



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

# POINT EXPRESS

TRUSTED NEWS AND RESPECTED VIEWS

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# ELECTION COURT TO DECIDE KELVIN SIMON'S FATE

*Story on Page 2*



## Election Court rejects Kelvin Simon's application to dismiss petition, hears arguments on injunction

The Election Court has convened in the matter of Casworth Aaron and Kelvin "Shugy" Simon.

This matter arises from the initial challenge that arose on 28th December, 2022, when the law offices of Marshall & Co., acting on the instructions of their client, Aaron, challenged Si-

mon's eligibility to be nominated as they assert that he was a civil servant at the time of his nomination.

The petitioner argues that Simon's employment status at the time of his nomination is in contravention of section 10(1) of the Civil Service Act and section 39(1)(g) of the Constitution



*Kelvin "Shugy" Simon*

Order of Antigua and Barbuda.

Within seven days after the general elections were held, Marshall & Co. filed a petition within the Courts.

At a hearing held on 31st January 2023, all preliminary applications were set to be heard on 9th February 2023.

Simon's lawyers were the first to proceed with an application to dismiss the Petitioner's Petition.

The Court heard arguments from both sides and ruled that the Application would be dismissed with costs agreed at \$1,000.00 to the Petitioner.

The Court then proceeded to hear the Petitioner's Applications.

The first Application relates to an injunction to prevent the ineligible Respondent from taking his oath and seat in Parliament pending the determination of the matter.

Arguments were heard from both sides, and the

Court reserved its judgement.

Although no date has been given for the judgement, a statement issued by the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party on Thursday said, "it is highly anticipated this will be before 17th February 2023 when all Parliamentarians are expected to be sworn in".

The other application related to a subpoena for a Public Officer who can speak to the status of the employment of Simon as at the date of nomination, 28th December, 2022.

The Court will also give directions to counsel on the hearing of the Petition.

Casworth Aaron, the Petitioner, is represented by Hugh Marshall Jr. and Andrea Smithen-Henry, both of Marshall & Co.

Kelvin Simon is represented by Kendrickson Kentish of Lake & Kentish, Harold Lovell, Charlesworth Tabor, Leon Symister and Sherrie-Ann Bradshaw.



### Government of Antigua & Barbuda

Ministry of Education, Sports & Creative Industries  
Government Complex, Queen Elizabeth Highway  
St. John's, Antigua  
Tel: 462-0192/462-0193/462-0198/462-0199  
Overseas: 268-462-4959/1051  
Fax: 268-462-4970

#### OAS Scholarship Application Announcement

The Organization of American States announces its 2023 call for scholarship applications for undergraduate and graduate academic studies and graduate research.

More information can be obtained through the links listed below.

- Call for applications for Graduate Studies: [https://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/Academic\\_Program\\_OAS\\_2023.asp](https://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/Academic_Program_OAS_2023.asp)
- Call for applications for Undergraduate Studies: [https://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/specaf\\_2023.asp](https://www.oas.org/en/scholarships/specaf_2023.asp)  
· Scholarship application form for Undergraduate Studies (last two years of a Bachelor's degree): <https://www.oas.org/fms/Announcement.aspx?id=1137&Type=1&Lang=Eng>
- Scholarship application form for Graduate Studies: <https://www.oas.org/fms/Announcement.aspx?id=1136&Type=1&Lang=Eng>

Deadline for submission of applications and accompanying documents to the Director of Education, Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries is Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2023.

## SLBMC successfully completes 10 kidney transplants

The Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre (SLBMC) has attained the significant milestone of having successfully completed ten kidney transplants.

Minister of Health, Sir Molwyn Joseph, reported the achievement to the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda on Wednesday following the success of two more kidney transplants at SLBMC on Monday and Tuesday this week.

Sir Molwyn reported that the country is in a position to offer more transplant operations, however, donors remain hesitant to come forward.

The minister urged the family and friends of those whose loved ones suffered renal failure and are on dialysis to step forward as donors.

Sir Molwyn also reported that



*Minister of Health, Sir Molwyn Joseph*

SLBMC has now met the requirements to offer kidney transplant services to OECS countries that are without the expertise to provide it.

“All kudos to the medical practitioners, and kudos to the foundation spirit behind this particular facility which is Dr. Ian Thomas and the minister has also offered his praise to Dr. Thomas for bringing the health institution to that position where we can consistently have these types of intervention for our patients,” Information Minister Melford Nicholas said during Thursday’s post-Cabinet press briefing.

The government has long stated its intention to market the services of SLBMC which include specialised care, including kidney transplants.

The government is aiming to soon offer cardiac care and surgeries once the Cardiac Unit, which is now being planned, is launched.



# Curry House

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## Customs Division unearths clearance certificate scam

The Customs Division is warning members of the public to be on the lookout for individuals who are purporting to have “Customs Clearance Certificates” and are soliciting money to clear packages.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the Customs Division said it had received reports that people were attempting to scam unsuspecting members of the public by claiming they possess Customs clearance certificates.

“The Customs and Excise Division takes these reports seriously and is fully cooperating with the authorities to ensure that the fraudulent and unscrupulous actions of certain members of the community are brought to a stop as soon as possible,” the statement read.

The division is also asking people



to contact its headquarters on telephone number 268-462-0028 to verify the identity of anyone contacting them

who claims to be an employee of the Antigua and Barbuda Customs and Excise Division.

“If you believe that you have been targeted or have fallen victim to this scheme, immediately contact the Criminal Investigations Department to make a report,” the division urged.

The Customs and Excise Division reminded in the statement that it is an offence to impersonate an officer. This offence carries the penalty of a fine of \$100,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 2 years.

The Customs and Excise Division says it is resolved to operate at the highest levels of professionalism and integrity as it remains steadfast in its overall mission to secure and serve, collect revenue, and protect the country’s borders.



## OUR NATIONAL LEGEND

# DAME GWENDOLYN TONGE

## DCN, OH, MBE.



She was an Antiguan teacher and home economics expert. After teaching for many years, she became the head of the government Women's Desk, the precursor to the Directorate of Gender Affairs. Appointed as a Senator, she continued to work in the Ministry of the Prime Minister, responsible for policies on women's issues.

As *Auntie Gwen*, she hosted a cooking show *Cooking Magic*, which began airing on the Antigua and Barbuda Broadcasting Service (ABS) in the 1960s until her death, the longest running television series in the Eastern Caribbean, other than the news programs. The recipient of many awards, she was honored with the Order of the British Empire, the Order of Honour of Antigua and Barbuda and Distinguished Order of the Nation.



A Message from Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board



## Search continues for missing New Winthorpes man

A search conducted yesterday for missing New Winthorpes resident George “Murphy” James has yielded no results, but family members are remaining hopeful that he will return home safely.

Relatives were aided by the police yesterday morning in their search for the 71-year-old who was last seen on Tuesday in the vicinity of Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium.

Allegations are George James left his home around 6:30am in the company of a friend to assist in retrieving coal from a kiln somewhere in the mangrove area off Old Parham Road, between Parham Town and Weirs Estate.

Further reports indicate shortly after arriving at the location, James allegedly told his friend he was leaving at around 7:30am to visit the beach. However, the New Winthorpes resident did not return to the location of the Coal Kiln up to the time his friend left the area at approximately 3:30pm.

Although “Murphy” failed to return, it is believed that the man who he accompanied thought nothing about it and said nothing to anyone. That was until George James’s daughter, Tamisha, began making inquiries on Wednesday.

She journeyed to her fa-



*George “Murphy” James* ther’s home and after realizing he was not there, she visited his friend’s home, where she was told the man and her father were at the site of the Coal Kiln for some time on Tuesday, but then he left.

After the information was conveyed to Tamisha James, a search was conducted in the area where the kiln is located to find George James, but it was unsuccessful.

The family is now desperate to find the septuagenarian, and has appealed to members of the general public to contact them if they are familiar with his whereabouts.

Anyone with information can call 726-5787, 717-7702, or the nearest police station.

## JOB OPPORTUNITY

### Parts Warehouse Officer

An automotive dealership seeking hardworking individuals who can work to efficient process methods and adapt to various tasks, must be a dedicated, hard-working and energized individual who pride themselves on their commitment and work ethic.

Warehouse officer role daily duties include:

- Assisting with the unloading of vehicles and the checking in of stock
- Sorting and placing materials or items on to racks, and shelves.
- Collecting items from throughout the warehouse, preparing and completing warehouse orders for pickup according to a schedule.
- Performing warehouse inventory controls through a computer.
- Stock counting and location checks.

As a warehouse operative you will be working both alone and as part of a team with efficiency and commitment to

complete your work and strive to maintain the business performance targets.

This role best suits upbeat and self-motivated individuals who enjoy working systematically and productively. The environment relies on organization and efficiency and with so much ground to cover in the line of duty it is important to ensure that you have a moderate level of fitness to enable you to comfortably carry out your tasks.

