

## US Man Cuts Out Woman's Heart, Cooks It For His Family, Then Kills Them

A man, who killed a woman, cut her heart out and then stabbed two people to death, including a 4-year-old child, has been sentenced to life in prison in US's Oklahoma state, reports say.

According to The Independent, 44-year-old Lawrence Paul Anderson committed the gruesome murders in 2021, less than a month after he received an early release from prison.

Weeks after he was freed, he murdered and carved Andrea Blankenship's heart, carried it to his aunt and uncle's house and cooked the organ with potatoes.

He then attempted to serve the macabre meal to the couple before he stabbed and killed 67-year-old Leon Pye and his 4-year-old granddaughter Kacos Yates, ABC news reported.

Anderson had served just three years of a 20-year sentence on a drug case when he was given a commutation by Oklahoma's governor Kevin Stitt. His release was part of a mass commutation effort by the state but an investigation later found that he was placed in the commutation list by mistake.

Anderson received five consecutive-life sentences after he pled guilty to murder, assault and maiming.

Anderson's aunt, who was also injured in the attack and the other victims' families, have filed cases against the Oklahoma governor and the prison parole board.

## Study Links Covid Origins To Raccoon Dogs Sold In China Seafood Market

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, its origin has kept researchers puzzled. Now, an international team of experts has found evidence suggesting that the virus might have spread from infected raccoon dogs being illegally sold at a seafood market in China's Wuhan, reported The New York Times.

The team collected genetic data from swabs taken from the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market and nearby areas in 2020. Researchers took the swabs from floors, walls, carts, and cages used to transport the animals as the market had been closed and animals removed after the outbreak, the report added.

An analysis of the samples, that were found to be infected by the virus, revealed that they carried genetic material of animals including raccoon dogs. While this doesn't confirm if raccoon dogs were infected and if they transmitted the virus to humans, scientists said the evidence pointed towards a scenario where the virus spread from wild animals.

"This is a really strong indication that animals at the market were infected. There's really no other explanation that makes any sense," Angela Rasmussen, a virologist who was part of the research, told The Atlantic.

The analysis was led by three prominent researchers namely Kristian Andersen, Michael Worobey, and Edward Holmes.

The genetic data was posted by Chinese researchers on GISAID, an open-access genomic database. It was then downloaded and analysed by scientists from North America, Australia, and Europe. The Chinese researchers, who uploaded the data, had already examined the samples. But their study stated that "no animal host of SARS-CoV-2 can be deduced". The analysis suggested that the virus found at the market could have been brought by an infected human and not a wild animal being sold there, the report said.

The fresh analysis of the samples carrying the virus, meanwhile, found animal genetic material matching that of a common raccoon dog. According to Alex Crits-Christoph, a computational biologist, the genetic data was "tangible". He added, "And this is the species that everyone has been talking about".

## "Being Cheated": Protest Intensifies As France Pushes Through Pension Reform Without Vote



Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron's government on Thursday rammed a controversial pension reform through parliament without a vote, sparking angry protests in Paris and other cities as well as tumult in the legislature. The move to use a special constitutional power enabling the government to pass legislation without a vote amounted to an admission that the government lacked a majority to hike the retirement age from 62 to 64.

The Senate had adopted the bill earlier Thursday, but reluctance by right-wing opposition MPs in the National Assembly to side with Macron meant the government faced defeat in the lower house.

"We can't take the risk of seeing 175 hours of parliamentary debate come to nothing," Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne told MPs as she announced the move amid jeers and boos from opposition MPs who also sang the national anthem.

A crowd of thousands gathered in front of the parliament in the historic Place de la Concorde in central Paris, watched over by riot police. "I'm outraged by what's happening. I feel like I'm being cheated as a citizen," said Laure Cartelier, a 55-year-old schoolteacher who had come to express her outrage. "In a democracy, it should have happened through a vote."

At around 8:00 pm (1900 GMT), police used tear gas and water cannon to clear protesters away after a fire was lit in the centre of the square, close to an Egyptian obelisk that has stood there for close to 200 years.

Some 120 people were arrested on suspicion of seeking to cause damage, Paris police said.

Even after the rally was dispersed, some protesters created fires and caused damage to shop fronts in side streets, AFP reporters said.

Several stores were looted during protests in the south-

ern city of Marseille while clashes between protesters and security forces also erupted in the western cities of Nantes and Rennes as well as Lyon in the south-east, AFP correspondents said.

