

US court grants motion to temporarily halt subpoenas against government officials

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Playing to Inspire 7 concert held last Saturday at SJPC

Story on Page 10

Photos by Wayne Mariette

Local News



US court grants motion to temporarily halt subpoenas against government officials



Senior Counsel, Anthony Astaphan

The case where a US court had issued a subpoena to probe into the finances of Prime Minister Gaston Browne, his wife, Minister Marie Browne, his son and several officials involved in the Alfa Nero sale has now been halted based on a motion which the court has granted.

But it is still a long way before the matter is finally settled. The court first granted the order for a subpoena for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the Clearing House Payments Company LLC to provide information regarding the sale and disbursement of any funds related to the said sale.

The firm representing Prime Minister Browne; Maria Bird-Browne; Gaston Andron Browne III; Hyacinth Harris; Darwin Telemaque; Ickford Roberts; IF Antigua Inc.; Farmer DG Browne Co. Limited; *con't on pg 3*

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con't from pg 2

Cove Head Development Limited; and Cove Head Communications Limited filed two important motions (1) to intervene in the proceeding and (2) to vacate the Section 1782 order issued by the Court and to quash the subpoenas served on the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the Clearing House Payments Company LLC.

The motion to inter-

vene was unopposed and the Court granted it on Friday.

The Russian woman behind this matter, Ms. Guryeva-Motlokhov has until April 25 to respond to the motion to vacate and to quash, and with the law firm set to file a reply on May 2.

Senior Counsel, Anthony Astaphan, who is the government's chief lawyer in the Alfa Nero sale, said he is 'very happy' with

where the case is today with the court granting the motion to intervene. Additionally, he said he is pleased that a date has been set for the case to begin.

He said he is happy with the contents of the motion filed before the court as it aligns with what the government has been saying on the matter all along. He added that he is very confident that the court will rule in the government's favour

in this matter, a sentiment also shared by the American law firm that is handling the case.

"As someone with some understanding of the law, I was very impressed with the quality of submission by the American lawyers," he declared.

The move to subpoena the bank's records by the Russian national has been described in legal circles locally as 'a fishing exercise'.

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Prime Minister Browne Reaffirms Legitimacy and Necessity of Alfa Nero Sale



Prime Minister the Gaston Browne has reiterated his government’s commitment to transparency and accountability in the sale of the superyacht *Alfa Nero*. Speaking publicly on the matter, he affirmed that if presented with the same circumstances, his administration would take the same course of action without hesitation.

To further promote transparency, the government released official documents outlining the sale price of the vessel (see attached *Bill of Sale*), along with a detailed account of how the proceeds were utilized (see attached *Use of Proceeds – Alfa Nero Sale*).

During a nationally televised programme last week—specifically convened to address a smear campaign by sections of the opposition colluding with Russian interests - the Prime Minister outlined that the decision to sell the vessel was necessitated by the situation

in which it was left abandoned in Antigua and Barbuda’s territorial waters for over three years.

“We were faced with consid-

erable risk,” Prime Minister Browne stated. “The vessel remained moored in our waters throughout multiple hurricane seasons, posing the real threat of damage or destruction. A significant fire even occurred at the dock where the *Alfa Nero* was berthed. Without government intervention and ongoing maintenance, the yacht could have burned and sunk within Falmouth Harbour. Such an event would have carried severe financial consequences and threatened the stability of our yachting sector, which is vital



GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
Ministry of Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships
 Updated March 28, 2025