Picking and packing products can involve a substantial amount of manual handling including bending, stretching, stooping, stepping, reaching and lifting. Having a good range of mobility is important to ensure you can work safely within health and safety regulations without placing undue strain on your body.

#### Education

Minimum High School Education

#### Skills Required:

- Reliability and dependability
- Literacy & numeracy
- Ability to meet the physical demands of the job
- Self-motivated
- Upbeat and energized
- Flexible and willing to take on a variety of tasks
- Team player
- A level of computer literacy

Deadline for submission of application is **February 28, 2023.**

Please send applications to [warehouseofficer6@gmail.com](mailto:warehouseofficer6@gmail.com).

## Law firm destroyed by fire

A fire that destroyed the law office of Daniels, Phillip and Associates on All Saints Road is under investigation.

All Saints and Coolidge fire departments responded to the blaze at 3:52am Wednesday, where they met the mainly wooden building engulfed in flames. Efforts to save the law office headed by attorney Lawrence Daniels and its contents were futile as the fire spread rapidly.

A source related that the

building was insured, but records of the many clients that retained the firm to represent their interests in legal matters were destroyed.

In January, 2022, the law office informed its clients of its relocation from St. Mary's Street to All Saints Road.

Lawrence Daniels is the defence attorney in the ongoing murder trial of Mikhail Gomes.

Fire investigators will be



seeking to determine if the blaze was an act of arson, electrical or was due to other causes.

## A&B, China launch second phase of agricultural programme



Minister of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, E. P. Chet Greene and the PRC's resident ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, Zhang Yanling.

Antigua and Barbuda and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have signed an agreement that paves the way for the start of the second phase of the agricultural programme through which the PRC shares farming techniques with local farmers.

The agreement was signed on Thursday by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, E. P. Chet Greene and the PRC's resident ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, Zhang Yanling.

Under the programme, Chinese farmers will cultivate land in Greencastle and other areas that will produce a variety of vegetables.

In addition to staple crops, new vegetables will also be introduced to Antigua and Barbuda.

Over the life of the three-year programme, the Chinese farmers will also provide training to local farmers and technicians in the Ministry of Agricul-

ture.

Chief Extension Officer, Owalabi Elabanjo, said during the first phase of the project, the Chinese were able to cultivate cauliflower and broccoli which were both well received by local consumers.

They also produced different varieties of watermelons.

In this new phase, mushroom production will take centre stage.

"We are hoping to have as many farmers as possible to participate in the programme over the lifespan of the project as we want to see how many farmers we can touch during that time," Elabanjo said.

Some of the planned training sessions will be conducted via ZOOM, while in other instances, local farmers and agricultural specialists will travel to China to experience the skills and methods employed by farmers there and receive firsthand training in land use practices.

# Ocean sand mining moves closer to reality

Mining sand from the ocean floor to meet the construction sector's demand is moving closer to becoming a reality.

This is good news as there is a steadily increasing shortage of the commodity.

On Wednesday, the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda invited the principals of the Blue Ocean Dredging Company to its meeting to discuss the shortage of sand for the purpose of construction.

Last year, the cabinet decided that it would allow sand to be mined from the ocean floor as traditional sources of the resource are nearing depletion.

The former Minister of Social Transformation and The Blue Economy, Dean Jonas, indicated in 2022 that billions of tons of sand were available in Antigua and Barbuda's exclusive economic zone that could be harvested safely over a 20-year period.

Antigua and Barbuda's Exclusive Economic Zone is 110,089 square kilometres and is estimated to have sev-



eral billion dollars' worth of resources including marine life.

During the meeting, Blue Ocean Dredging explained that sand mined from the ocean will come with its own challenges as it must be completely freed of its salt content before use.

This process takes place naturally as rainfall is relied upon to rinse the sand free of salt.

In the case of Antigua and Barbuda where drought is an issue, this process could

take several weeks due to the infrequency of rainfall.

Despite this hurdle, Blue Ocean Dredging advised that other Caribbean countries have turned to this method of sand mining with minimal consequences and "maximum success".












Well placed sources informed Pointe Xpress that the Environment Division and Department of Fisheries will provide the Development Control Authority with the licences to approve deep sea sand mining.

These licences will be temporary in the first instance then granted for longer periods later on.

Meanwhile, during its meeting with cabinet, the principals of Blue Ocean also discussed the payment of additional fees it incurred to move ahead with the removal of the extremely hard rock that delayed dredging at the St. John's Harbour.

The machinery that was being used was unable to penetrate the rocks and a South American company with specialised equipment had to be engaged to complete that phase of the job which allowed the channel into the harbour and its turning basin to be widened and deepened enough to accommodate the world's largest ships.

The government agreed that it will absorb this additional cost.

Fri 10   Day		Fri 10   Night	
<b>80°</b>		<b>73°</b>	
21% E 18 mph		21% E 15 mph	
Some clouds in the morning will give way to mainly sunny skies for the afternoon. High near 80F. Winds E at 15 to 25 mph.		Clear to partly cloudy. Low 73F. Winds E at 10 to 20 mph.	
 Humidity <b>70%</b>	 UV Index <b>10 of 10</b>	 Humidity <b>76%</b>	 UV Index <b>0 of 10</b>
 Sunrise <b>6:35 am</b>	 Sunset <b>6:07 pm</b>	 Moonrise <b>10:13 pm</b>	 Moonset <b>9:37 am</b>
 Waning Gibbous			

# Opinion

## Haiti at the tipping point of becoming fully hostage to criminals

**By Sir Ronald Sanders**

*(The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the United States of America and the Organization of American States. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London and Massey College in the University of Toronto. The views expressed are entirely his own)*

Haiti continues to occupy the concerns of nations around the world, especially its closest neighbouring states.

Those in charge of the Haitian Government have called for “effective support” from international partners “in the form of the immediate deployment of a specialized armed force of sufficient strength to stop, throughout the country, the humanitarian crisis that has been caused by, among other things, the breakdown in security resulting from the criminal actions of armed gangs and their sponsors”.

But others in the Haitian community insist that the Haitian authorities share the blame for the country's rapid deterioration. They are not convinced that, even if it were possible, an intervening military force is the answer to Haiti's deep seated and long-lasting woes.

Everyone is united in the view that more than 200 gangs now effectively control 60 per cent of the Capi-

tal, Port-au-Prince and about 80 per cent of the entire country, and that action is required to end their reign of terror. However, how to end the rule of the gangs remains an issue within Haiti and among its very large diaspora community. Some favour armed intervention by external forces but without any clear definition of the terms under which this would be accomplished. Others resist the notion of any intervention by external forces.

Among the latter is The National Human Rights Defence (RNDDH) group, which states that the “request for military intervention was produced by the de facto government (of Prime Minister, Ariel Henry) without any form of legitimacy (and) with its own objectives which seem to be to keep the PHTK (Henry's political party) in power until the completion of the elections which they will organize with, in addition, the ability to manipulate the biometric data of citizens, that is, the electoral data”.

Prime Minister Henry has managed to garner support for a “National Consensus for an inclusive transition and transparent election”. On December 21, Henry's government and some representatives of the private sector, other political parties and civil society organizations signed a document, committing to this transition. But participation was not fully inclusionary



*Sir Ronald Sanders*

and key stakeholders were either omitted or omitted themselves. Therefore, while Haiti's international partners acknowledge the benefit of the commitment and the formation of a High Council for the Transition (HCT), they are concerned that the body is not inclusionary enough to represent a national consensus. Further, the past record in Haiti of abandoning agreed positions, resulting in even wider discord, does not encourage confidence that a limited HCT will survive or that its decisions will be respected.

In a letter to the President of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on October 8, 2022, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, recognizing that the 5 permanent members would not agree to UN military intervention in Haiti, proposed two approaches. First, “A group of Member States, acting bilaterally at the invitation of the Government of Haiti,

could establish a special force to support the Haitian National Police in tackling gangs, including through joint strike, isolation and containment operations across the country”; and second, “The Security Council could welcome such a special force, the viability of which would be strengthened by the existence of broad political and social support for its deployment and a meaningful agreement between the Government and the opposition on a political way forward for Haiti”.

Neither of these proposals were pursued. No country, including the U.S. is anxious to commit forces to Haiti, outside of an agreed multi-national expedition. Further, there is still not in Haiti the kind of “broad political and social support” for the deployment of an external force. And despite the accord of December 21, 2022, and the creation of a limited HTC, there is, as yet,

*cont'd on pg 9*



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no “meaningful agreement between the government and the opposition on a political way forward”.

This situation in Haiti is made even more complex by the overarching power of the criminal gangs.

One academic, César Niño, an associate professor and researcher at Universidad de la Salle in Colombia, writes that “the criminal gangs managed to make alliances with the police and security, thus enabling kidnapping, human trafficking, the flow of weapons, and other crimes while minimizing the consequences”.

