

Irish women saved clinging to lobster pot after 15 hours at sea



Volunteers helped search for the pair near the County Galway coast
Reuters | Dublin

Two cousins who were blown out to sea paddle boarding off Ireland's west coast were found clinging to a buoy on a lobster pot after a 15-hour ordeal, media reports said.

The Irish Coast Guard said the women aged 17 and 23 were rescued on Thursday after being reported missing the previous evening, prompting an overnight air and sea search of Galway Bay.

They survived heavy rain and strong winds without wetsuits, although they were wearing buoyancy aids, Barry Heskin from the RNLI lifeboat service told public broadcaster RTE.

A local fisherman eventually tracked down the pair 27 kilometres (17 miles) from where they were last seen, having set off with his 18-year-old son to find them, RTE reported.

"They were waving their paddles up in the air, they had us spotted, well they were waving anyway and then we came alongside," fisherman Patrick Oliver told the broadcaster.

"They are weak and tired of course but they were sitting up and (we got) a little bit of chat out of them," he said, adding that he and his son had brought the cousins to an island where they were picked up by a helicopter and taken to hospital.

Biden calls for mask mandate

Joe Biden urges mandatory face-mask order for next three months in effort to save lives

● Joe Biden said wearing a mask was "about your responsibilities as an American" as he and Kamala Harris, drew a contrast with President Trump's handling of the coronavirus

AFP | Washington

White House hopeful Joe Biden called for a nationwide mask-wearing mandate for the next three months, drawing a contrast with President Donald Trump as the challenger makes coronavirus pandemic recovery a focal point of his campaign.

Declaring that "every single American should be wearing a mask" while outside their home, Biden called on governors of all 50 states to institute a national mask mandate "starting immediately" as a way to halt the virus's spread and save tens of thousands of lives.

"Look, this is America. Be a patriot," Biden, with his newly named running mate Kamala Harris standing nearby and wearing a face covering, told reporters near his home in Delaware.

"Protect your fellow citizens, step up, do the right thing," Biden added.

Health experts remain adamant about the need for people to wear masks and maintain social distance to defeat a pandemic that has already infected 20 million people and killed 750,000 worldwide.

Even as COVID-19 rages in the



Democratic presidential nominee and former US Vice President Joe Biden (L) and vice presidential running mate, US Senator Kamala Harris, arrive to conduct their first press conference

United States, Trump has steadfastly ignored recommendations that people wear masks. He himself did not wear one in public until July 11.

"Americans must have their freedoms," Trump said at a White House press briefing, as he accused Biden of "playing politics with the virus" with his call for a mandate.

"We will continue to urge Americans to wear masks when they cannot socially distance, but we do not need to bring the full weight of the federal government down on law-abiding Americans to accomplish this."

The remarks, just 82 days before the election, highlight the political fault lines over health policy that have affected the presidential race.

Biden seeks to make a referendum on Trump's handling of the

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per cent of Americans disapprove of the President Donald Trump's coronavirus response, according to website FiveThirtyEight

pandemic, with polls showing that 57 percent of Americans disapprove of the president's coronavirus response, according to website FiveThirtyEight.

Thirty-four states have mask mandates, mostly requiring facial coverings indoors or outdoors around other people, according to seniors organization AARP.

Some hotspots, like Florida and Georgia, have no mandate

and their Republican governors have resisted pressure to impose one.

Fresh off Wednesday's campaign rollout that featured the Democratic ticket together for the first time, Biden, 77, and Harris, 55, held a coronavirus working group with health experts who participated remotely.

"As (Biden) has been saying since the beginning of this pandemic, it should be the public health professionals that are leading policy in our country to address this lethal pandemic," Harris said.

Biden and Harris also held a session with experts, including former Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen, on the pandemic's impact on the economy. Democrats widely accuse Trump of mishandling the US response to a pandemic that has claimed

some 167,000 lives nationwide.

Critics have blamed him for voicing falsehoods about the virus, including that children are "almost immune" to COVID-19, and ignoring or sidelining some chief scientists and administration health officials.

Top priority

By highlighting coronavirus recovery at the start of their campaign, Biden and Harris are signaling to voters that the crisis is a top priority.

On Monday, the Democratic National Convention begins -- online -- to formally nominate Biden and his running mate.