| | USD | EC\$ |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
| SALE OF ALFA NERO TO YM Thunder (Yildirim Group) - July 2024 | | |
| <i>Sale brokered by Northrop and Johnson - Superyacht Brokerage</i> | | |
| Sale Price | 40,000,000.00 | 108,000,000.00 |
| Brokerage fee deducted by Northrop and Johnson | 1,800,000.00 | 4,860,000.00 |
| Balance Remitted to Government of Antigua and Barbuda | 38,200,000.00 | 103,140,000.00 |
| Amount deposited to Government of Antigua and Barbuda Account at Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) on July 18 2024 | 36,000,000.00 | 97,200,000.00 |
| Amount deposited to Government of Antigua and Barbuda Account at ECCB on September 5 2024 | 2,200,000.00 | 5,940,000.00 |
| Payments/Reimbursement for Alfa Nero Crew, Fuel, Supplies and other Expenses | | |
| Reimbursement to Port Authority for Alfa Nero Expenses | 518,518.52 | 1,400,000.00 |
| Reimbursement to Government of Antigua and Barbuda for Weekly Payments to Marina and Resort Lt. to meet Crew expenses (April 11-2023 to June 14, 2024) | 1,736,000.00 | 4,716,538.40 |
| Legal Fees - Christopher and Associates | 300,000.00 | 810,000.00 |
| Legal Fees - Anthony Astaphan | 98,148.15 | 265,000.00 |
| Payment to West Indies Oil Company for Fuel Supplies | 694,385.19 | 1,874,840.00 |
| Payment to Registrar of High Court - Consent Order - Marshall and Co. (Attorney for - Tina Westwood/Caribbean Concierge Services) | 114,408.86 | 308,903.93 |
| Payment to Marshall and Co. (Attorney for - Tina Westwood/Caribbean Concierge Services) | 43,622.90 | 117,781.84 |
| Payment to Registrar of High Court - Consent Order for Alfa Nero Crew | 3,124,523.09 | 8,436,212.34 |
| Payment to Marina and Resort Ltd. for Crew, Security and other expenses | 2,962,426.61 | 7,998,551.85 |
| Total Alfa Nero Expenses | 9,592,033.32 | 25,927,828.36 |
| Other Payments | | |
| Lorna Nanton - Land Acquisition | 370,370.37 | 1,000,000.00 |
| BDO - Henry Estate - Land Acquisition | 370,370.37 | 1,000,000.00 |
| Software One | 549,473.53 | 1,483,578.54 |
| Canadian Bank Note | 185,185.19 | 500,000.00 |
| Caribbean Development Bank Loans | 5,522,265.62 | 14,910,117.17 |
| ECCB Advances | 16,068,838.15 | 43,385,063.01 |
| ECCB Debenture | 2,877,524.07 | 7,769,315.00 |
| Payment of Securities | 1,086,866.34 | 2,934,544.52 |
| World Bank Loan | 187,041.63 | 505,012.40 |
| IMF XDR Purchase | 531,650.48 | 1,435,456.30 |
| Abu Dhabi Fund | 590,136.16 | 1,593,367.63 |
| Richards and Co- HMB Judgement Debt | 800,000.00 | 2,160,000.00 |
| Stanford Development Company- Receiver - Judgement Debt | 370,370.37 | 1,000,000.00 |
| Total Debt Payments | 29,510,094.29 | 79,677,254.57 |
| Grant Total | 40,902,127.60 | 110,465,082.93 |



Local News



to our economy.”

He further explained that the government had already expended nearly US\$2 million on the upkeep of the yacht over a two-year period—excluding costs for fuel, docking, and other incidentals. These ongoing expenses, Prime Minister Browne emphasized, became untenable, especially for an asset the state did not yet own.

“Spending millions of dollars on a vessel that did not legally belong to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda was not sustainable,” he remarked. “At one point, the captain formally notified Cabinet that he intended to abandon the vessel, as the crew was owed nearly one million US dollars and could no longer afford basic provisions. The legal uncertainty due to international sanctions further complicated the matter. Our options were extremely limited.”

Prime Minister Browne also revealed that the government had issued a global notice, inviting the rightful owner to reclaim the vessel. No party responded, and the yacht was legally deemed abandoned. The Port Authority subse-

quently initiated the required legal process to take ownership of the yacht, thereby transferring it to the state, he said.

“Once the yacht was formally acquired, we were in a position to justify not only the prior maintenance expenditure, but also to secure further liabilities, including payments for fuel supplied by the West Indies Oil Company and berthing costs at Carlo Falcone’s marina,” he explained.

