

SOS in sand saves three



An Australian Army ARH-90 Tiger Helicopter lands on Pikelot Island in the Federated States of Micronesia

Rescuers spot three men stranded on an uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean

AP | Wellington, New Zealand

Three men have been rescued from a tiny Pacific island after writing a giant SOS sign in the sand that was spotted from above, authorities say.

The men had been missing in the Micronesia archipelago for nearly three days when their distress signal was spotted Sunday on uninhabited Pikelot Island by searchers on Australian and US aircraft, the Australian defense department said Monday.

The men had apparently set out from Pulawat atoll in a 7-meter (23-foot) boat on July

30 and had intended to travel about 43 kilometers (27 miles) to Pulpak atoll when they sailed off course and ran out of fuel, the department said.

Searchers in Guam asked for Australian help. The military ship, Canberra, which was returning to Australia from exercises in Hawaii, diverted to the area and joined forces with U.S. searchers from Guam.

The men were found about 190 kilometres (118 miles) from where they had set out.

"I am proud of the response and professionalism of all on board as we fulfil our obligation to contribute to the safety of



Australian Army soldiers during the rescue mission

life at sea wherever we are in the world," said the Canberra's commanding officer, Capt. Terry Morrison, in a statement.

The men were found in good condition, and an Australian military helicopter was able to land on the beach and give them



Stranded mariners wave goodbye after receiving food and supplies from HMAS Canberra following a search and rescue mission

food and water. A Micronesian patrol vessel was due to pick them up.

SOS is an internationally recognised distress signal that originates from Morse code.

News in brief

COVID-19 deaths in Yemen reach 500



◆ The number of people who have died in Yemen after contracting the

new coronavirus has reached 500, according to a Reuters tally, although aid organisations say the death toll is probably much higher. About 80 per cent of the population rely on humanitarian assistance in Yemen after years of war.

◆ **Iran confirmed yesterday over 2,700 new COVID-19 infections,** its highest single-day count in more than a month, as the health ministry called for those without masks to be fined.

Iran records highest COVID-19 cases in over month

Deaths and infections from the novel coronavirus have been on a rising trajectory in the Islamic republic since hitting a months-long low in May.

China accuses US of 'outright bullying' over TikTok

◆ China accused the United States yesterday of "bullying" over popular video app TikTok, after President Donald Trump ramped up pressure for its US operations to be sold to an American company. In the latest diplomatic spat between the world's two biggest economies, Beijing hit back after Trump gave TikTok six weeks to arrange a sale of its US operations -- and said that his government wanted a financial benefit from the deal.



◆ **Thailand's cabinet approved amendments on Tuesday to its narcotics act to allow private production and sale of marijuana for medical use,** officials said. With a tradition of using the leaf to relieve pain and fatigue, Thailand became the first Southeast Asian nation to legalise

marijuana in 2017 for medical use and research, but only the government was allowed to grow plants. Deputy government spokeswoman Traisuree Taisaranakul told reporters after a cabinet meeting that the proposed amendments would also allow patients, businesses and medical professionals to produce, export, import and sell the leaf.

Thailand plans to widen medical marijuana production

WHO says China team interviewed Wuhan scientists over virus origins

◆ A World Health Organization team in China to probe the origins of COVID-19 had "extensive discussions" and exchanges with scientists in Wuhan where the outbreak was first detected, a spokesman said yesterday. The talks included updates on animal health research, he said. China shut down a wildlife market in Wuhan at the start of the outbreak, a day after discovering some patients were vendors or dealers. The WHO says the virus most likely came from bats and probably had another, intermediary animal "host".

◆ A second wave of the coronavirus epidemic is highly likely to hit France in the autumn or winter, the government's top scientific body warned on Tuesday as authorities seek to contain an increase in new cases over the past two weeks. The warning came as an increasing number of French cities decided to make mask-wearing mandatory in crowded outdoor areas - including possibly Paris, according to a report by newspaper Le Monde.

Second COVID wave highly likely to hit France this year

Egypt invites Musk after 'aliens built pyramids' tweet

AFP | Cairo

Egypt has invited Elon Musk to visit its famed pyramids after the SpaceX and Tesla founder posted a satirical tweet stating that clearly extra-terrestrials had built the giant monuments.

"Aliens built the pyramids obv," Musk had tweeted, picking up on a theme popular with conspiracy theorists and kicking off a predictable flood of replies ranging from light-hearted to furious.

Among the avalanche of

one-liners, memes and potshots were some angry messages from nationalistic Egyptians who demanded the eccentric engineer and high-tech billionaire better check his facts.

Egyptian International Cooperation Minister Rania al-Mashat, a savvy social media user, however, saw a marketing opportunity to help revive the country's pandemic-battered tourism sector.

"I follow your work with a lot of admiration," wrote Mashat, a former tourism minister. "I invite you & Space X to explore

the writings about how the pyramids were built and also to check out the tombs of the pyramid builders.

"Mr. Musk, we are waiting for you," she added, inviting the entrepreneur to come and see for himself one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, Egypt's enormous tombs built for pharaohs and their consorts.

Musk followed up by posting a link to a BBC article about the history of the giant structures, calling it "a sensible summary" of how they were constructed.



The most famous and largest of Egypt's ancient monuments, the Giza Pyramids outside Cairo, reopened to the public last month after a three-month closure forced by the coronavirus pandemic.

Global Covid-19 Cases:

18,573,912

Deaths: 700,448

Recovered: 11,773,972

New cases: +138,443

New deaths: +3,365

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
1 USA	4,883,818	+571	159,499
2 Brazil	2,759,436	+376	95,078
3 India	1,906,121	+847	39,818
4 Russia	861,423	+144	14,351
5 South Africa	516,862		8,539
6 Mexico	443,813	+266	48,012
7 Peru	433,100		19,811
8 Chile	362,962	+38	9,745
9 Spain	349,894	+26	28,498
10 Colombia	327,850		11,017
11 Iran	314,786	+212	17,617
12 UK	306,293	+89	46,299
13 Saudi Arabia	281,456	+35	2,984
14 Pakistan	280,461	+15	5,999

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Egypt	94,640		4,888		44,066	45,686	41	923
Saudi Arabia	281,456	+1,363	2,984	+35	243,713	34,759	1,983	8,074
UAE	61,352	+189	351		55,090	5,911	6,196	35
Kuwait	68,774	+475	465	+4	60,326	7,983	131	16,083
Oman	79,159		421		61,421	17,317	187	15,469
Qatar	111,538	+216	177		108,254	3,107	73	39,724

Figures as of closing