

## 'GREEN POLICE' TO BATTLE TUNISIA TRASH SCOURGE

**TUNIS:** Tunisia on Tuesday launched a special "green police" unit aimed at dealing with the proliferation of waste, a scourge that has worsened dramatically since the 2011 revolution. "May God help you it's a very difficult mission," Prime Minister Youssef Chahed said at the launch of the unit, with their new uniforms and GPS-equipped pick-ups. The North African country's rubbish woes have worsened because municipalities are not dealing with the problem in advance of local elections slated for December.

There is also a lack of equipment, treatment centers and landfills, Environment Minister Riadh Mouakher said. "Even municipalities themselves sometimes dump their waste in public spaces," he told reporters. But he also pinpointed a lack of awareness among the general public. For a

month, the environment police will be responsible for raising that awareness, Mouakher said. After that, from mid-July, throwing trash outside dumpsters or burning waste will incur fines of between 40 and 60 dinars.

And if an offence is deemed to be damaging to the public health, a prison term can be or higher fines of between 300 and 1,000 dinars can be imposed. Initially, the new force will deploy 163 officers in 34 municipalities across greater Tunis. In mid-July, an additional 136 officers will patrol another 40 municipalities across the country. The "green police" will come under the authority of municipalities but will also be monitored by the environment ministry. In another measure taken in March this year aimed at ending "visual pollution", Tunisia banned plastic bags from supermarkets.—AFP



**TUNIS:** Tunisian policemen take part in an event to launch the environmental police force in Tunis.—AFP

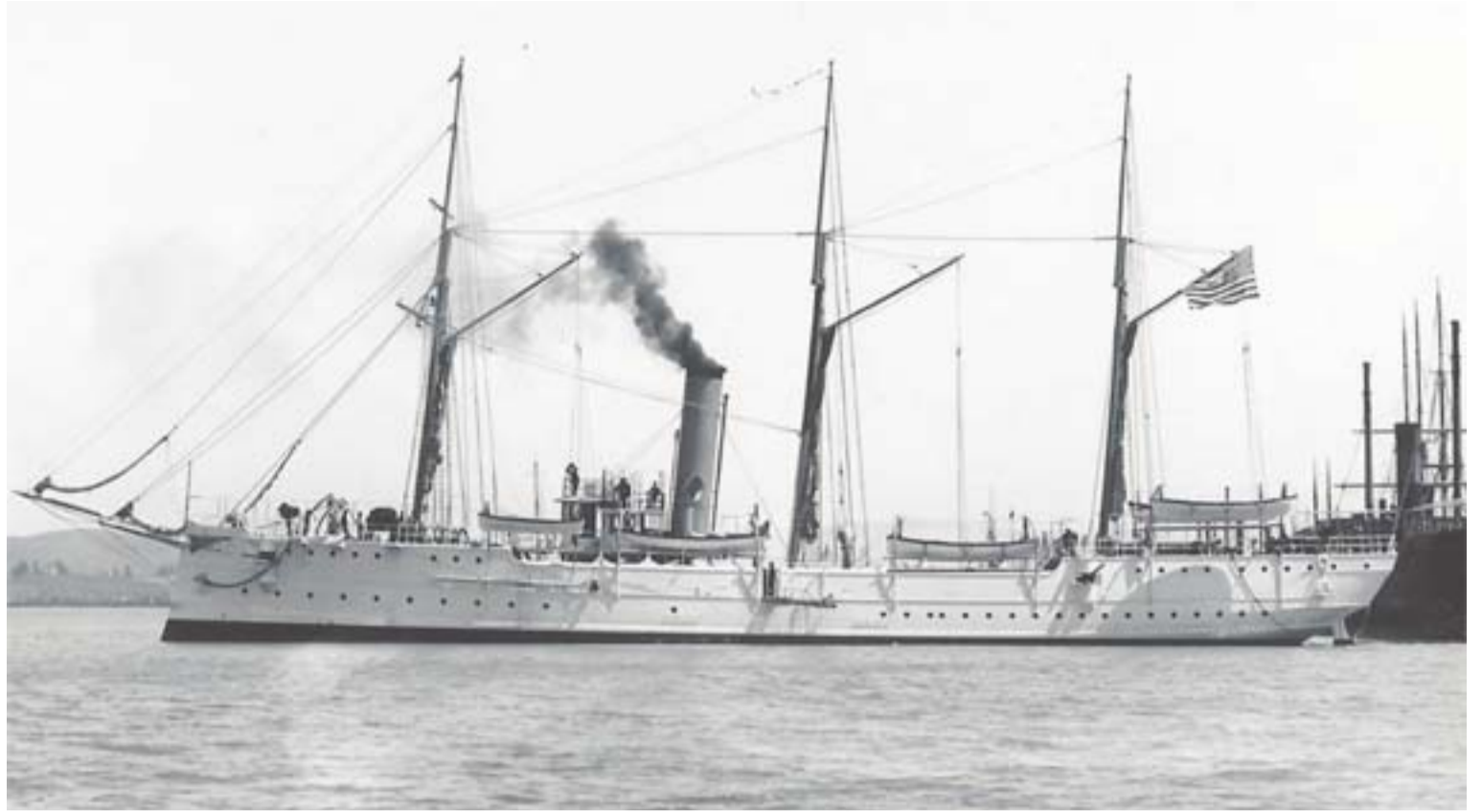
## BABY WALRUS BORN AT SEAWORLD, ORLANDO