“In conclusion, given the same set of circumstances, this government would have acted in exactly the same manner. The decision was necessary, lawful, and in the best interests of the people of Antigua and Barbuda,” the Prime Minister stated.

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The Trade Minister paints a bleak picture about US Tariffs and the local economy

The impact of new tariffs as announced by US President Trump could have a significant impact on the Antigua and Barbuda in a number of ways.

That's the view of Trade Minister, E.P Chet Greene who appeared on the Browne and Browne Show on Saturday. The Minister was asked to comment on the announcement from the White House regarding the imposition of tariffs from Antigua and Barbuda on any goods that the country exports to the US.

According to the minister the impact could be reflected in a reduction in the number of visitors to the country, if US residents decide to cut back on expenditure in the face of a pending recession.

"In terms of the wider tariff conversation, we stand affected. Because of this tariff on China and other countries that export their goods into the United States, it has implications for softening economies. Already we are hearing that the country that is suffering most under the new tariffs is the United States. Now, that is our number one source market for tourism. Therefore, if our number one source market becomes 'soft' and Americans then have less spending money, it stands to reason that a vacation is one of the first things that they would pull," he explained.

The Trade Minister also noted that should the US economy enter into a downturn, then this could affect many Antigua and Barbuda families in a more direct way.

"We have to also think about remittances as there are many families who rely on this for their sustenance. However, should the economy slow down and unemployment in the US rises, that could affect many nationals in the US to be out of a job and therefore not be in a position to help their families back home," he further explained.

Antigua and Barbuda nationals who



Trade Minister, E.P Chet Greene

frequently shop for consumer goods in the United States could find themselves paying higher prices for these items if the 145 percent tariff on Chinese goods remain in effect, Greene noted.

He used a practical example to highlight the impact of the tariffs on people in Antigua and Barbuda who import items that are made in China. "There is a young man in my constituency who sells seamoss. He purchases his bottles from China because they are less expensive. Now these goods go through the US. Therefore, if they attract this 145 percent tariff, it simply means that the costs for the bottles would naturally go up and thus the price for seamoss," he emphasized.

The young man in this case may be forced to make a decision that could very well mean that he ends his seamoss business, Greene declared.

The minister stated that of this one example is looked at from the point of view of the number of businesses that rely on Chinese goods, then one could understand the true impact of the tariffs on the economy.



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Business and public sector officials voice concern over US tariffs

There are growing concerns among public and private sector officials in Antigua and Barbuda over the recent announcements from the Trump Administration that it is imposing tariffs on practically every country in the world, even though respective countries will pay different rates.

Even as the Trump Administration has announced a 90-day pause on some of the tariffs, there remains in place a 10-percent tariff on goods coming from most countries, including Antigua and Barbuda.

President of the Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Commerce, Mario Colindres hosted the regional trade experts and business leaders who are sounding the alarm over rising shipping costs and looming economic disruption, as international sanctions threaten to strain supply chains and trade routes across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Gathering at the American University of Antigua last week, representatives from the shipping industry, customs, consumer affairs, and diplomatic corps from surrounding countries addressed the growing pressures on small island states like Antigua and Barbuda. The session, convened by the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Martin Cave focused on the fallout from unilateral international sanctions by the United States government, and the urgent need to consider diversifying trade relationships as a viable option.

Among the issues raised were again the increasing cost of freight, the implications of new carbon taxes from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the risks associated



with importing goods from less familiar markets.

Deputy Comptroller of Operations at the Customs David Martin said that while tariffs remain steady, shipping companies would be independently raising prices—passing increased operational expenses onto importers and, ultimately, consumers.

Tamara Lowe-James, Island Manager for Tropical Shipping, cited higher production costs for shipping agencies as the main reason behind elevated shipping charges, even though

customs tariffs have not changed.

Port Manager Darwin Telemaque painted a bleak picture of the road ahead. “Ports are becoming as crucial as the power grid and data centers,” he said, stressing the need to rethink port efficiency and productivity to cushion consumers from skyrocketing costs. “We should take a hard look at the ecosystem and try to find ways to mitigate the expenses.”