- 'Total failure' -

Trade unions and political analysts had warned that adopting the legislation without a vote -- by invoking article 49.3 of the constitution -- risked radicalising opponents and would undercut the law's democratic legitimacy. "It's a total failure for the government," far-right leader Marine Le Pen told reporters. "From the beginning the government fooled itself into thinking it had a majority."

According to polls two-thirds of French people oppose the pension overhaul.

"When a president has no majority in the country, no majority in the National Assembly, he must withdraw his bill," added Socialist Party chief Olivier Faure.

Some opposition parties including Le Pen's are set to call a no-confidence vote in the centrist government on Friday, but Borne's cabinet is expected to survive, thanks to backing from the right-wing Republicans party.

Unions immediately called for another day of mass strikes and protests for next Thursday, calling the government's move "a complete denial of democracy".

## 2.5 Tons Of Missing Uranium Found In South Libya: Report

More than 2 tonnes of natural uranium reported missing by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog in Libya have been found, BBC reported. The Libyan National Army said in a statement that the containers of uranium had been recovered "barely five kilometers (three miles)" from where they had been stored in southern Libya.

The group, led by renegade Libyan commander Khalifa Hifter, also released a video of a worker counting what it said were barrels of uranium in the desert in southern Libya.

"The situation is under control. The IAEA has been informed," General Khaled al-Mahjoub, commander of eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar's communications division, told AFP news agency. Earlier on Tuesday, the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors had reported the missing uranium. It said that the "uranium had gone missing from a Libyan site and may present a radiological risk."

On Tuesday, "agency safeguards inspectors found that 10 drums containing approximately 2.5 tons of natural uranium in the form of uranium ore concentrate were not present as previously declared at a location in the state of Libya," the IAEA said. "Further activities will be conducted by the agency to clarify the circumstances of the removal of the nuclear material and its current location."

## US Says Video Shows Russian Jet Intercepted Spy Drone Near Ukraine

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon released a video on Thursday that it said provided evidence a Russian fighter jet clipped the propeller of a U.S. spy drone and caused it to crash into the Black Sea this week, despite Russia's denial.

The 40-second-long video was filmed by the MQ-9 Reaper drone as it conducted regular reconnaissance in international airspace two days ago near Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula Moscow forcibly annexed in 2014.

The video showed what the Pentagon said were two Russian Su-27 fighter jets swooping toward the drone and releasing jet fuel on it in harassing behaviour. After a second pass by the jets, the video cuts out then resumes with images of the drone's damaged propeller.

U.S. officials have accused the Russian jets of acting in an unsafe manner. Russia has denied any collision took place and said the drone went down after making "sharp manoeuvres", having "provocatively" flown close to Russian airspace.

Highlighting the risk of a Russia-U.S. clash, Moscow contended the jet encounter showed the U.S. was directly involved in the Ukraine conflict, something Washington has taken pains to avoid for fear of worsening tensions between the two nuclear powers. The Pentagon said it had indications Russia was trying to recover debris from the drone, which would be diffi-



cult to recover in very deep water. Russia said on Wednesday it would try to retrieve the remains but appeared to acknowledge the challenges.

Washington has said the drone no longer carried any valuable intelligence.

China, which has not condemned Russia for invading Ukraine, said it was concerned about the war intensifying and hoped Moscow and Kyiv would hold peace talks.

War Crimes Probe

Investigations by an international panel said some of Russia's actions since invading Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, may be crimes against humanity. Russia dismissed the report released on Thursday, which said crimes included willful killings and torture.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made no direct reference to the United Nations-mandated report in his nightly video address. He spoke in remembrance of those killed in the Russian bombing of a theatre in the southern city of Mariupol one year ago.

"Russian bombs destroyed the Mariupol theatre, a build-

ing used as a shelter. Women and children were inside. Some people were pregnant, others elderly," Zelenskyy said.

No one knows the death toll for certain.

Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians, though the conflict has killed thousands, displaced millions, pulverised Ukrainian cities, shaken the global economy and created a Cold War chill in international relations.

"The day will come when those guilty of war crimes against Ukraine will appear in the halls of the International Criminal Court and in national courtrooms," Zelenskyy said.

Bakhmut Fighting

Zelenskyy also made no direct reference to Bakhmut, the focal point for eight months of Russian attempts to advance through the industrial Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine bordering Russia. Ukrainian forces were withstanding Russian assaults on the ruined city. Reuters reporters roughly 1.5 km (1 mile) from the front lines could hear the constant boom of artillery and the crackle of small arms fire.