The Haitian Human Rights Group (RNDDH) goes even further, pointing to “ongoing and repeated connections between state authorities and armed gangs”.

Added to this are the following undisputed facts. The country has no legislature and nobody overseeing the government; the Supreme Court is dysfunctional (its members must be approved by the parliament which does not exist) and it has lost a third of its members.

Amid all this, the people of the country are suffering. Research shows that five million people currently experience food insecurity across the country; reported kidnappings soared to more than 1,200 last year, more than double the number in 2021, according to the U.N.; and there were 2,200 homicides in 2022, a dramatic increase over 2021.

The issue that confronts

the international community in its desire to be helpful to Haiti is both the lack of meaningful, inclusionary dialogue and a genuine national consensus on the way forward within Haiti, as well as no clear terms under which external forces would be invited into Haiti and by whom; how would such a force be organized and financed; under whose authority would it function and with what mandate and immunity.

In the meantime, it should be acknowledged that the U.S. and Canada are deploying logistical assistance to the Haitian National Police. In the circumstances, it is better than doing nothing.

However, no one should lose sight of the fact that, apart from dictatorships in Haiti, two countries bear the greatest responsibility for that country’s condition – France and the U.S. Outside of an agreed multinational military intervention, they should use their considerable influence within Haiti to encourage national consensus on their path forward, including how to deal with the criminal power of the gangs.

CARICOM Heads of Government meet in their regular session in The Bahamas from February 15 to 17. Undoubtedly, Haiti will be on their agenda. They will have to consider the ways in which they can act to be helpful to the people of Haiti within the limits of their capacity.

**Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sirronaldsanders.com](http://www.sirronaldsanders.com)**



## Antigua Cruise Port

### JOB OPPORTUNITY

#### Accounts Officer

The Accounts Officer will report to the Financial Controller in supporting the company's Finance programs.

#### CORE DUTIES

1. Reconcile bank accounts daily and prepare cash reports.
2. Post vendor invoices to accounting software daily, initiate and post payments.
3. Send out invoices to cruise lines daily and tenants monthly.
4. Follow up on receivables for Cruise Lines and tenants and compile monthly reports.
5. Manage purchasing (placing orders, clearing overseas shipments, liaising with Broker/Driver).
6. Receiving purchases, tracking inventory (cleaning and office supplies), compile monthly inventory reports.
7. Update the fixed asset register weekly (new purchases and disposals).
8. Assist in the preparation for and during Audits.
9. Assist in the preparation of management and financial reports.
10. Fill in for Admin as Financial Assistant when position is vacant.

#### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Associate Degree or equivalent in Accounting or a Finance related field. In the absence of the respective qualifications, a minimum of 3-years relevant work experience.
- Good organizational skills.
- Excellent communication and coordination skills.
- Excellent understanding of dealing with people.
- Leadership skills.
- Use of written and spoken English and report writing skills.
- Confident and self-motivated.
- Ability to work flexible hours.

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 to [veryssam@antiguacruiseport.com](mailto:veryssam@antiguacruiseport.com)

# Technology



## Elon Musk's Neuralink may have illegally transported pathogens, animal advocates say

By Rachael Levy

An animal-welfare organisation said it plans to ask a U.S. government agency on Thursday to investigate Elon Musk's brain-implant company Neuralink over records it said show potentially illegal movement of hazardous pathogens.

The Physicians Committee of Responsible Medicine (PCRM) said in a letter to the U.S. Department of Transportation, which was shared with Reuters, that it has obtained emails and other documents that suggest unsafe packaging and movement of implants removed from the brains of monkeys.

These implants may have carried infectious diseases in violation of federal law, PCRM said.

The letter said records that the group obtained showed instances of pathogens, such as antibiotic-resistant staphylococcus and herpes B virus, that may have been transported without proper containment measures.

PCRM's letter adds to the scrutiny facing Neuralink, which is developing a brain implant it hopes will help paralyzed people walk again and cure other neurological ailments.

In December, Reuters



Neuralink logo and Elon Musk photo are seen in this illustration taken, December 19, 2022. REUTERS/Dado Ruvic/Illustration/File Photo

reported that Neuralink has been under a federal investigation over potential animal welfare violations and that some of its staff made internal complaints about experiments being rushed, causing needless suffering and deaths.

The incidents that involved potential breaches of hazardous material transportation regulations happened in 2019, when Neuralink relied on University of California, Davis to help carry out its experiments on primates, according to the documents cited by PCRM.

While Neuralink's

partnership with UC Davis ended in 2020, PCRM said the company continues to employ the neurosurgeon who oversaw the experiments and other staff involved may also still be employed.

Reuters reviewed the UC Davis records cited by PCRM in its letter. It is unclear whether further records exist that provide a different or fuller account of what happened.

PCRM obtained the records from UC Davis through public information requests. Neuralink messages and records not shared with UC Davis are

not subject to such information requests.

Representatives for Neuralink, including Musk, and the Department of Transportation did not respond to comment requests. A UC Davis spokesperson would only say that the university abides by all biohazard and lab safety regulations.

PCRM's letter said pathogens were carried on removed implants from monkeys after improper sanitization and packaging.

The group said those pathogens could cause se-

*cont'd on pg 11*

*cont'd from pg 10*

rious health issues in infected humans, such as bloodstream infections, pneumonia and severe brain damage, among other problems.

PCRM, which opposes the use of animals in medical research, did not identify any harm as a result of these incidents, but said Neuralink's actions "may pose a serious and ongoing public health risk."

"The company's documented track record of sloppy, unsafe laboratory practices compel DOT to investigate and levy appropriate fines," PCRM said in the letter.

PCRM said it also found instances that appear to describe UC Davis employees urging immediate biohazard training for Neuralink employees following incidents that had caused contamination concerns.

On one occasion in April 2019, a UC Davis employee wrote in an email that the university's primate centre is "at risk" for "monkey contaminated hardware."

"This is an exposure to anyone coming in contact with the contaminated explanted hardware and we are making a big deal about this because we are concerned for human safety," wrote the employee, whose name was redacted from the records.

PCRM has raised concerns about Neuralink in the past. Last year, it wrote

to federal officials about alleged animal-welfare issues during Neuralink's research partnership with UC Davis, citing another set of records it obtained. A federal prosecutor in the Northern District of California referred PCRM's complaint to the USDA Inspector General, which

later launched the federal probe into Neuralink, Reuters previously reported.

During its partnership with UC Davis, Neuralink grew frustrated with what it regarded as the slow pace of testing on primates, current and former company employees told Reuters, and has since built out ex-

tensive in-house animal testing facilities.

The company has missed deadlines set by Musk to proceed to human trials, however. His pressure on Neuralink's staff to make progress contributed to mistakes plaguing some experiments, Reuters reported.

## Pointe Xpress Weekend Puzzle

### ACROSS

- 1) Counter in a debate
- 6) Opponent
- 9) Involuntary muscle contraction
- 14) NBA playground
- 15) One cause of inflation?
- 16) Sheer fabric
- 17) Gives in
- 19) It may be golden on a phonograph
- 20) "Look over here!"
- 21) Common Market abbr., once
- 22) Messy, as a room
- 23) Cyma \_\_\_ (molding type)
- 25) Grazing grounds
- 26) Yaps foolishly
- 31) Parkinson's drug
- 33) Type of horse
- 34) Egg handler just before Easter
- 35) When dark comes o'er the land
- 36) Thumbs-down vote
- 39) Weight-room unit
- 41) Hawaiian gift
- 42) Transmitted
- 44) Veterinarian's patient
- 46) Poem of uneven couplets
- 48) Blabs
- 52) Be a contestant
- 53) More than drizzles
- 54) Locate, as data on a computer
- 57) Small newt
- 58) The Three Tenors, for example
- 62) Necklace trinket
- 63) Gives a false alarm
- 65) Author A.A.
- 66) Greek island
- 67) Head of a Muslim state (Var.)
- 68) Dazzling display
- 69) Fire remains
- 70) Square footage measures

### DOWN

- 1) Sound hoarse
- 2) Historians' subjects
- 3) Ottoman VIPs
- 4) Remove bindings
- 5) Greek "T"
- 6) Diamond features
- 7) Some auto repair shop containers
- 8) "... \_\_\_ he drove out of sight"
- 9) Mick Jagger and bandmates, briefly
- 10) Danced at Oktoberfest
- 11) Adjutant
- 12) Fall's prelude
- 13) Satisfy, as demands
- 18) Narrowest bottle part
- 22) Arm bones
- 24) Enthusiastic liveliness
- 26) Metric measure of weight
- 27) Lazy poet's above?
- 28) Stocking material
- 29) Acorn, essentially
- 30) Lake that feeds the Niagara River
- 31) Subtraction word
- 32) Low-pitched
- 37) Church recesses
- 38) Up to the present
- 40) Menial worker
- 43) Greek eatery
- 45) Bullfighters
- 47) After peace is declared
- 49) Destiny
- 50) Like a clumsy lout
- 51) Web spot
- 54) Nadir's opposite
- 55) Stylish
- 56) "Safe!" or "out!"
- 59) Part in a play
- 60) Pelvic bones
- 61) Does in, in mob slang
- 63) Intelligence org.
- 64) Caribbean music

### UTTER NONSENSE

By Janet Wise

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
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62									63			64			
65									66			67			
68									69			70			

# Passport rush blamed on US policy stalls adoptions in Haiti

By Dánica Coto

Dozens of children are stuck in orphanages across Haiti, unable to leave the increasingly volatile country and start new lives with adoptive parents because a U.S. policy change has unleashed a rush for passports at Haiti's main immigration office.