If the U.S. implements measures against Chinese-built ships, “it’ll be

con’t on pg 9

con't from pg 8

worse than the COVID-19 pandemic worse than a hurricane,” he warned, calling for urgent reforms to avoid economic catastrophe.

Orrin Steele, from the Prices and Consumer Affairs Division, said the cascading impact of sanctions could lead to unaffordable prices for basic goods. “I don’t know what’s going to happen in the next six months based on all those charges that may come. We are a small island and we don’t have certain powers to curtail these things.”

There were calls for Antigua and Barbuda to explore becoming a regional logistics hub and for the government to petition CARICOM for tariff exemptions on essential goods.

“Our allies that kept us safe are not interested in doing that anymore,” Telemaque stated, suggesting that Caribbean nations must now look inward for solutions.

Luis Enrique Reynon, The First Secretary Embassy to the Dominican Embassy echoed the sentiment. He called for stronger economic ties between the DR and CARICOM countries. “It is important that governments sit together and make decisions that benefit the Caribbean as one economic bloc,” he said, highlighting the DR’s strategic position between the Caribbean and South America.

The DR is well placed between the Caribbean and South America but there is a disconnection between CARICOM countries and DR, he said.

Kevin Rogers, Chief Operating Officer at Go To Enterprises added that while the company brings in some goods through the DR, most shipments still pass through South Florida. “Everything goes through Miami” which means that any sanctions



would greatly impact its business.

The consensus at the forum was clear: the Caribbean must act swiftly and collaboratively to insulate its

economies from the knock-on effects of sanctions and reimagine trade to ensure stability and sustainability for the future.

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Local News



Kanneh-Masons, ABYSO and guests deliver in ‘Playing to Inspire 7’



It has become the high-point of cultural and artistic expression in Antigua and Barbuda each year, the annual must-see concert presented by the world-renowned Kanneh-Masons, the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra and the Inspire Choir.

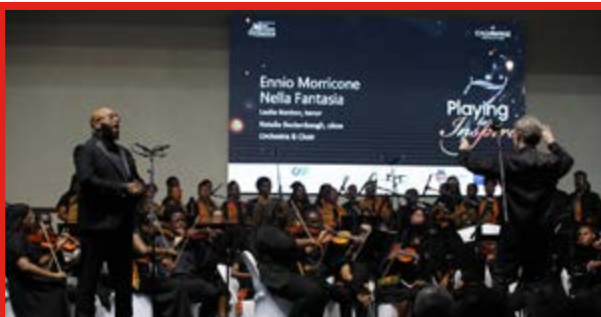
The seventh instalment of

the concert, ‘*Playing to Inspire 7*’ was staged at the St. John’s Pentecostal Church on Lauchland Benjamin Drive on Saturday night before a packed audience that included the Governor General, Sir Rodney Williams, and Lady Williams, Culture Minister, Daryll Matthew among others.

It was a musical ‘tour de force’ with scintillating performances by ABYSO which has grown in leaps and bounds in terms of their growth as accomplished musicians and as an orchestra, to the Kanneh-Masons who bring to the performances each year a level of musical skill and accom-

plishment that is a sheer joy to experience.

This year, the special guest artist was Felix Klieser on horn, who was born without arms and who uses his toes to manipulate the instrument. It was an amazing experience to observe his playing with precision and skill. He was roundly ap-



Local News



plauded for his remarkable performance.

This year's concert featured a performance from Antiguan-Canadian classical tenor, Leslie Nanton as well as the participation in the orchestra of seven musicians from Small Beginnings Music Project of Montserrat. Representatives from the Atlanta Music Project were also at the concert. They

are exploring ways for exchange visits between them and ABYSO in the coming years.

UK High Commissioner, Karen-Mae Hill, a member of the ABYSO Board of Directors, calls the night's proceedings 'another off-the-chart' concert when you think of the level at which ABYSO is now playing and the pieces they are

tackling; this is not easy repertoire; that Rachmaninov, that Beethoven, that's advanced music and to see the children able to follow a conductor and play with such good timing, good inclination and good understanding...its nothing short of saying, "Wow! Our kids have talent," she stated.