## These Companies Are Calling Employees Back To Office In 2023

Amid a second round of sweeping layoffs, Meta Platforms Inc. Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg is now encouraging staff to "find more opportunities to work with your colleagues in person."

Meta is the latest high-profile company to walk back lenient work-from-home policies and call workers back to the office in 2023, joining others like Amazon.com Inc., Starbucks Corp. and Walt Disney Co.

The orders come as office occupancy across the US this year broke 50% for the first time since the pandemic began and CEOs like JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s Jamie Dimon continue to reject remote work. Working from home "doesn't work" for managers or younger staff, Dimon said recently.

This year's return-to-office policies follow 2022's mandates from the likes of Goldman Sachs Group Inc., Morgan Stanley, Apple Inc. and Peloton Interactive Inc. (Last year Bloomberg LP required its workers to return to the office a minimum of three days a week.)

Some executives have tried to rebrand the effort to get people to show up in person, emphasizing continued



commitments to virtues like flexibility while sounding familiar notes around the office's centrality to "creativity," "collaboration" and "culture." Meanwhile, speculation has arisen about other reasons executives want workers back in person, like keeping corporate tax breaks.

Here's a running list of major companies ordering workers back to their desks in 2023:

1. Amazon.com Inc. The company has told employees to return to offices three days a week starting May 1. That's after CEO Andy Jassy said in October that managers would be able to decide how often, if at all, their staff should come in. "There is something about being face-to-face with somebody, looking them in the eye and seeing they're

fully immersed in whatever you're discussing that bonds people together," Jassy said on the company's blog. The order came on the heels of a mass layoff of some 18,000 employees, and took many by surprise.

General Motors Co. The automaker set a return-to-office date of Jan. 30, requiring employees to report to offices three days a week. The announcement caused an uproar among corporate employees, catching many off-guard. The new requirement seemed to walk back the firm's "Work Appropriately" policy, which most took as a vote of confidence in staff to work the hours and in the places that best suit them.

Meta Platforms Inc. CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced

plans to let go another 10,000 workers and close 5,000 open roles this spring in another round of deep cuts following the company's first large-scale layoff of 11,000 employees in the fall. While Meta was one of the first tech companies to offer all of its employees the ability to work from home, Zuckerberg is now encouraging staff to "find more opportunities to work with your colleagues in person."

News Corp. The publisher of the Wall Street Journal and other newspapers has issued a memo to its workforce encouraging them to return to the office for the "subtleties of body language and the nuances of knowing glances," for which working from home does not allow. Though CEO Robert Thomson conveyed his desire for staff to come in more than they are now, the company has remained vague about exactly how many days employees are expected to show up. "There is some room for flexibility in the work environment, but that flexibility is not boundless," Thomson said in the memo. "Attendance is an absolute imperative as collaboration and cooperation are priorities for each of our businesses."

## "As An AI...": GPT-4's Answer When Asked "How Can Humans Get Along"

OpenAI, the artificial intelligence research company behind ChatGPT, recently unveiled its new and more advanced model called GPT-4. The latest version is said to be more creative and accurate in its response and has better problem-solving capabilities than ChatGPT. Ever since its launch, users have been busy trying out the new chatbot to determine its efficiency.

A Twitter user who goes by the name YourPOP shared what GPT-4 answered when he asked the chatbot about "how can humans get along."

"In other news, I just subscribed to Chat GPT PLUS to give GPT-4 a try. The first question I asked was || How can we as humans all just get along? Praying for humanity," reads the caption.

The chatbot answered that being an "AI language model" it can offer some "general thoughts" on the matter and then goes on to list a few things that humans can "strive to get along with one another."

Here's the full answer: "As an AI language model, I can offer some general thoughts on how humans can strive to get along with one another. One of the most important things we can do to get along with others is to cultivate empathy and understanding.

This means taking the time to listen to others' perspectives, recognizing their experi-

ences and emotions, and striving to see the world from their point of view. We can also work to be more accepting and tolerant of differences, recognizing that diversity is a strength and that everyone has something valuable to contribute."

According to OpenAI, GPT-4 is a "large multimodal model", which means it can generate content from both image and text prompts. GPT-4 can handle up to 25,000 words which enables users to have longer conversations with it and create long-form content. According to the company blog, the latest chatbot is "more creative and collaborative than ever before" and would "solve difficult problems with greater accuracy" than its earlier versions. The company has claimed that GPT-4 is advanced in three areas, including creativity, visual comprehension, and context handling.