The party's presidential hopeful introduced Harris at a rollout event Wednesday near his home in Wilmington, at a gymnasium with no public access due to coronavirus concerns.

Harris was announced as Biden's VP pick a day earlier, sparking a grassroots fundraising spree that the campaign said raised an eye-popping \$26 million in the first 24 hours, and \$34.2 million by the end of Wednesday.

At the rollout, Harris said Trump's "mismanagement" of the pandemic has plunged the nation into its deepest health crisis in a century and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

"There's a reason (the coronavirus) has hit America worse than any other advanced nation. It's because of Trump's failure to take it seriously from the start," she said.

Harris lamented "his refusal to get testing up and running. His flip-flopping on social distancing and wearing masks. His delusional belief that he knows better than the experts."

'Massive poisonous shock': Scientists fear lasting impact from Mauritius oil spills

Reuters | Nairobi

Some corals have lived for centuries at the fringes of Mauritius. Now smothered for days in heavy fuel oil spilled from a wrecked Japanese tanker nearby, parts of those reefs may be in trouble.

The full impact of the toxic spill is still unfolding, scientists say. As the Indian Ocean island's residents scramble to mop up the oil slicks and clumps, they are seeing dead eels and fish floating in the water, as fuel-soaked seabirds limp onto shore.

Satellite images also show the 1,000 tonnes of spilled oil spreading northward along the coastline from the spill site in the turquoise waters of Blue Bay Marine Park.

The damage, scientists say, could impact Mauritius and its tourism-dependent economy for decades.

"This oil spill occurred in one of, if not the most, sensitive areas in Mauritius," oceanographer and environmental engineer Vassen Kauppaymuthoo told Reuters by telephone from the island, where he was surveying the disaster. "We are talking of



A section of the bulk carrier ship MV Wakashio that ran aground on a reef

decades to recover from this damage, and some of it may never recover."

The wildlife at risk include the seagrasses blanketing sand in the shallow waters, clownfish darting around coral reefs, mangrove trees corraling the coastline with their tangled root systems, and the critically endangered Pink Pigeon, endemic to the island.

Giant tortoises slow-walk through a nature reserve on the nearby islet, Ile-aux-Aigrettes, where there is also a scientific research station. Altogether, Blue Bay Marine park counts

38 types of coral and 78 species of fish.

The spill brings "a massive poisonous shock to the system," said Adam Moolna, an environmental scientist from Mauritius who lectures at Keele University in Britain. "This oil will have cascading effects across the webs of life."

Still uncontained

The spill came from the Japanese-owned MV Wakashio, which rammed into a reef in the marine park on July 25. It is still unclear why the ship was sailing so closely to the coast.

About a week later, oil began gushing from the cracked vessel. However, the flow had been stopped, authorities say, after they pumped the remaining oil from the ship.

On Thursday, the ship's owner Nagashiki Shipping said it would face up to its liability and assess compensation for the disaster.

Already, about 15 km of coastline have been affected by the spill, said Mauritius Marine Conservation Society President Jacqueline Sauzier.



Satellite images also show the 1,000 tonnes of spilled oil spreading northward along the coastline from the spill site in the turquoise waters of Blue Bay Marine Park

Trump's ex-lawyer to reveal president's 'skeletons' in upcoming book

AFP | Washington

Michael Cohen, US President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer and fixer, on Thursday promised to show how Trump cheated in the 2016 election with Russian help in an upcoming book titled "Disloyal, A Memoir."

"Trump had cheated in the election, with Russian connivance, as you will discover in these pages, because doing anything -- and I mean anything -- to 'win' has always been his business model and way of life," Cohen writes in the book's foreword, which was published online on Thursday.

The 3,700-word foreword does not reveal anything new about Russia's interference in



Michael Cohen

the 2016 presidential election, and it was not clear if the book would.

Former Special Counsel Robert Mueller last year concluded that Russia waged a major campaign to help Trump to victory in 2016.

Mueller did not find evidence of a criminal conspiracy between Trump's campaign and Russia, but he did detail extensive contacts between the campaign and Russian operatives.

Cohen worked closely with Trump for years before turning against him, most publicly in testimony to Congress last year prior to Trump's impeachment.

Cohen said he knows where Trump's metaphorical "skeletons" are buried because he buried them.



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MICHAEL COHEN