The orchestra performed under the direction of Brit-

ish conductor, Jonathan Bloxham. Junior ABYSO was conducted by Sophie Biddell while conducting understudy, Nakiya De-Freitas had a stint conducting a cello duet featuring Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Jonathan Bloxham. The host of the evening was Jamilla Kirwan.



Photos by Wayne Mariette

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WE ARE GETTING STRONGER

The Committee looking at the effects of marijuana on the society aims to complete its work by July



Dr. Kwasi K. Tonge

The Cabinet-appointed Committee tasked with reviewing the effects of marijuana since its decriminalization is currently in the data-gathering phase as it seeks to complete its assignment by the end of July.

Led by, a senior researcher at UWI Five Islands Campus, Dr. Kwasi K. Tonge, the Committee is primarily using surveys, along with focus group discussions, to collect data on the public's perception regarding marijuana use.

The research aims to gather insights from a broad cross-section of society, including the public, students, medical professionals, educators, members of the sacramental community (Rastafarians), and organized focus groups.

Dr. Tonge explained that the Committee seeks to gather information from about 10 percent of the population and to extrapolate the data that will form the basis of its report to the Cabinet at the completion of its task.

The committee extends its sincere thanks to those who have already participated in the survey and emphasizes the importance of continued public input. Citing that the public's perspective is vital to the ongoing social discourse surrounding marijuana use and policy.

The Committee has published a link and a QR code for members of the public to access the survey forms and to participate in the exercise.

The Cabinet established the committee after there has been much public concern over the likely impact on the society of the decriminalization of marijuana. There are fears that the decriminalization has led to a spike in the number of people who are now frequent users of marijuana, an outcome that was not intended by the decriminalization process.



<https://forms.gle/wvNBgPNJWfd8c3T28>

ABDF officer in custody on drug charges



The Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force (ABDF) has revealed that one of its officers is currently in police custody on a matter involving illegal drugs.

In a media release, the ABDF did not identify the

officer concerned only to state that in keeping with its obligation under the Defence Act, 2006, and guided by the principles of due process, the ABDF initiated internal proceedings to address the matter in accordance established military protocol. However, according to the media release, it was determined that the case would proceed to civilian jurisdiction.

The ABDF assures the public that it is working in full cooperation with the

Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda to ensure that justice is served. This joint approach, the release noted, reflects the ABDF's unwavering commitment to transparency, accountability and the rule of law. The ABDF remains steadfast in its responsibility to uphold the highest standards of discipline and integrity.

Sources in the ABDF have confirmed that the officer is a female officer who is herself an attorney at law. She has been a member of the

ABDF for approximately two-and-a-half years and she has been in the custody of the All Saints Police station since Saturday.

She is expected to appear in court on Monday when the charges will be formally read out to her.

"We recognize the importance of maintaining public trust and the national security and we will continue to cooperate fully with all relevant authorities in this matter," the release concluded.



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Regional News



UHWI denies renal unit failures amid patients' outcry



The University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) is refuting claims by some of its dialysis patients that deteriorating conditions and a lack of resources at the facility's renal unit are jeopardising their health and well-being.

While describing the situation as a “disaster”, chief among the patients' growing concerns were the constant malfunctioning of dialysis machines and the water treatment unit, along with a general shortage of resources. Patients say

these issues often result in them being turned away when they arrive for treatment.

In a story published in yesterday's *Gleaner*, frustrated patients – who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation – raised concerns about the health risks posed by delayed treatments. They also complained about the unsanitary condition of the unit.

However, in a statement issued yesterday, UHWI dismissed the claims, despite public relations and com-

munications manager Kerry-Ann Robinson telling *The Gleaner* on Wednesday that the hospital was investigating the patients' allegations.

