuel onto this drone several times, flew in front of it, and generally tried to disrupt its flight.

What we've also heard this afternoon is that the ambassador, Anatoliy Antonov, has been summoned to the State Department.

It's a pretty serious diplomatic move in any circumstances.

It is clearly a significant escalation in the sense that assets from Russia,

an asset from the United States, physically coming into contact for the first time since the Ukraine

war began.

What do we know about this drone? It was unmanned, wasn't it?

Was this in international airspace?

That's what the Americans say. The Russians have a slightly different view.

They've claimed it's near a Crimea, which of course they have annexed from Ukraine and suggesting that it's in some kind of controlled airspace.

It's pretty big. It's one of these Reaper drones.

It can carry weapons, but the Pentagon wouldn't say whether it was carrying weapons in this case.

They only say it was conducting ISR.

That's the shorthand for intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance spying.

They say that these are regular flights and they have every right to do it in international waters.

They do also say there have been attempts at intercepts over the last year, near misses, planes buzzing past one another, but literally a physical impact has not happened.

And the Pentagon also saying that it's their belief that the Russian plane that actually hit the drone is damaged.

They wouldn't say how they knew that.

Russia has denied causing the drone to crash.

A Defence Ministry statement said the Russian jets didn't use weapons against the US drone or have any contact with it.

Vitaliy Shevchenko of BBC Monitoring gave his analysis of Russia's response.

I found it unusually devoid of aggression.

What Russia basically said is that we were up there in the air, our two jets,

to have a look at what was that thing flying right next to our borders.

And it fell because it manoeuvred too sharply.

There was no criticism of the actual presence of a US unmanned drone next to what Russia considers to be its borders.

It only said that the drone had its transponders off, which means its radio beacons identifying the aircraft.

That was the only criticism that Russia voiced.

Otherwise, it was a matter of fact and apparently seeking to de-escalate the situation.

Will it want to recover this drone?

It would make sense for Russia to try and do that because this is a type of drone that America has been using to conduct surveillance of sensitive Russian operations in occupied Crimea, among other areas.

So it's full of classified equipment, radars, sensitive cameras, other equipment that America may be using to spy on Russia if the Russians manage to recover that equipment.

It's a big win for Russia.

Now, we understand that Washington has summoned the Russian ambassador in the United States.

How significant is this incident?

This is something everybody was worried about, weren't they?

That's true.

But Russian officials, since the invasion of Ukraine, they've been saying that bilateral relations with America have hit rock bottom.

They can't get any worse.

So having your ambassador summoned for a difficult conversation isn't really going to make it any worse.

A lot depends on how the United States reacts to having one of its most expensive and sophisticated drones being effectively downed by Russia.

But American officials are very careful not to make things even worse than they are currently.

So I would personally be surprised if this incident leads to a major escalation.

Vitaly Shevchenko.

More than 200 people are now known to have died in Malawi and Mozambique when Tropical Storm Freddie struck the countries for a second time at the weekend.

Close to 60,000 people have been affected in Malawi, which was already struggling to cope with a cholera epidemic.

Rescuers say they are overwhelmed.

A correspondent, Shenganyoka, sent us this report.

Heavy rains continue to lash southern Malawi, days after Tropical Storm Freddie made landfall.

And with each passing day, the devastation is becoming clearer.

Muddy flash floods that lift people buried in the rubble of their homes or swept them away, roads and bridges destroyed.

Those who survived are now left rummaging through the rubble of their homes to try to salvage what they can, emptying buckets of water

on the doorsteps of their flooded houses

and digging through the mud in search of those missing.

About 200 people are now confirmed to have died,

hundreds more injured and dozens still missing.

The figures are expected to rise as the rain shows no sign of stopping.

As they were digging through the mud, rescuers shared their harrowing stories.

I'm helping to find the victims.

I know there are more bodies that are still buried.

So far, between 20 and 25 bodies have been recovered from the debris and the destroyed houses.

Most of them have been taken to the hospital, but they all look dead.

This is the second time.

In 2015, we also experienced a similar disaster, but this is the worst.

I have seen 12 dead people and the figures could be rising.

Now, a potential humanitarian crisis is unfolding.

Malawi's Department of Disaster Management says thousands of households have been displaced.

Families are finding refuge in camps without enough supplies.

The Malawi Red Cross told the BBC that they are yet to reach some areas, as poor weather has made it difficult to reach people by land and by air.

Here's Felix Washan from the Malawi Red Cross.

A lot of rivers have flooded and a lot of roads have cut off.