U.S. President Joe Biden announced last month that the U.S. will accept 30,000 people a month from Haiti, Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela if they pass a background check and have an eligible sponsor and a passport to travel.

The ensuing demand for Haitian passports has overwhelmed Haiti's passport office in the capital, Port-au-Prince, where people with appointments cannot squeeze through the aggressive crowd or secure new appointments.

Meanwhile, adoptive parents say the U.S. State Department has declined to grant passport waivers as they worry their children will succumb to hunger, cholera or gang violence.

"It's infuriating," said Bryan Hanlon, a postal inspector who lives with his wife in Washington.

They became the legal parents of Peterson, 5, and Gina, 6, last year and fear they won't be able to se-



Bryan and Julie Hanlon hold photos of their adopted Haitian children, Gina, left, and Peterson, in a play area of their home in Washington, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2023. They became the legal parents of the siblings in 2022 and fear they won't be able to secure their passports and fly them out of Haiti. (AP Photo/Cliff Owen)

cure passports for the children and fly them out of Haiti, which has been in a downward spiral since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.

Last year, the number of reported kidnappings in Haiti soared to 1,359, more than double the previous year, and 2,183 killings were reported, up by a third from 2021, according to the United Nations. Gangs also are raping women and children at an alarming rate, including

those as young as 10, officials say.

The country also is fighting a deadly cholera outbreak and a spike in starvation.

Last year, 5-year-old Peterson became malnourished and had to be taken to a clinic, where he was treated for a couple of months.

Then in October, the siblings had to flee the orphanage with a caretaker as gangs raided the neighbourhood, killing dozens

of civilians and setting homes on fire.

The violence that erupts as gangs fight over territory has left tens of thousands of Haitians homeless.

"That was the worst day of our lives," Hanlon said. "We didn't know if they were alive or dead."

With their orphanage abandoned because of the violence, the children had been taken by one of their caretakers to her home in

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southern Haiti, where they have remained, he said.

Hanlon said he and his wife send money to the caretaker, but that “some days, there is just no food to buy or no fuel to cook it.” Other times, she cannot leave the house to pick up the money because it’s too dangerous, he said.

Brooke Baeth, an elementary school speech therapist in Minnesota, understands the fear and frustration.

She and her husband became the legal parents of a 5-year-old girl in Haiti nearly a year ago, but they don’t know when they will be able to meet her.

In late January, her daughter and caretakers flew from their orphanage in northern Haiti to Port-au-Prince only to encounter a huge crowd at the immigration office.

Despite having an appointment, they could not get inside, nor could some of the office’s own employees, Baeth said.

“It’s just devastating,” she said, adding that like the Hanlons, they haven’t been able to obtain a passport waiver from the State Department. “It feels like our voices are not being heard.”

A spokesperson for the State Department said intercountry adoption is one of the agency’s highest priorities and that it uses all appropriate tools to identify and overcome barriers.

“We understand that it is currently difficult for prospective adoptive parents to obtain a Haitian passport,” the spokesperson said.

“We remain committed to helping prospective adoptive parents navigate the often-complicated journey of intercountry adoption. We will continue to engage with the Haitian government on this issue.”

Hanlon shared email messages

with The Associated Press in which the U.S. government denied his request for a waiver by noting that both Haiti’s immigration office and the Ministry of the Interior were open for business, and that passport waivers are for use only on a case-by-case basis and as a last resort.

Ryan Hanlon, president and CEO of the U.S. The National Council for Adoption, which is not related to Bryan Hanlon, said in a phone interview that the State Department’s manual calls on officials to prioritise adoption cases.

“Can we even say we prioritise adoption when we have legal options that we choose not to utilise?” he said. “It’s the safety of the children that’s the concern here.”

Given the ongoing crush at Haiti’s main immigration office, government officials recently opened two makeshift offices in a gymnasium and a soccer field elsewhere in Port-au-Prince. They also implemented a schedule setting aside specific days for groups including women and the elderly. Saturdays have been reserved for children.

Officials say they don’t know how many Haitian children are in this situation, but two of 11 U.S. agencies that are main providers of adoption services in Haiti say a dozen or more of their children are affected and the number has been rising.

From 2016 to 2020, people adopted 827 children from Haiti, according to the most recent statistics from the State Department. Only 96 children were adopted in 2020, down from a high of 227 in 2017.

At one adoption agency, Colorado-based A Love Beyond Borders, at least 13 children in Haiti have been adopted but have been unable to obtain passports amid a processing backlog that is growing every day, said Stephanie Thoet, the agency’s Haiti program coordinator.

She noted that even Haiti’s Ministry of the Interior has been unable to access the passport office to manually deliver the files of adopted children and worries about officials being killed or kidnapped by gangs as they travel back and forth with paperwork that has taken years to complete.

“I am terrified every time they go,” she said.

At another agency, Utah-based Wasatch International Adoption, at least a dozen children who already have been adopted can’t obtain a passport, and the number is growing, said Chareyl Moyes, the agency’s Haiti program manager.

“The situation is dire,” she said, adding that she worries about a child or caretaker being killed. “Do we want to wait until it’s at that point?”

Baeth said it’s hard for her daughter to understand why it’s taking so long to be together.

They tell her how much she means to them and send her images of the snow, prompting her to excitedly ask if she could eat it.

The girl, who wants to be a unicorn rider when she grows up, has sent them videos of her doing cartwheels and somersaults.

Hanlon said his daughter knows what is going on: “She understands enough to be frustrated.”

He recalled how Gina was upset one day and told her caretaker: “I don’t want to talk to them in videos anymore. I want to talk to them in person.”

His son, however, is younger.

Hanlon said when the boy is told he can’t travel to certain parts of Haiti, he tells the other children not to worry, assuring them: “My dad’s like Superman. He’ll fly down and kill the bad guys.”

Hanlon paused as his voice broke.

“Some days, I feel like I’m letting him down.”

## Stella Jean quits Milan Fashion Week over lack of inclusion

By Colleen Barry

The only Black designer belonging to Italy's fashion chamber withdrew Wednesday from this month's Milan Fashion Week, alleging a lack of support for diversity and inclusion after the chamber "abandoned" a project to promote young designers of colour working in Italy.

Stella Jean interrupted a press conference by the Italian National Fashion Chamber to announce that neither she nor five members of the We Are Made in Italy collective of designers of colour would participate in fashion week.

She also said she had started a hunger strike Wednesday out of concern members of WAMI, an initiative launched in 2020 on the heels of the Black Lives Matter movement, could suffer a professional backlash for her activism.

The moves signalled a dramatic denouement of a nearly three-year-collaboration with the chamber to promote designers of colour.

"The chamber told us, 'We didn't know there were Italian designers who weren't white.' We brought them to the runway. They supported us for two years. Then we were abandoned," Jean told the press conference.

Italian Fashion Chamber President Carlo Capasa



Designer Stella Jean accepts applause at the end of her womens Spring/Summer 2018/19 fashion collection, presented in Milan, Italy, on Sept. 24, 2017. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno, File)

assured her from the dais that the chamber had no intention of retaliating in any way.

He expressed regret that neither she nor the WAMI members would participate in Fashion Week.

"Stella's contribution has always been appreciated. We Italians need to have our conscience stimulated," he said.

"As for WAMI, we are not people who retaliate. For us it is important to promote new brands."

He noted that two WAMI designers from previous seasons were presenting collections during Milan Fashion Week, which runs from Feb. 21-27.

In addition, the chamber has included on the fashion week calendar the inaugural edition of the Black Carpet Awards recognizing the achievements of minorities in Italian society, and was hosting another diversity initiative by the owner and

editor of U.S.-based Blanc Magazine, Teneshia Carr.

Jean charged that the chamber had significantly cut back support for WAMI after she made an impassioned speech about the personal price she had paid for highlighting racial injustice in Italy during a runway show last September.

She also said it backtracked on a promise to create a Black board within the chamber to promote diversity and inclusion. Capasa told AP that he decided against the board after WAMI made social media posts that cast a negative light on some Italian fashion brands.

"We wrote a nice letter, saying we want to give them the liberty to express themselves," Capasa said, adding that the chamber could not host any board that appeared to take public swipes at other members.