“We acknowledge that no healthcare system is without challenges, but we reject the notion that the UHWI is failing its renal patients. Instead, we stand firm in our dedication to continuous improvement, patient engagement, and high-quality, life-sustaining care. At UHWI Dialysis, we ensure that no patient needing emergency dialysis is turned away,” the statement read.

Dialysis is a life-sustaining treatment for individuals with kidney failure, acting as an artificial kidney to filter blood, remove waste and excess fluids, and maintain electrolyte balance and blood pressure. It alleviates symptoms and improves quality of life.

According to the patients, however, the reliability and quality of care at UHWI have significantly declined – particularly over the past two years.

“Every week there's a different problem. Either the pump is down, or there's an issue with the acid or fluid. It's unpredictable, and the unit can shut down at any time,” one patient told *The Gleaner*.

“If you complain, they take it out on you when you return for treatment.”

“The standard has dropped – badly,” another patient said, noting that machine breakdowns are common and often not communicated in advance, leaving patients stranded without treatment.

One patient described the situation as especially disheartening for those who struggle to afford the \$7,500 per session payment, only to be denied care due to equipment or supply shortages.

In its statement, UHWI did not indicate whether the patients' reports of frequent malfunctions and treatment disruptions were inaccurate. It also did not directly address the allegations of insufficient supplies, including needles and lines.

However, the hospital noted that it currently has 21 functioning dialysis units, with three others undergoing repairs. UHWI said the renal unit serves 35 to 40 patients daily, in addition to two to three ICU patients with complex medical and surgical needs. It operates on a 24-hour basis from Monday to Sunday, delivering over 210 dialysis sessions weekly and approximately 840 monthly, the hospital noted. (*Jamaica Gleaner*)

Barbados introduces Japanese braille blocks to help visually impaired

An initiative involving blocks from Japan to assist the visually impaired move around more safely in public is being introduced here by the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs.

The braille blocks, or tenji blocks, are used in Japan to help visually impaired individuals move around safely.

They provide tactile paving or textured ground surfaces and can be found on sidewalks, at train stations, and in places with public transit in Japan.

The Japanese blocks are designed to be detected by foot or with a cane and offer directional cues and warnings for those with limited vision.

Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs Kirk Humphrey was moved to implement the initiative after visiting Japan in 2023.

During a courtesy call to Minister Humphrey on Friday, Miyasaka Yusuke, Resident Ambassador of Japan to Barbados, revealed that the procedures to bring samples of the blocks have already begun.

“These blocks are now widely implemented, including in outside areas. Just yesterday, I was informed that your ministry has begun handling import procedures for these samples,” he said. “I understand that installing Braille blocks indoors is relatively simple and that the wider use can provide tremendous support for the mobility and independence of individuals with visual impairments.”

First Secretary Miura Shitau, who also attended the meeting, explained that Minister Humphrey heard about

the blocks during a courtesy call by athletes of the Japan Blind Judo Federation who engaged in conversations with him about the Braille blocks.

“The minister himself, when he visited Japan, observed that in Japanese society we install them in many places for supporting the visually impaired,” the First Secretary said.

“The president of the Japan Blind Judo Federation arranged the sample Braille block supply with a particular company in Japan. Now we are at the final stage, just before sending them out from Japan.”

Humphrey said this project fits into the island’s legislative agenda and its efforts to move towards greater inclusion, as evident in the bill passed

in the Parliament of Barbados on the rights of persons with disabilities. He said the blocks will make a difference to the quality of life of Barbadians who are visually impaired.

“If you know how to read the blocks, it basically assists you in being able to navigate the streets and to navigate buildings.”

He said training will be provided to persons on how to use the blocks “so that they could learn to read the blocks [and] know where the elevators are, where the doors are, and so on and so forth.”

Humphrey said, “Of course, this work is a practical kind of manifestation because this is what we have been hoping to do in the ministry.” *(Loop Caribbean)*



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Regional News



JDF rescues fishermen stranded at sea

The Maritime Air and Cyber Command of the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) on Friday rescued two Jamaican fishermen who were stranded at sea.