This coupled with the rains is making the efforts very difficult.
The immediate needs are food, shelter and also sanitary materials.
We are just in the middle of responding to cholera,
so the resources are very small.
The needs are huge and they are still increasing.
So we are appealing to the international community and the general public
to join hands in the response to the cyclone, Freddie.
Freddie is the most severe storm ever seen in the Southern Hemisphere.
It struck Madagascar and Mozambique twice,
but Malawi has suffered the heaviest toll.
The rains are expected to continue for the coming days
before a weekend Freddie returns eastward towards Mozambique.
Shingai Nyoka President Biden has signed an executive order,
which will increase the number of background checks on gun buyers.
He did it during a visit to Monterey Park in California,
where 11 people were shot dead in January
by a gunman during Lunar New Year celebrations.
The White House says it's the most comprehensive policy the president can enact
without it going through Congress and is designed to reduce mass shootings.
President Biden said it would accelerate and intensify work to save more lives.
This executive order helps keep firearms out of dangerous hands
as I continue to call on Congress to require background checks for all firearm sales.
In the meantime, my executive order directs my attorney general to take
every lawful action possible to move us as close as we can
to universal background checks without new legislation.
Our Washington correspondent Nomea Iqbal told me more about what this executive order will do.
Mr Biden's rhetoric's really grown when it comes to guns,
so he often calls for banning so-called assault weapons in his speeches.
And I don't think Democrats were this vocal when he was VP under President Obama,
but I think after seeing regular gun control talk didn't result in massive election losses.
He clearly thinks that this resonates with people and it does
because universal background checks are supported by most Americans.
Now with this executive order, this is about gun sellers.
So put it in context, America has a patchwork state-by-state system
of when background checks are carried out during the process of buying a gun.
It involves a gun buyer's info being put through an FBI database before a sale is made.
But progressives want a blanket universal background system across the country.
There's not enough votes for that to happen.
So what President Biden has done with this executive order
is take limited action to close loopholes during the process of selling a gun.
He wants his attorney general to clarify what is a gun seller.
If I sell you a gun, am I a gun seller or am I just a friend selling you a gun?
That often happens in parts of America where you have gun shows
and background checks don't take place in that instance,

but in some places they do.

So he really wants a clarification on all of that

and this is what the executive order is trying to do.

It's trying to crack down on gun sellers who break the law

and stop dealers whose licenses were revoked from continuing to sell.

I mean, is there much opposition to this move?

I mean, there are those who will still say, you know, any kind of law

or any kind of attempt to make it harder for people to get guns as an infringement.

But this one is something he can do without, as you mentioned there,

as an executive order so he doesn't need Congress's approval.

What he's essentially trying to do is, through his attorney general,

he wants the attorney general to clarify the statutory definition

of who is involved in dealing with guns

because those are the guys that are also responsible for doing background checks.

He's already, I think, done the most significant thing so far last June.

We saw Biden sign into law the most significant gun control bill

which got bipartisan support in nearly 30 years

and he has repeatedly called on lawmakers to do more.

Nomi Aikbal, there have been violent clashes in Pakistan

between police and supporters of the opposition leader Imran Khan.

Trouble flared as officers tried to arrest the former prime minister

at his residence in Lahore.

As I heard from a reporter in Islamabad, Farhat Javad.

There is police outside Imran Khan's residence in Lahore.

Intermittent tear gas shelling continues and the target is Imran Khan's

supporters who have gathered outside his residence in Lahore.

And at the same time, there are protests happening in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar

and even Islamabad because Imran Khan shared a video from his Twitter account

asking his supporters to come out and continue his struggle

if he is arrested or if he is killed.

And we have been seeing in the past as well

when Imran Khan calls his supporters out, they do come out.

Imran Khan is not being arrested because he has been convicted on something.

He hasn't been convicted for any crime.

He is being arrested because he wasn't appearing before a court

after multiple notices issued to him.

And why do they want to arrest him?

There are more than 70 cases registered against Imran Khan.

The case, he has been issued an arrest warrant

about the gifts that Imran Khan received as a prime minister.

He sold those gifts, which is completely legal.

But the money he received after selling those gifts,

he didn't declare that money in his asset declaration forms,

which he was supposed to submit before Election Commission of Pakistan

every year in December.

It is mandatory that the person should be present in person for indictment.

But Imran Khan wasn't appearing before the court.

So that is the reason that he was being arrested today.

Mr Khan says the cases are politically motivated.

He spoke to the BBC's Caroline Davis about what happened.

First of all, the attack came, the police came in without any knowledge.

I mean, suddenly we saw news that the police were coming to arrest me.

And we didn't have that many workers.

So they immediately tried to remove the workers.

So they then stood their ground and then there was this first water cannons, then this tear gas shilling inside my house.