Italian-Haitian Jean, who made her Milan runway premiere in 2013 on

the Armani runway, said she and her family have been subjected to retaliation for her activism for racial justice in Italy. She said that included death threats against her daughter by other minors, and the termination of professional relationships for her.

"When you speak of retaliations, of death threats, people, I work in fashion. I don't traffic arms, I don't traffic drugs or make money from trafficking women," Jean said. "It is absurd, vile, shameful and inhuman that I must speak for people who feel their lives are in danger, who feel they will suffer the same retaliation."

WAMI was launched by Jean, African-American designer Edward Buchanan and the head of Afro Fashion Week Milano, Michelle Ngonmo, to draw attention to the lack of minority representation in the Italian fashion world. It followed some racial gaffes by major fashion houses that made global headlines.

Ngonmo told the AP that financial support for the project from the chamber had dwindled over the three years it has run so far, and that Afro Fashion Week Milano wasn't able to come up with 20,000 euros (\$21,000) to support the five young designers in making solid looks to present, plus a vid-

cont'd on pg 15

## Netflix steps up its effort to get paid for account sharing

By Dee-Ann Durbin

Netflix has a plan to deal with rampant account sharing: a program that lets subscribers pay extra to share their account with people outside their household.

The streaming giant introduced paid sharing in Canada, New Zealand, Portugal and Spain on Wednesday. It was previously rolled out in multiple markets in Latin America.

While Netflix won't say when paid sharing will come to other countries, some version of the plan is expected to be introduced in the U.S. in the next few weeks. Around one-third of Netflix's subscribers live in the U.S. and Canada.

Netflix has more than 231 million paid subscribers in 190 countries.

The Los Gatos, California-based company estimates that 100 million households are currently sharing their accounts with



*The Netflix logo is shown in this photo from the company's website on Feb. 2, 2023, in New York. Netflix has a plan to deal with rampant account sharing: a program that lets subscribers pay extra to share their account with people outside their household. The streaming giant introduced paid sharing in Canada, New Zealand, Portugal and Spain on Wednesday, Feb. 8. It was previously rolled out in multiple markets in Latin America. (AP Photo/Richard Drew, File)*

others, which impacts the company's ability to invest in new programming.

"We've always made it easy for people who live together to share their Netflix account with features like profiles and multiple streams," the company said in a blog post Wednesday. "While these have been

hugely popular, they've also created confusion about when and how you can share Netflix."

Starting Wednesday, Netflix said it will allow standard and premium subscribers in Canada, Spain, New Zealand and Portugal to set up an extra account for up to two people they

don't live with for an extra monthly fee. The monthly fee varies by country; in Canada, it's 7.99 Canadian dollars, while in Portugal it's 3.99 euros.

Netflix said it will also allow people who have been borrowing accounts to transfer their viewing history and other preferences to a new, paid subscription.

Netflix didn't say what actions it will take if subscribers continue to share accounts outside their household. In a conference call with investors in January, Netflix co-CEO Greg Peters said the company is trying to be thoughtful and gradual in its rollout.

"It's worth noting that this will not be a universally popular move, so there will be current members that are unhappy with this move. We'll see a bit of a cancel reaction to that," he said. "We think of this as similar to what we see when we raise prices."

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eo.

The Italian fashion chamber fully supported the collections for the two WAMI classes, each with five designers, but hasn't funded the third generation, Ngonmo and Jean said.

A September show featuring Jean, Buchanan and WAMI was financed through other allies and their own contributions. The latest WAMI collections were to be presented by video on Feb. 22.

"Maybe the message is the whole

industry needs to open their eyes and say, 'What can we do to make that happen?'" Ngonmo told the AP.

Capasa emphasised that the project by Blanc Magazine's Carr is receiving the same support he offered WAMI: a slot on the calendar and a physical space in the Fashion Hub where journalists and buyers can view the collections.

But Jean insists that Italy's designers of colour deserve special promotion by the chamber, whose role is the promotion of Italian fashion.

Jean said progress in recent seasons - including opening fashion week with WAMI designer Joy Meribe's runway show, and Jean's own return to the runway in September - had turned out to be "performative."

"They used WAMI as a free pass of safe conduct for diversity," Jean told the AP. She said she was withdrawing out of fatigue with the "continual fight" for recognition for designers of colour in Italy.

"I am a fighter by nature, but I cannot be this way all the time," she said.

## Brazil pushes illegal miners out of Yanomami territory

AP - Armed government officials with Brazil's justice, Indigenous and environment ministries pressed illegal gold miners out of Yanomami Indigenous territory Wednesday, citing widespread river contamination, famine and disease they have brought to one of the most isolated groups in the world.

People involved in illegal gold dredging streamed away from the territory on foot. The operation could take months. There are believed to be some 20,000 people engaged in the activity, often using toxic mercury to separate the gold. An estimated 30,000 Yanomami people live in Brazil's largest Indigenous territory, which covers an area roughly the size of Portugal and stretches across Roraima and Amazonas states in the northwest corner of Brazil's Amazon.

The authorities - the Brazilian environmental agency Ibama, with support from the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples and the National Guard - found an airplane, a bulldozer, and makeshift lodges and hangars, and destroyed them - as permitted by law. Two guns and three boats with 5,000 litres (1,320 gallons) of fuel were seized. They also discovered a helicopter hidden in the forest and set it ablaze.

Ibama established a checkpoint next to a Yanomami village on the Uraricoera River to interrupt the miners' supply chain there. Agents seized the 12-metre (39-foot) boats, loaded with a ton of food, freezers, generators, and internet antennas. The cargo will now supply the federal agents. No more boats carrying fuel and equipment will be allowed to proceed past the blockade.

The large amount of supplies



Miners walk for days to leave the Yanomami Indigenous territory ahead of expected operations against illegal mining in Alto Alegre, Roraima state, Brazil, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2023. The government declared a public health emergency for the Yanomami people in the Amazon, who are suffering from malnutrition and diseases such as malaria as a consequence of illegal mining. (AP Photo/Edmar Barros)

bound upriver could indicate some of the gold miners were ignoring President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's promise to expel them after years of neglect under his predecessor, Bolsonaro, who tried to legalise the activity.

Other miners, however, sensed it was better to return to the city. On Tuesday, The Associated Press visited a makeshift port alongside the Uraricoera River, accessible only by a three-hour drive on a dirt road. Dozens of gold miners arrived over the course of the day, some of them after walking for days through the forest, en route to state capital Boa Vista.

One of them, João Batista Costa, 61, told reporters the Yanomami are dying of hunger and that recent emergency food shipments have not been enough.

The federal government has declared a public health emergency for

the Yanomami people, who are suffering from malnutrition and diseases such as malaria as a consequence of illegal mining.

A report published yesterday by the Health Ministry found that gold miners have invaded four clinics inside Yanomami territory, leaving them inoperational.

In the city of Boa Vista, where starving and sick Indigenous people have been medevaced to a temporary medical facility, there are 700 Yanomami, more than three times its capacity.

The gold miners, who come from poor regions, such as Maranhao state in Brazil's Northeast, usually cross the forest wearing flip-flops, carrying only food and personal belongings in their backpacks. They sleep in hammocks in campsites.

But their mining depends on so-

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## Several Caribbean islands rattled by earthquakes

CMC - An earthquake with a magnitude of 4.0 rattled several parts of Trinidad on Wednesday morning, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

The Seismic Research Centre (SRC) of the St. Augustine campus of the University of West Indies (UWI), said the quake, which occurred at 6.31 a.m. had a depth of 4.9 miles and was located Latitude: 10.72N, Longitude: 61.88W.

The SRC said that the tremor was felt 25 miles west of the capital, Port of Spain, 41 miles west of Arima, and



43 miles west of San Fernando, the second most populous municipality in Trinidad.

The SRC also announced that a quake with a magnitude 3.5 had been

recorded four seconds after midnight on Wednesday, affecting the Caribbean islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and the French Islands of Guadeloupe.

It said the quake, recorded at 00.04 a.m. (local time) had a depth of 30 miles and was located Latitude: 16.40N, Longitude: 61.24W

It was felt 23 miles northeast of Point-à-Pitre in Guadeloupe, 65 miles southeast of St. John's the Antigua and Barbuda capital, and 76 miles north of Roseau in Dominica.

## Haitian journalist snatched as kidnapping scourge continues

AP - Suspected gangs have kidnapped another Haitian journalist as colleagues demanded his release, a government office announced Wednesday.

The journalist was identified by the Office of Citizen Protection as Jean Thony Lorthé, who works for Radio Vision 2000.

Local media reported

that Lorthé was headed to a funeral with two other people including his brother, who is a professor, when they were kidnapped last Friday in the Laboule 12 neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince.

A gang called Ti Makak, which translates to "Little Macaques," is known to control the community of

Laboule.

Last year, gang members killed two other journalists who were reporting in that area.