It can write screenplays, learn a user's writing styles, and compose songs. The model has broader general knowledge allowing it to solve difficult problems with greater accuracy. Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, called GPT-4 "our most capable and aligned model yet." He also cautioned that "it is still flawed, still limited, and it still seems more impressive on first use than it does after you spend more time with it."

## Kim Jong Un, Daughter Oversee North Korea's "Monster Missile" Launch



SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, accompanied by his daughter, personally oversaw the recent test-firing of the country's most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile, state media images showed Friday.

The launch on Thursday -- Pyongyang's second ICBM test this year -- involved a Hwasong-17 missile, the official Korean Central News Agency reported, adding that it was fired in response to "frantic" US-South Korea joint military drills. Photographs in the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed Kim watching the black-and-white Hwasong-17 -- dubbed a "monster missile" by analysts -- blast off into the sky.

Some of the images showed him watching the launch with his daughter --

never named by state media but identified as his second child Ju Ae by South Korean intelligence.

State media also released images showing the Earth from space, purportedly taken by a camera mounted on the ICBM.

KCNA said the launch "confirmed the war readiness of the ICBM unit", adding that it "had no negative impact on the security" of neighbouring countries.

South Korea had previously said the missile was fired on a lofted trajectory -- up instead of out, typically done to avoid overflying neighbouring countries.

Last year, North Korea declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power, and Kim recently called for an "exponential" increase in weapons production, including tactical nukes.

launch, Kim said North Korea would "react to nuclear weapons with nukes" and called for "irreversibly bolstering up the nuclear war deterrent", according to KCNA.

He also highlighted the country's "rapid response posture... to cope with any armed conflict and war", KCNA said.

In theory, the Hwasong-17 ICBM can reach the continental United States, and with this latest launch, North Korea is trying to emphasise the advanced level of its weaponry, analysts said.

"With the photos of the Earth, Pyongyang seems to be trying to show that it can accurately hit any target the regime wants with its ICBM," Cheong Seong-chang, a senior fellow at the Sejong Institute, told AFP. The next step will likely be North Korea firing the missile "at a normal angle", he said, which would demonstrate it can survive reentry into the atmosphere.

The Thursday launch -- Pyongyang's third show of force this week -- came as Tokyo and Seoul sought to thaw long-frozen ties to counter an increasingly aggressive North Korea.

Overseeing the Thursday

## "This Layoff Was Not Performance-Based": Employee Fired From Meta During Maternity Leave

After laying off 11,000 employees last year, Facebook's parent company Meta is now cutting 10,000 more jobs. Many employees who have been impacted by the second round of layoffs in the company are now taking to LinkedIn to share their stories. One such Meta employee has revealed that her maternity leave was cut short due to the layoffs, after spending three years at the company.

Sara Schneider, who was part of the Talent Acquisition and recruiting team, said how she went through major life milestones during her time at the company, including moving three times, finding the love of her life, getting married, getting pregnant, and having her first baby.

In a LinkedIn post, she wrote, "Unfortunately, my maternity leave was cut short at Meta due to the brutal Meta Layoffs. I spent an amazing 3 years at a company that had so many memories and worked with the best teams and incredible people. This layoff was not performance-based as so many top performers were let go. I am honored to have spent time recruiting for the People Team as well as the Software Engineering Team."

Ms. Schneider's post also revealed that she had "suffered from an almost fatal post-partum hemorrhage 8 hours after giving birth."

"During my birth process, I suffered from an almost fatal post-partum hemorrhage 8 hours after giving birth. I lost over 5 Liters of blood with massive blood clots and blood pressure in the 50's. Although incredibly traumatic, I know I was kept alive for a reason. It gives me perspective that I have a purpose, and the hills and valleys of life are just that -- temporary. I made a promise to myself that if I made it out alive, I wouldn't sweat life so much and be grateful for everything around me," she further wrote.

Prior to this, another Meta employee was also sacked during her maternity leave. In a LinkedIn post, Andi Allen, who worked as a Senior Technical Recruiter at Meta, wrote, "I was part of today's Meta layoffs while on maternity leave".

She also asked, "Has Mark Zuckerberg taken a pay cut?" and stated that her recruitment team was "top-notch" while saying that Meta's "handling of the situation is appalling".

Besides the layoffs, Meta Platforms Inc. is also planning to close roughly 5,000 openings, scrap lower-priority projects, and flatten layers of middle management.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the company will ask managers to become individual contributors and give them less than 10 direct reports to make the organisation "flatter".