I mean, we were washing our faces because it came right inside the house.

Now there is a lull.

They're gathering more force.

I'm all mentally prepared that I'm going to be spending my night in a cell.

I got on how many nights, but I'm all prepared for that.

But I think they're determined this time that it won't be behind bars.

So why are you resisting arrest when the police are coming now?

We had taken bail, protective bail till the 18th.

So on 14th, there was no reason why they should have come to arrest me.

And the worry is that this is all malefied.

What I would want in Pakistan is rule of law.

And rule of law means simply whoever breaks the law should be punished, whether it is someone in my party or someone against me or opponent.

They should all be subject to the law of the land.

The law of the land says that there is an arrest warrant out for you, that you are resisting.

So are you not following the law of the land?

It is not the law of the land because I had a protective bail till the 18th.

They've come four days earlier.

It's not the law of the land.

It's the law of the jungle.

Imran Khan

It's been three decades since the end of apartheid in South Africa, but hundreds of cases of alleged human rights violations carried out during that time are still unresolved.

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission that aimed to ease the country's transition referred the cases for further investigation in 2003.

But allegations have been made in recent years that political interference has obstructed their progress.

BBC Monitoring's Somaya Bach reports.

My first memory of my dad is his funeral.

This is Lokanyo Galata.

His father, Fort Galata, was one of the Kradok 4 anti-apartheid activists who were abducted and killed by the South African Security Police one night in June 1985.

Lokanyo was three years old.

I remember it was very cold.

My mother crying heavy, heavy, heavily.

I also remember being very, very scared.

You were a policeman.

You were a policeman for many years.

Your duty was to maintain law and order.

Is that right?

That is correct.

In 2003, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission referred several hundred cases of apartheid-era crimes

in which it had not granted amnesty

to the National Prosecuting Authority

for further investigation and prosecution.

All but a handful of them have remained untouched.

Is there anything that you'd like the Commission to know?

Led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu,

the Commission sought to heal the country's past

by hearing the public testimonies of witnesses,

victims and perpetrators of crimes committed under the apartheid system.

My father was still alive.

He was very, very helpful.

I remember him calling a family meeting to tell us

what is important for us is that if she's not alive,

we just need to be told what happened.

This is Tembani Kadimeng.

She is now Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

Her older sister, Nakatula Similani, went missing in 1983.

The family of slain apartheid activists,

Nakatula Similani, says it will never give up its fight to have...

But the trial of two former security police officers, accused of being involved in her kidnap and murder,

has been beset with delays.

Here's Minister Tembi again.

So at the beginning of the year in 1992,

I think my parents were also becoming a bit worried.

We're not hearing anything.

It's then that my father opened the case.

The National Prosecuting Authority has failed to act.

In 2015, senior former officials from the National Prosecuting Authority

filed claims in support of a court application from Nakatula's family for a formal inquest into her disappearance. They claimed that political interference had obstructed investigation and prosecution in the cases that had been referred by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The government did not respond to a request from the BBC for comment. Like many who had been pushing for their progress, Nakatula says that the allegations did not come as a surprise. We felt vindicated. We knew that there must be something. It made us believe that we went crazy. Earlier this year, families of the victims welcomed the news that 64 new cases would be investigated, and a former TRC Commissioner, Dhumisa Ntabesa, had been appointed to oversee the handling of apartheid era cases. Minister Tembi Nkadimeng's own father and brother have passed away never having had answers to their questions about Nakatula's fate. My mum is 83 years. Her recollection has faded. So we have wasted a good 30-35 years in this fight. I think that's the greatest loss for everybody else that other people may die with their pain. With many of the suspected perpetrators and key witnesses having died during the decades of delays, the prospects for resolution in most of the cases are dim. A dim. Still to come in the Global News Podcast? I've been searching with metal detectors since I was 10. You just hope to find a nice coin, and that's all you hope for. But if you find something like this, that's just unbelievable. Stay tuned to find out just what this detectorist struck in the Netherlands. Facebook's parent company Metta has announced that 10,000 jobs are going in a fresh round of cuts. The tech giant's chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said the decision had been taken in an attempt to improve efficiency. Here's our technology reporter Shona McCallum. Just four months ago, Metta announced 11,000 job cuts. Now another big chunk of its workforce is going. As well as cutting another 10,000 positions, Metta will also close 5,000 currently unfilled posts. Lower priority projects are being cancelled and hiring rates reduced. The first redundancy is it will be in recruiting teams.

They'll be confirmed this week.

Then tech groups in April and business groups in May.