The Association of Haitian Journalists demanded that kidnapers release the group, noting that Lorthé's family is unable to pay a ransom and that the journalist suffers from serious

health problems.

"The widespread insecurity raging in the country, characterised by acts of murder, kidnappings and beatings, has a major impact on the profession of journalism in Haiti," the association told online news site AlterPresse.

The number of reported kidnappings soared to more than 1,200 last year, more than double what was reported the previous year, according to the U.N. At least seven journalists were killed in Haiti last year, and several more remain missing, including freelance photographer Vladjimir Legagneur, who disappeared in March 2018 after he was last seen in the Grand Ravine area.

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phisticated logistics to outfox authorities and is backed by investors outside the forest. Such tactics include: illicit fuel distribution on the outskirts of Indigenous land; airstrips carved from the jungle for transport of miners and supplies; light planes with modified tail numbers, registered to front companies; helicopters operating between mining sites on the reserves, and clandestine communication networks.

"This operation hasn't come a moment too soon," Sarah Shenker, the head of the non-profit Survival International in Brazil, said in a statement.

"It's absolutely vital that the authorities get the miners out, and keep them out. They've blighted the Yanomami's lives for far too long, and have caused untold misery and destruction. Even if all of them are removed, and they can be kept out, it will take years for the Yanomami and their rainforest to recover."

# MH17 inquiry: 'Strong indications' Putin OK'd missile supply

AP - An international team of investigators said Wednesday it found "strong indications" that Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the supply of heavy anti-aircraft weapons to Ukrainian separatists who shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in 2014 with a Russian missile.

However, members of the Joint Investigation Team said they had insufficient evidence to prosecute Putin or any other suspects and they suspended their 8½-year inquiry into the shooting down that killed all 298 people on board the Boeing 777 flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.

Russia has always denied any involvement in the downing of the flight over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014, and refused to cooperate with the investigation.

Dutch prosecutors said that "there are strong indications that the Russian president decided on supplying" a Buk missile system - the weapon that downed MH17 - to Ukrainian separatists.

"Although we speak of strong indications, the high bar of complete and conclusive evidence is not reached," Dutch prosecutor Digna van Boetzelaer said, adding that without Russian cooperation, "the investigation has now reached its limit. All leads have been exhausted."

She also said that, as



*Digna van Boetzelaer, the Netherlands, Andy Kraag, the Netherlands, David McLean, Australia, Asha Hoe Soo Lian, Malaysia, Eric van der Sypt, Belgium, and Oleksandr Bannyk, Ukraine, take their seats for the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) news conference in The Hague, Netherlands, Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2023, on the results of the ongoing investigation into other parties involved in the downing of flight MH17 on 17 July 2014. The JIT investigated the crew of the Buk-TELAR, a Russian made rocket launcher, and those responsible for supplying this Russian weapon system that downed MH17. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)*

head of state, Putin would have immunity from prosecution in the Netherlands. The team played a recording of an intercepted phone call in which they said Putin could be heard discussing the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

"Are we disappointed? No, because we think we came further than we had ever thought in 2014. Would we have liked to come further? Of course, yes," said Andy Kraag of the Dutch police.

The team informed relatives of those killed in the downing of MH17 of their findings before making them public.

"There was disappointment because ... they wanted to know why MH17 was shot down," Kraag said. "We're really clear on what has happened, but the answer to the question why MH17 was shot down still remains in Russia."

Van Boetzelaer said that while the investigation is being suspended, phone lines will remain open for possible witnesses who may still want to provide evidence. If that happens, the inquiry could be reactivated.

Russian officials say that a decision to provide rebels with military support over the summer of 2014 was in Putin's hands.

A decision to supply arms was even postponed for a week "because there is only one who makes a decision (...), the person who is currently at a summit in France," the investigative team said, citing a phone conversation that was referring to Putin.

Prosecutors said that at the time Putin was at a commemoration of D-Day in France.

The announcement by the investigative team comes nearly three months after a Dutch court convicted two Russians and a Ukrainian rebel for their roles in shooting down the

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## North Korea shows off largest-ever number of nuclear missiles at nighttime parade

Reuters - Nuclear-armed North Korea showcased its missile production muscle during a nighttime parade, state media reported on Thursday, displaying more intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) than ever before and hinting at a new solid-fuel weapon.

The country has forged ahead with its ballistic missile programme, test-launching dozens of advanced missiles last year despite United Nations Security Council resolutions and sanctions.

“This time, Kim Jong Un let North Korea’s expanding tactical and long-range missile forces speak for themselves,” said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha



A missile is displayed during a military parade to mark the 75th founding anniversary of North Korea’s army, at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea February 8, 2023, in this photo released by North Korea’s Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). KCNA via REUTERS

University in Seoul. “The demonstrating its capabilities to deter and coerce, will likely come in the form of solid-fuel missile tests and detonation of a miniaturised message Pyongyang wants to send internationally, likely come in the form of **cont’d on pg 20**

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plane. One Russian was acquitted by the court. None of the suspects appeared for the trial and it was unclear if the three who were found guilty of multiple murders will ever serve their sentences.

The convictions and the court’s finding that the surface-to-air Buk missile came from a Russian military base were seen as a clear indication that Moscow had a role in the tragedy. Russia has always denied involvement. The Russian Foreign Ministry accused the court in November of bowing to pressure from Dutch politicians, prosecutors and the news media.

But the November convictions held that Moscow was in overall control in 2014 over the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic, the separatist area of eastern Ukraine where the missile was launched. The Buk

missile system came from the Russian military’s 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade, based in the city of Kursk.

The Joint Investigation Team is made up of experts from the Netherlands, Australia, Malaysia, Belgium and Ukraine. Most of the victims were Dutch. It had continued to investigate the crew of the missile system that brought down the plane and those who ordered its deployment in Ukraine.

As well as the criminal trial that was held in the Netherlands, the Dutch and Ukrainian governments are suing Russia at the European Court of Human Rights over its alleged role in the downing of MH17.

The findings revealed Wednesday will likely strengthen the case at the human rights court and could also be used by prosecutors at the International Criminal Court who are investigating possible war crimes in Ukraine

dating to the start of the separatist conflict.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowed to keep pursuing justice for 38 Australian citizens and residents who died aboard MH17, describing Putin as “reprehensible.”

“The shooting down of MH17 was an act of terrorism that had an impact here in Australia but on many countries as well. And we will continue to pursue these issues with every avenue at our disposal,” Albanese said in the Australian capital Canberra.

“This is a guy who runs an authoritarian regime, that doesn’t care about human rights, that doesn’t care about devastation of communities - whether it be in Ukraine, whether it be the oppression of his own citizens, or whether it be acts outside of Russia, of which we’ve seen a number,” Albanese added.

# Biden says US not seeking conflict with China after balloon saga

Aljazeera - The United States was not looking for conflict with China despite heightened tensions over last week's downing of an alleged Chinese surveillance balloon over its airspace, President Joe Biden has told the US broadcaster PBS.

"We're going to compete fully with China, but ... we're not looking for conflict - and that's been the case so far," Biden said on Wednesday.

But the US president angered Beijing by saying that Chinese President

Xi Jinping had "enormous problems", including "an economy that is not functioning very well".

"This type of rhetoric from the US is extremely irresponsible and runs counter to basic diplomatic etiquette," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters on Thursday, saying Beijing was "strongly dissatisfied".

The sighting of the balloon, which US officials say was part of a spy fleet spanning five continents, has caused a diplomatic row between the two coun-



A huge white balloon carrying sophisticated equipment traversed the continental United States last week before Biden ordered the military to shoot it down just off the east coast in the Atlantic [Randall Hill/Reuters]

tries, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken postponing a trip to Beijing.

Blinken has said that

the suspected surveillance balloon was "a clear violation of our sovereignty".

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nuclear device."

Imagery released by state media outlet KCNA of the Wednesday night parade showed as many as 11 Hwasong-17s, North Korea's largest ICBM, which are suspected to be able to strike nearly anywhere in the world with a nuclear warhead.

Eleven missiles could be enough to overwhelm current U.S. missile defences, Ankit Panda of the United States-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said on Twitter.

"This is cumulatively more ICBM launchers than we've ever seen before at a North Korean parade," he said in a tweet.

The Hwasong-17 was first tested last year. Alongside them at the parade were what some analysts said could be a prototype or mockup of a new solid-fuel ICBM in canister launchers.

Developing a solid-fuel ICBM has long been seen as a key goal for the country, as it could make its nuclear missiles harder to spot and destroy

during a conflict.

North Korea held the parade in Pyongyang to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of its army, KCNA said. Leader Kim Jong Un attended with his daughter, who is seen as playing a possible future leadership role in the hereditary dictatorship.

South Korea's foreign ministry criticised North Korea for holding the event when it is facing a worsening food crisis and economic difficulties.