The fishermen were rescued approximately 15 miles south of Rocky Point, Clarendon.

Their fishing vessel 'YELLOWTAIL FOUR' reportedly had engine failure, leaving the men stranded.

The Maritime Air and Cyber Command was contacted to provide assistance to the fishermen and the aerial and maritime assets from the JDF Air Wing and Coast Guard were immediately deployed to locate them.

Having found the fishermen, the JDF Coast Guard safely transported them and their vessel to Port Royal



where they were reunited with their families.

Brigade Commander, Maritime Air and Cyber Command, Brigadier Elon Clarke, commended the airmen and sailors of the JDF Air Wing and the First District, JDF Coast Guard

for their continued vigilance and dedication to service for the lives of others.

The JDF is advising all seafarers that overdue vessels and vessels in distress can be reported to the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) Kingston at (876)

976- 8193 or (876) 836-1216.

The JRCC Kingston is a 24-hour aeronautical and maritime search and rescue centre operated by the Maritime Air and Cyber Command of the Jamaica Defence Force. *(Jamaica Gleaner)*

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Three men arrested for allegedly kidnapping two women in St Andrew



- One Taurus G2c pistol with a magazine containing 12 rounds
- One 7.62 millimetre round
- An extended magazine with 27 rounds
- Two imitation firearms
- Clothing matching descriptions from the incident
- One grey ski mask

The three men are now facing serious charges, including kidnapping, aggravated robbery, possession of prohibited weapons, unauthorised possession of ammunition.

The police say their identities are being withheld pending further investigations. *(Jamaica Gleaner)*

Three men have been arrested in connection with several crimes, including the kidnapping and aggravated robbery of two women in Harbour View, St Andrew, on Tuesday.

The two women were reportedly taken against their will after entering a taxi on their way to work.

The police say men in the vehicle brandished firearms and robbed the victims of their phones, cash, and bank cards. The women were later released in Pembroke Hall, St Andrew, where they were rescued by the St Andrew South Police.

Following the report, National Strategic Anti-Gang Division (NSAD) detectives launched an investigation.

Their inquiries led to the identification of a Toyota Probox motor car, the vehicle believed to have been used in the crime.

The police say Further intelligence work led to the vehicle's positive identification by the Police Emergency Control Centre (PECC).

On Thursday, the Kingston Central Police intercepted the vehicle in the East Parade area of downtown Kingston and apprehended three men.

A search of the suspects' properties by NSAD, along with a search of the vehicle by the Caribbean Search Centre, reportedly uncovered several items, including:

- One black Glock 19 pistol with a

magazine containing 15 rounds

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Brazil's former president Bolsonaro transferred to Brasilia after hospitalization

Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was transferred Saturday by medical aircraft from northeastern Brazil to the capital Brasilia after being hospitalized with abdominal pain a day earlier.

Bolsonaro was hospitalized Friday morning while traveling in northeastern Brazil. The pain was caused by a bowel obstruction and was related to long-term effects of being stabbed in the abdomen in September 2018, his doctors said.

Bolsonaro has been in and out of hospitals since the attack at a campaign event before Brazil's 2018 presidential election. The conservative leader underwent several surgeries during his presidency from 2019-2022.

"After so many similar episodes over the past few years, I had gotten used to the pain and discomfort. But this time, even the doctors were surprised," he said in a social media post Saturday, adding that a longtime physician told him it was "the most serious case since the attack."

Bolsonaro also said he would likely undergo another surgery. Earlier on Saturday, doctors at Rio Grande Hospital in the northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte told journalists he was stable and not in need of emergency surgery, said further procedures would depend on his recovery.

Doctors also that the transfer to Brasilia was requested by his family and would happen Saturday afternoon.

The far-right leader was admitted to a hospital in Santa Cruz, a small city in Rio Grande do Norte, and later transferred to a hospital in the state's capital, Natal.

Bolsonaro was set to start a trip across the region to promote his party's right-wing agenda, eyeing next year's presidential election, though he himself is



barred from running.