These cuts are the result of the economic slowdown, eating into Metta's earnings, a slump in advertising and competition from rivals such as TikTok.

Similar problems are driving layoffs across other sections of the tech industry too.

But they also coincide with Mr Zuckerberg's plans to focus much of Metta's money and energy on the Metaverse, a 3D virtual space where he hopes people will begin to live in the future. An investment that for now isn't paying off.

Shona McCallum.

Paris, the city of light, is currently a place of stinking mounds of rubbish as a result of a strike by waste collectors that's already lasted a week.

Black plastic bin bags are stacked up, making the pavements an obstacle course to the disgust of many Parisians.

There were two piles of bins in the market.

Bins left on Friday that weren't picked up.

They sat there all weekend.

It just rained.

It's quite annoying.

It will stink if we leave our rubbish bins.

But in the 10 districts of the capital covered by private companies, the service is running almost normally according to the Paris authorities.

This private rubbish collector was brought in, especially to help clear the backlog.

It's immeasurable.

There's so much.

They haven't collected for a week.

On top of that, the trucks are blocked.

There are only four 26-ton trucks, so we're going back and forth doing eight-hour shifts.

But it's not enough.

Other cities, including Nantes, Rennes and La Havre, are also affected by the strike, which is over President Macron's plans to raise the pension age.

There's going to be a key vote on the issue in Parliament on Thursday.

So, what's it like living in the French capital?

I asked our Paris correspondent, Hugh Scurfield.

It's getting serious.

I mean, it's been going on gradually building out for the last week.

But today, yesterday, I think people are realising that this is getting pretty horrid.

Tempers are fraying on many streets.

My street, for example,

it's piled up in huge mounds of rubbish.
We're just lucky it's not hot weather,
because then it would be really quite unbearable.
And the worst of it is that it doesn't look like
it's going to end anytime soon,
because I've just been told that the unions
have voted to continue this through till next Monday.
So, there's a lot of angry people out there
who are worried about the situation.
They're saying it's unhealthy.
They're saying that it encourages the rats,
of which we know there are many, many in France.
And they're urging the mayor of Paris to do something about it,
but she's not doing anything because she's blaming the government.
This is all, don't forget,
totally linked with the pensions protests,
which have been going on for a couple of months now,
and which are linked to the government's plans
to raise the retirement age.
That's what triggered this strike.
And so, the socialist government of the city
is saying, well, we're with the strikers.
Interesting. I was reading that
sanitary workers can retire at the moment at 57.
The government wants to raise that to 59.
Yeah, men and women are obviously a category of worker
who face a very tough working life.
And so, they're in a category that has a dispensation.
I mean, the basic rule is that
the age to which you can start to draw a pension
will go up from 62 to 64.
That's for most people,
but there are these categories where it's different.
It's not just Paris.
There are other cities around the country
which are also facing this wave of action
by sanitary workers or whatever you want to call them.
There are other things as well going on,
but this is what's hitting.
This is what's making the headlines.
This is what's making the political weather at the moment
because it's Paris and it's so obvious
because it's a health hazard.
I mean, it's right on the doorstep of the government.

Yuscofield in Paris.

Severe flooding in a small outback town in Northern Queensland in Australia has brought some unwelcome visitors. Saltwater crocodiles.

Dozens of residents of Burktown had to be airlifted to safety after river levels exceeded seven metres and their homes were inundated with floodwater. Council member Dan McKinney lives in Burktown and has been coordinating the evacuation effort. And he spoke to Michelle Hussein.

We are in the recovery phase.

Flood waters are no longer coming into town.

We've still got a lot of residents who we had to evacuate out, who are still out.

We've seen record flood levels never seen before and we're surrounded by four rivers and that is the problem.

But some of our rivers have never recorded flood levels ever this high.

How high were they?

You know, we're a little town way out in the salt plains in very remote Australia and it was like the town was sitting in the middle of the ocean.

That's how it felt.

And the flood waters got up to about three quarters of the town itself.

But our rural areas, a lot of farms, we flooded, a lot of livestock killed.

How close did people then end up getting to the crocodiles?

Because with water levels that high, I'm imagining however high your house is, even if you're on upper levels, the waters are going to be all around you.

So what was happening with the people in the crocodiles?

We had salt crocodiles, which are the worst crocodiles.

We had them in town.

They were in the flood waters, so we had to tell residents not to venture out into the water at all.

Because unlike flood levels in some places, you see people going through water up to the hips or something. You couldn't do it because you could get taken by a croc.

The other problem is snakes.

We have some of the world's most feminist snakes.

So there were also snakes lurking around near the water stage in there.

Dan McKinley, the remote Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard has more polar bears than humans.