**ORLANDO:** A whiskered baby walrus has been born at SeaWorld Orlando. SeaWorld officials said that a 14-year-old walrus named Kaboodle gave birth June 3 at the Florida theme park. It's Kaboodle's first baby, and it's the first walrus birth at SeaWorld Orlando. The pair of flipper marine mammals is not currently on public display. The sex of

the young walrus was not released. Images posted online by SeaWorld showed the young walrus sporting a full mustache, just like its mother. Both male and female walruses have whiskers and tusks. Park officials said the birth has thrilled its animal husbandry and veterinary teams, "especially when mom and calf vocalize with each other."—AP



**ORLANDO:** This photo provided by Sea World Orlando shows a baby walrus born at the park in Orlando, Florida.—AP



**SAN FRANCISCO:** This undated image provided by NOAA shows the USCG Cutter McCulloch that was launched in 1896.—AP

## COAST GUARD SHIP WILL LINGER IN CENTURY-OLD WATERY GRAVE

**SAN FRANCISCO:** A hundred years ago in a blinding fog, a US Coast Guard ship was sailing off the coast of Southern California when it smashed into a passenger steamship. The USCGC McCulloch sank within 35 minutes and lingered on the ocean floor undisturbed by people for a century. On the 100th anniversary of the vessel's June 13, 1917, disappearance, the Coast Guard announced that it found the shipwreck - not far from where it went down. And officials plan to leave it there.

Strong currents and an abundance of sediment would make moving the delicate ship too difficult, officials said in detailing the discovery of the San Francisco-based USCGC McCulloch. They also paid tribute to its crews, including two members who died in the line of duty, but not in the crash. Coast Guard Cmdr. Todd Sokalzuk called the ship "a symbol of hard work and sacrifice of previous generations to serve and protect our nation" and an important piece of history. The ship sank shortly after hearing a foghorn nearby and then colliding with the SS Governor, a civilian steamship. The McCulloch's crew was safely rescued and taken aboard the steamship.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Coast Guard discovered the wreck last fall during a routine survey. Researchers focused on the area of the shipwreck 3 miles off Point Conception, California, after noticing a flurry of fish. Sunken ships offer a great place for fish to hide. The site is about 150 miles northwest of Los Angeles. Commissioned in the late 1800s, the McCulloch first set out to sea during the Spanish-American War as part of Commodore George Dewey's Asiatic Squadron in the Battle of Manila Bay.

Cutters based in San Francisco in the late 1800s and early 1900s represented American interests throughout the Pacific. They also played important roles in the development of the Western US. After the war, the cutter patrolled the West Coast and later was dispatched to protect fur seals in the Pribilof Islands off the coast of Alaska, where it also served as a floating courtroom in remote areas. The archaeological remains, including a 15-inch torpedo tube molded into the bow stem and the top of a bronze 11-foot propeller blade, are draped with white anemones 300 feet below the surface, officials said. A 6-pound gun is still mounted in a platform at the starboard bow.—AP

## TRACKING INVASIVE SPECIES? FOLLOW THE PEOPLE

**PARIS:** Islands and populated coastal areas are the world's "hotspots" for invasive species, which can upend entire ecosystems and drive local animals and plants to extinction, a study reported. The first global census of non-native fauna and flora found the highest concentrations in Hawaii, New Zealand's North Island, and the Lesser Sunda Islands of Indonesia. The 50th US state is beset with alien species, including rats, feral pigs, and the fire tree, which crowds out indigenous plants, in each of eight categories that include reptiles, fish, ants, spiders, mammals and amphibians.

Disease-bearing mosquitoes that arrived in the early 19th century have wiped out half the island chain's tropical birds, with several other species on the brink. Florida is the top hotspot among mainland regions, boasting a rogues' gallery of invaders: walking catfish, giant iguanas, mammal-crushing pythons, and monster African land snails that gobble up native plants and carry a parasite that causes meningitis in humans. The California coast and northern Australia are also rife with uninvited guests.

The new map of intruder species points unmistakably to how they got there, said Wayne Dawson, a biologist at Durham University in northeastern England and lead author of the study published in Nature Ecology and Evolution. "We have shown that regions with higher human population density, and greater wealth, have more established alien species," he told. Not all living things that take root in foreign soils or waters cause harm. But those that do are among the main drivers, along with habitat loss, hunting for food, pollution and climate change of wildlife decline around the world, experts say.

Creatures that have evolved in isolation may find themselves helpless against unfamiliar predators or pathogens. Forests in

Guam are eerily silent, for example, because the brown tree snake has devoured most of the island's birds (or their eggs) over the last half century. Newcomers often marginalize native species: Asian carp now dominate some US rivers, grey squirrels have replaced red ones in London parks, and kudzu, a perennial vine introduced to the US 150 years ago as an ornamental bush, has crowded out many plants.

### Altered ecosystems

Benign or not, the overwhelming majority of invasive species are brought to new places by humans. Sometimes it happens on purpose, for pest control. But attempts to engineer nature can backfire: plantation owners in Hawaii imported mongooses to eat the rats that had infested sugar cane fields. But rats are nocturnal, and thus continued to thrive. The diurnal mongooses ate ground-nesting birds instead. More often, invasive critters spread by hitching rides with cargo. The deadly Asian hornet is thought to have landed in Europe a dozen years ago in a shipment of pottery from China.

Ballast water in cargo ships pumped in and out of huge tanks to keep vessels balanced is also a major conduit, transporting thousands of aquatic species, including bacteria and viruses, unnoticed across the globe every day. Under the terms of an international treaty going into effect in September, all big ships will be required to have equipment to treat their ballast water. "We are arguably creating a new 'Pangaea,'" said Dawson, referring to the super-continent that joined most of Earth's land masses some 335 million years ago. "The consequences of such a virtual continent are profound: The creation of novel communities with mixtures of species from around the world, altered ecosystems, and extinctions of some species," he said.—AFP

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