"We urge North Korea to immediately stop illegal nuclear and missile development, and reckless nuclear threats, and promptly return to the denuclearisation negotiations," South Korea's foreign ministry spokesperson, Lim Soo-suk, told a regular briefing.

North Korea has said its missile programme and nuclear weapons development fall under its sovereign right to self defence, and are necessary because of hostile policies by the United States and its allies.

In December North Korea con-

ducted the first static ground test of a large solid-propellant rocket motor at its Sohae Satellite Launching Station, but at the time it was unclear whether it was solely for the country's submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) programme, said Dave Schmerler, a researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS).

North Korea has not launched its new missile submarine, however, so the parade weapon suggests intentional signalling that Pyongyang is pursuing a complex, land-based ICBM deterrent, he said.

"The general takeaway is that we should expect to see North Korea test a large land-based solid-fuel ICBM," Schmerler said.

Most of the country's largest ballistic missiles use liquid fuel, which requires them to be loaded with propellant at their launch site - a time-consuming process. It is unclear how close the suspected new missile could be to testing. North Korea has sometimes displayed mockups at the parades.

## Wins for Clare Hall, PMS in schools' basketball league

Clare Hall Secondary and Princess Margaret School both claimed wins in the Cool & Smooth Inter-Schools' Basketball League on Wednesday, 8th February.

Clare Hall Secondary prevailed 57 - 39 over the Antigua State College in their Senior Boys' affair at the JSC Sports Complex.

Azandy Thomas shot a game high of 19 points while Kevin Pimental shot 13 and Aiden Christian 12 points for Clare Hall Sec-

ondary School.

Tahjir Jenkins sank 14 points and Judah Benn scored 9 points for the Antigua State College.

Princess Margaret defeated Jennings Secondary 56 - 22 in their Junior Boys' encounter.

Tyrese White scored 15 points, Craig Massiah produced 13 points and Dewan Edwards and Tyrese Mervas each contributed 10 points to Princess Margaret School's success.



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The top diplomat has said that the US was giving data to allies as it assessed recovered debris.

"We already shared information with dozens of countries around the world, both from Washington and through our embassies," Blinken said.

"We're doing so because the United States was not the only target of this broader programme, which has violated the sovereignty of countries across five continents," he told a joint news conference with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg.

The Pentagon also said on Wednesday it was part of a programme involving a number of such airships that China has been operating for "several years."

Biden, in his State of the Union address on Tuesday, said that his orders to shoot down the balloon showed that the US would not hesi-

tate to act when needed.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, speaking separately to reporters on Air Force One, described the balloons as part of a fleet and said they had been spotted around the world for several years.

China denies it was a surveillance balloon

China insists that the balloon was merely conducting weather research, but the Pentagon described it as a high-tech spying operation. The balloon floated at an altitude far higher than most aeroplanes and crossed directly over at least one sensitive US military site.

China, which voiced regret about the air intrusion but later denounced the US decision to down it, responded to Biden that it would also "firmly defend" its interests.

Meanwhile, the NATO secretary-general, whose visit to Washington followed a trip to Japan and South

Korea, said the balloon showed the need for countries across the alliance to protect themselves.

"The Chinese balloon over the United States confirms a pattern of Chinese behaviour where we see that China over the last years has invested heavily in new military capabilities," Stoltenberg said on Wednesday.

"We've also seen increased Chinese intelligence activities in Europe. They use satellites, they use cyber and, as we've seen over the United States, also balloons. So we just have to be vigilant," he said.

Stoltenberg also issued a new warning that China was drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine, which NATO countries have been supporting as it fights back Russian invaders.

"What happens in Europe today could happen in Asia tomorrow," Stoltenberg said, pointing to China's pressure on Taiwan, the self-governing democracy claimed by Beijing.

# Sports News



## Olympics 2024: Ukraine should drop threat of boycott - IOC

BBC - The International Olympic Committee has urged Ukraine to drop threats of boycotting Paris 2024 if Russian and Belarusian athletes compete.

IOC president Thomas Bach has told Ukraine's Olympic Committee that such threats are "extremely regrettable".

Ukraine is hoping to gain international support for a ban on athletes from the two countries over Russia's invasion.

The IOC has said it will "explore a pathway" for Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete as neutrals.

Ukraine's sports minister, Vadym Guttsait, who is also president of its Olympic Committee, responded by saying the country could boycott the Paris Games, with several other European nations also calling for the ban to be upheld.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky has said allowing Russian athletes to compete at the 2024 Olympics would amount to showing that "terror is somehow acceptable".

In a letter from Bach to Guttsait, which has been seen by the BBC, the IOC president says comments from Ukrainian officials suggesting allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes would promote the war are "defamatory".



*Russian and Belarusian athletes were allowed to compete under a neutral flag at the 2022 Winter Paralympics*

Bach added that threatening a boycott is "premature" because the IOC has not discussed the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes as neutrals in "concrete terms yet".

He also accused Ukraine of "pressuring" international federations, IOC members and future Olympic hosts "in an attempt to publicly influence their decision making" and claims this has been "perceived by the vast majority of them as, at the very least, extremely regrettable".

Bach said Ukrainian athletes have the "unanimous support" of the Olympic movement and that "we all feel the pain and suffering of the Ukrainian people in this cruel war".

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the IOC called on sports federations to exclude athletes, officials and teams from Russia and Belarus from international events but Bach has also

said he is conscious of the impact such sanctions have on the athletes.

In his letter, he cited a United Nations resolution that said "any form of discrimination is incompatible with the Olympic movement" and two UN special rapporteurs expressing concerns over a total ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes being discriminatory.

Bach said these were reasons for considering their inclusion as neutrals.

He added that a boycott would be a "violation of the Olympic charter" and goes against the "fundamentals" and "principles" of the Olympic movement.

In response to Bach's letter, Athletes for Ukraine and athlete association Global Athlete said the IOC had an "inverted stance toward the aggressor and the victim of this war" which they believe contravenes the Olympic charter.

They added that by being so critical of the boycott

threat, the IOC is "denying Ukraine's right to sovereignty".

Earlier this month, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland all voiced their opposition to the inclusion of athletes from Russia and Belarus, before the Olympic committees of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden followed suit.

Poland's sport and tourism minister believes as many as 40 countries could boycott the next Olympics - thus making the whole event "pointless".

The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, does not want Russia to compete at the 2024 Olympic Games while the war in Ukraine continues.

The UK Government condemned the IOC's plan to look at Russian and Belarusian inclusion as a "world away from the reality of war".

World Athletics stressed that athletes from those countries remained excluded from its events.

The IOC banned Russia and Belarus from the Winter Paralympics in March 2022 - though athletes were allowed to compete under a neutral flag.

Further sanctions were announced across other sports, including football, rugby, Formula 1, cycling

*cont'd on pg 23*

## Athanaze hits classy 141 to lead Volcanoes fightback

CWI - Athanaze hits classy 141 to lead Volcanoes fightback

Windward Islands Volcanoes captain Alick Athanaze made his maiden first-class century, a superb 141, to lead his team to 292-8 against Guyana Harpy Eagles on the opening day of the second round of West Indies Championship four-day first-class matches.

The stylish left-hander struck 16 fours from 220 balls in a little 4 1/2 hours of controlled batsmanship to be the anchor as the home side made use on good batting conditions at the Grenada National Stadium.

In the early exchanges the Volcanoes ran into trouble, when the Harpy Eagles new ball pair of Ronsford Beaton and Nial Smith sent them sliding to 26-3 inside the first 45 minutes. Beaton made the breakthrough in the third over when he got Kimani Melius for two, and he got former captain Kavem Hodge caught behind for 14. In between, Smith got Jerlani Robinson for five.

But Athanaze was the glue that held the Volcanoes innings together and he shared three half-century stands that added West Indies batsman Sunil Ambris, shared 89 for the fifth wicket with all-rounder Justin Greaves, and 90 with allrounder Ryan John for the seventh wicket.

John was not out on 50 when play came to a close two overs after Athanaze was caught behind off Veerasammy Permaul, Ambris scored 47, and Greaves made 21.

At Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua: Barbados Pride bowled well and fielded brilliantly to dismiss Jamaica Scorpions for 140. The defending champions then batted solidly to reach 89-2 on the opening day.

Shamar Springer was the pick of the Pride bowlers, with 3-11 from 9.5 overs; left-arm spinner Camarie Boyce supported with 3-26 from 11 overs, and pacer Akeem Jordan did the early damage to collect 3-48 from 17 overs.

Scorpions slumped to 44-4 before lunch, and needed a stand of 44 between Jamie Merchant and Abhijai Mansingh. Merchant's top score of 35 included four towering sixes while Mansingh made a composed 27.

Pride got an opening stand of 40 from left-handed opener Shayne Moseley, not out 41, and Zacharay McCaskie before two wickets in 10 balls set them back. McCaskie and Jonathan Drakes were both caught behind before Moseley and Shamarh Brooks shared an unbroken stand of 48.