Now the authorities there have refused permission for 30 helicopter landings as part of filming for the latest installment of the Tom Cruise Movie, Mission Impossible.

Richard Hamilton reports.

Lying less than a thousand kilometres from the North Pole, Svalbard is a fragile and largely undisturbed wilderness with seven national parks and 23 nature reserves.

Its glaciers, mountains and fjords are home to seabirds, polar bears, reindeer and arctic foxes.

It's also a movie maker's dream.

It provided locations for the 2002 Bond film Die Another Day and the 2021 TV series The North Water.

Now Paramount Pictures want to spend three weeks filming there for Mission Impossible Dead Reckoning Part 2.

Tom Cruise is well known for doing many of his own stunts and loves to fly helicopters.

The 2014 film Edge of Tomorrow opens with one landing in London's Trafalgar Square.

Here he is with his co-star Emily Blunt, discussing the film with the BBC's Sally Nugent.

The opening scene is incredible.

Trafalgar Square.

It's real, isn't it?

It really happened.

Yes, the R.A.S.

Tell me, Drew, what happened?

I wanted...

I would love to land a helicopter in Trafalgar Square.

That was really, yeah.

I've always really...

I thought this works into the story, right, guys?

Yeah, yeah.

You can justify it about being a character, but you wanted to fly a helicopter in Trafalgar Square.

Yes, I did. Yes, I did.

You wanted to fly.

You flew the helicopter.

No, no, no, no.

No, we had the R.A.F.

They worked for this.

I was asleep in the back.

Norway's Ministry of Culture has already refused the production company the usual subsidies it would get for filming in Norway.

And the Department of the Environment said no travel there should result in unnecessary disturbance to humans or animals.

Delays in the application may cause problems for Paramount, which had planned to shoot in a short time frame

when there's near constant light in Svalbard, but the ice is yet to break up from the winter freeze.

PolarX, the local production company which is coordinating the shoot, is appealing against the decision.

Dead Reckoning Part 2 is due to be released in 2024. Richard Hamilton.

A horde of gold jewellery a thousand years old and 39 small silver coins dating from 200 years later have gone on display in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden in the Netherlands.

The medieval treasure called The Find of the Century by some was discovered by the historian Lorenzo Reiter. He spoke to Rob Young from Holland.

It's a lot of gold and it's jewellery.

They're big.

Just terrific to find something so important like this.

So you went out with a metal detector.

Did you, were you expecting to find something or were you just out there trying your luck?

Yeah, trying my luck of course.

I've been searching with a metal detector since I was 10.

Yeah, I go out every week.

Sometimes you just hope to find a nice coin and that's all you hope for.

But yeah, if you find something like this, that's just unbelievable.

So when your metal detector started beeping or flashing, what were you feeling as you began to discover more and more gold, jewellery and silver coins?

With the first golden pendant,

I just couldn't believe it that I finally had medieval gold after all these years.
I can't really describe the feeling actually.
It's just so weird and then I found another one and then another one and then I realized this might be a real treasure.
So I was just shaking of excitement.
It's a really special feeling, yeah.
How long were you digging for then?
I have been searching for maybe three to four hours and it was the end of the day so I wanted to go home.
And yeah, then this came.
Presumably you realized it was pretty old.
What did you then do next to work out that it was a thousand years old?
I have seen one of these pendants before.
I knew what it was when I found it and then I looked it up and it said that it was made around the year 1050.
Quickly I knew how old it was.
And yeah, with the coins, it's the same because there are many recognizable coins in it.
So I just could look up from which count the coins were or which bishop and then you have to date.
These artifacts are now on display at the National Museum of Antiquities but you remain the owner of them, is that right?
That's right, yeah.
Now it's visible for everyone there and that is exactly what I want because the treasure is so important as to be seen by everyone.
Important and I suspect also valuable.
Have they been valued?
They have not been valued, no.
And I'm not really interested in the money value.
I just want to know the story behind it, of course.
Do you know who they may have belonged to a thousand years ago?
We do not know, but what we do know is that this gold jewelry, yeah, only the highest social classes could afford it.
So you may be speaking about a count or at least someone that's very powerful.
Lorenzo Reiter on his remarkable discovery.
And that's it from us for now

but there'll be a new edition of the Global News Podcast later.

If you want to comment on this podcast
or the topics covered in it, send us an email.

The address is GlobalPodcast at [bbc.co.uk](mailto:GlobalPodcast@bbc.co.uk).

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This edition was mixed by Caroline Driscoll,
the producer was Emma Joseph.

The editor, as always, is Karen Martin.

I'm Valerie Sanderson.

Until next time, bye-bye.