A panel of judges banned Bolsonaro from running for office again until 2030 after a panel of judges concluded that he abused his power and cast unfounded doubts on the country's electronic voting system. He has also been charged in connection to an alleged coup attempt to stay in office after his 2022 election defeat.

Bolsonaro's alleged coup attempt included plans to poison and kill his political rival, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, prosecutors said. (*NBC News*)



High winds and sandstorms prompt Beijing to cancel hundreds of flights and close parks

High winds and the threat of sandstorms Saturday prompted Beijing to cancel hundreds of flights and close public parks, as massive gales felled hundreds of trees, crushing cars and damaging older homes across China's capital.

Beijing's two massive international airports, Beijing Capital and Daxing, canceled 693 flights by 2:00 p.m. with warnings of more violent weather on its way, especially in the country's north and along coastal areas.

More flights and trains were canceled in other parts of China. Some parts of the country recorded their most powerful winds in more than 75 years, registering at up to 92 mph.

In Beijing, the Universal Studios theme park was closed at least through Sunday and historic sites such as Beijing's Forbidden City, Summer Palace and Temple of Heaven were closed. Football matches and other outdoor events have also been suspended.



High winds and sandstorms are generated in China's dry north, where the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts sit surrounded by grasslands and, mountains and forests.

China has fought a decades-long battle to lessen the impact of sandstorms,

especially in Beijing, which sits on the edge of an arid region and where such storms can reduce visibility to practically zero, send sand into buildings and clothing, and cause severe discomfort to the eyes, nose and ears. *(NBC News)*

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Sudanese paramilitary attacks famine-stricken camps, killing at least 100



Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have killed at least 100 people, including 20 children and nine aid workers, after launching an assault on two famine-stricken camps in the Darfur region, the latest escalation in a bitter civil war about to enter its third year.

The RSF targeted the Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps, where more than 700,000 people are sheltering from the relentless violence that has killed tens of thousands, forcibly displaced 12.7 million people and left 24.6 million people facing acute hunger, according to the United Nations.

U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator Clementine Nkweta-Salami said Saturday that the latest attacks marked "yet another deadly and unaccepted escalation" in the conflict, and that attacks on civilians and aid workers marked "grave violations of international humanitarian law."

"The colleagues from an international non-governmental organization were killed while operating one of the very few remaining health posts still oper-

ational in the camp," she said.

The war pits Sudan's armed forces, led by the country's de facto ruler Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, against the RSF militia commanded by his former deputy, Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo.

The two were once allies within the military junta that seized control after the spectacular collapse of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's government in 2021. But their power-sharing arrangement rapidly fell apart, sparking war in April 2023.

While both sides have been accused of extensive human rights violations, a U.N. fact-finding mission in October found that the RSF was responsible for committing sexual violence on a large scale in areas under its control, including gang rapes, abductions and sexual slavery.

In January, the United States determined that the RSF had committed genocide in areas under its control.

A March report from UNICEF said children as young as 1 year old had

been raped and sexually assaulted by armed forces, in the first comprehensive account illustrating how mass sexual violence is being wielded as a weapon of war against children in Sudan.

The agency documented over 200 cases of child rape since early 2023, although the authors stressed that this was only a small fraction of the total number of cases.

The latest attacks comes as aid groups grapple with a funding crisis after President Donald Trump enacted a 90-day freeze on all foreign aid in February.

One network of communal kitchens has had to immediately stop most of its operations due to a lack of funding, about 75% of which came from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), according to their organizers.

Abuzar Osman Suliman, the coordinator of the Emergency Response Rooms in Sudan's western Darfur region, told NBC News in February that all 40 of ERRs' community kitchens had to close in the Zamzam camp.

U.N. agencies have been unable to get substantial amounts of food relief to the Zamzam camp and a famine was already declared in the camps in August, according to an analysis by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), an international system that sets a scale used by the United Nations and governments.

Famine has since spread to four other areas of Sudan, according to the IPC, and is expected to deepen and spread in coming months due to the war and impeded access to humanitarian assistance. *(NBC News)*

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