At Sir Vivian Richards Stadium: Darren Bravo was unbeaten on 74 and Yannic Cariah was not out on 32, and



they have so far shared 82 unbroken for the fourth wicket to stabilise the Trinidad & Tobago Red Force against Leeward Islands Hurricanes.

The visitors wobbled to 8-2 inside the first half-hour before Bravo anchored successive half-century stands with experienced Jason Mohammed and Cariah. They will resume on Thursday at 151-3.

Mohammed (34) added 74 with Bravo before he was caught behind off pacer Sheeno Berridge before Cariah (35 not out) came to the crease and blunted the Hurricanes attack in between the showers.

*cont'd from pg 22*

and swimming, while Russian and Belarusian tennis players were banned from playing at Wimbledon last year. Russia was banned from the previous summer Olympics in Tokyo as part of sanctions for doping scandals, though more than 300 athletes across 30

sports were able to compete, representing the Russian Olympic Committee.

Wimbledon is yet to announce if the ban it imposed last year will continue, but Russia and Belarusian players have competed at other Grand Slams, with Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka winning January's Australian

Open under a neutral flag.

Bach cited the example of Sabalenka in his letter and said the IOC's discussions on Russian and Belarusian involvement were "in line" with what happened at the Australian Open, with no "flags, national symbols or signs supporting the war" to be displayed.

Ukrainian player Elina Svitolina, who wants Russian and Belarusian players to remain banned from this year's Wimbledon, said "I don't think the neutral flag is changing anything".

Last month, President Zelensky said that "any neutral flag of Russian athletes is stained with blood".

## AP source: Brooklyn Nets trading Kevin Durant to Suns

AP - Kevin Durant's time in Brooklyn ended early Thursday when the Nets agreed to trade him to the Phoenix Suns, a person with knowledge of the details said.

The Suns will send Cam Johnson, Mikal Bridges, Jae Crowder, four first-round picks and additional draft compensation to the Nets for the 13-time All-Star.

The Suns also receive forward T.J. Warren in the deal, the person told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the trade is not yet official.

It was first reported by ESPN.

The 34-year-old Durant is still playing at an elite level, averaging nearly 30 points per game this season. He asked for a trade last summer and the Suns were interested, and finally got him before Thursday's 3 p.m. EST trade deadline.

He is recovering from a sprained knee ligament, and when he returns it will be to a Phoenix lineup that suddenly could be one of the best in the Western Conference.

Durant was moved just days after the Nets traded Kyrie Irving from Dallas, a stunningly fast end to the superstar era in Brooklyn. James Harden was traded at last year's deadline, leaving the Nets with little to show for the brief time they had the Big Three together.

Now it's the Suns with a top collection of talent, with Durant joining Devin Booker, Chris Paul and Deandre Ayton.

The trade comes just hours after new Suns majority owner Mat Ishbia was introduced in Phoenix. The self-described basketball nut, who was a walk-on at Michigan State under Tom Izzo, didn't waste any time shak-



Brooklyn Nets' Kevin Durant (7) looks to drive against Chicago Bulls' Coby White (0) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2023, in Chicago. Chicago won 121-112. (AP Photo/Paul Beaty, File)

ing up the NBA.

Phoenix has never won an NBA championship. The Suns made the NBA Finals two seasons ago, but lost to the Milwaukee Bucks in six games. They also played in the finals in 1976 and 1993.

The Suns have had several injuries this season, but played better in recent weeks and look like contenders again. They jumped to fifth in the Western Conference with a 30-26 record. Booker (groin) and Paul (hip) have both recently returned.

When Irving heard the news, he said: "I'm just glad that he got out of there."

Irving scored 24 points in his Mavs debut against the Clippers on Wednesday. The Nets refused to give him a contract extension last summer, about the same time Durant was telling the team he wanted to be dealt.

Eventually, it was Irving out and Durant gone as well.

"We had a lot of conversations throughout the year about what our

futures were going to look like," Irving said. "There was still a level of uncertainty but we just cared about seeing each other be places that we can thrive. Whether that be together or whether that be apart, there has never been one moment where I've felt like he's been angry at me for the decisions I've made or I've been angry at him."

"I just love the competition now that we can be in the same conference."

Bridges was the runner-up to Boston's Marcus Smart last season for the Defensive Player of the Year award and his offensive game continues to grow. The swingman scored 21 points Tuesday when the Suns beat the Nets 116-112 in Brooklyn.

His acquisition, along with Dorian Finney-Smith, who came with Spencer Dinwiddie from Dallas, should make the Nets a much stronger defensive team. But it seems impossible to replace the firepower they lost with Durant and Irving, two All-Star starters.



## AGHS claim second win in 16-and-Under Division

The Antigua Girls High School (AGHS) claimed their second win in the 16 and Under Secondary Division of the Cool & Smooth Inter-Schools' Netball League on Wednesday this week.

After beating the Christ the King High School's (CKHS) First Team in their opening encounter last week, AGHS claimed the second win in a row after they secured a 10 - 3 victory over CKHS' Second Team at the YMCA Sports Complex.

Joy Shaw sank eight of her eleven tries while Kellisha Gordon scored on two of six attempts for AGHS.

Amyah Francis scored three of four tries for the CKHS Second Team.

All Saints Secondary also recorded their second win in the same category by coasting to a 22 - 6 victory over the CKHS First Team.

Shakorai Prince converted fifteen of twenty-one shots and Kinisha James scored seven of sixteen attempts for All Saints Secondary. Jamora Williams, meanwhile, sank



each of her five shots for the CKHS First Team.

Ottos Comprehensive School cruised to a 16 - 5 victory over St. Mary's Secondary School in their 18 and Under Division encounter.

Kiara Samuel sank thirteen of nineteen shots and Jessica Massicott scored three of eight attempts for Ottos Comprehensive School, while Annika Samuel converted three of her eight tries and Zadare Parker two

of six attempts for St. Mary's Secondary School.

The AGHS Second Team prevailed 10 - 4 over the AGHS First Team in their match in the 13 and Under Secondary Division.

Kendra Aska sank seven of twelve tries and Delisha Thomas scored three of her seven attempts for the AGHS Second Team, while Zaquella Isaacs converted three of eight shots for the AGHS First Team.

## Three teams in a tie at the top of national domino league

Dominatrixx, Moise Eagle Warriors and Parham Strikers are all in a three-way tie at the top of the Antigua and Barbuda National Domino Association (ABNDA) League.

Each team has accumulated six points after the second week of team Three-Hand and Four Hand matches, which took place last weekend at the ABNDA

headquarters in Ottos.

Each team was also victorious in their matches in the Three Hand competition.

Dominatrixx accumulated 80 points to beat Willikies B with 70 points and Bolans Revellers A with 67 points.

Moise Eagle Warriors recorded 74 points to prevail against Double Six A Team with 73 points and Ramplers with 56 points.

Parham Strikers mustered 85 points to overcome Triple Dynamite's 67 points and Bravo B's 61 points.

The other team Three Hand matches were won by Unstoppables, Double Six B and Future.

Unstoppables coasted to 83 points to oust Legacy who mustered 71 points and the Bravo A Team's 70 points.

Double Six B scored 82 points to defeat the Bolans Revellers B's 72 points and Rising Stars' 63 points.

Future ended with 79 points to finish ahead of the Willikies Superstars A's 75 points and the Bolans Revellers C's 70 points.

Dominatrixx and Ramplers also claimed their second wins in the team Four Hand contest.

## FC Master Ballerz defeat Blackburn to claim second win

FC Master Ballerz surged to the largest margin of victory on Wednesday to record their second win in eight matches in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Second Division League.

Shareem Richards scored a brace to lead Master Ballerz to a 6 - 0 drubbing of Blackburn Palace at the ABFA Technical Center.

Richards converted his first goal in the 13th minute and Teejay Roberts scored in the 23rd minute to give Master Ballerz a 2 - 0 half-time lead.

Richards scored his second in the 57th minute.

His team's other goals were scored by Clive Sansculotte in the 77th minute, Kerland Ferdinand in the 79th minute and Rimar Gidrisingh in the 2nd minute of added on time (90+2 minutes).

Jennings United remain the only unbeaten team in the competition after salvaging a goalless draw with Freemans Village in their



encounter at the Freemans Village.

Despite dropping points for the second time in consecutive matches, Jennings United have regained the lead in the Second Division on goal difference.

The result lifted Jennings United to 23 points, a

point standing shared by Attacking Place, who slipped second place by virtue of an inferior goal difference.

Lingies CPTSA Wings recorded their third win in nine matches by prevailing 2 - 1 over ABAYA at St. Johnston's.

Jamar Peters put Wings

ahead with a 23rd minute conversion, but Akeem Mason scored a 37th minute equaliser for ABAYA.

Dorian Meade ensured that Wings took the three points on offer when he scored what turned out to be the winner in the 40th minute.