

●AFRICA

African free trade zone created

LEADERS have signed off on the African continent's largest free trade zone, which will cover 26 countries between Cape Town and Cairo.

The deal, which was signed in Egypt, is intended to free up movement of goods across its member countries, which collectively represent more than half the continent's GDP.

Currently the poor state of many African roads, railways and airlines is making transportation difficult.

Three existing trade blocs – the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa – are to be united to make one new zone.

●UNITED STATES

30 hurt in Lincoln Tunnel crash

MORE than 30 people have been hurt in a crash in New York's Lincoln Tunnel after a commuter bus rear-ended a tour bus carrying students from Canada.

A spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police said 35 to 40 people on a New Jersey Transit bus were hurt in the crash. The four most seriously injured suffered neck and back injuries. The Fire Department of New York says none of the injuries are considered life-threatening.

A 32-year-old woman also went into labour while stuck in the tunnel.

●BELGIUM

Belgians defy Paris with coins

BELGIUM has begun minting €2.50 coins commemorating the 200th anniversary of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, after France forced it to scrap a €2 coin doing the same.

Belgium did away with 180,000 coins that had already been minted, after Paris said they could cause an "unfavourable reaction in France".

But Belgium has managed to skirt the protests thanks to a rule that allows eurozone countries to issue coins if they are not of a denomination in regular use.

Finance minister Johan Van Overtveldt said: "The goal is not to revive old quarrels. In a modern Europe, there are more important things to sort out."

PROFILE PRISON BREAK

BY SOPHIE MCNAUGHTON

WHAT'S THE STORY?

HUNDREDS of armed police officers in body armour have flooded a small town in New York state in the search for two killers who used power tools to break out of a maximum security prison 30 miles away in Dannemora.

The hunt that began over the weekend is focusing on Willsboro, close to Lake Champlain, in the Adirondack foothills, after residents reported seeing two men walking on a road during a rainstorm. Following the sighting, hundreds of black-clad searchers wearing bulletproof vests worked methodically shoulder-to-shoulder through the hilly woods, fields and swamps, checking every home, garage, shed and outbuilding.

By early evening, it appeared

the sweep had come up empty, and there was no confirmation from the police that the escaped convicts had been there.

Authorities have fielded numerous tips since the breakout at Clinton Correctional Facility, about 20 miles from the Canadian border, but appeared to have

jumped hardest on this one.

David Sweat, 34, and Richard Matt, 48, cut through a steel wall, broke through bricks and crawled through a steam pipe before emerging through a manhole outside the prison grounds, where it is believed they arranged for someone to pick them up.

The inmates were discovered missing from their cells at 5.30am on Saturday after stuffing their beds with clothes to fool prison guards on their



rounds and leaving behind a taunting note which read: "Have a nice day."

Given the meticulous planning that went into this escape, there was speculation that the inmates had arranged for someone on the outside to collect them, providing an explanation for why searchers found no trace of the escapees.

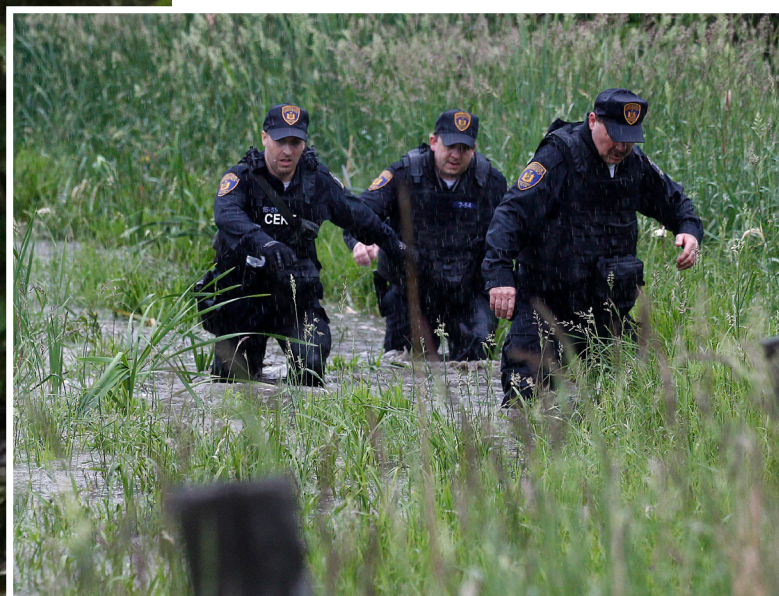
On Monday, authorities said the inmates could be anywhere

– perhaps Canada or Mexico.

Willsboro dairy farmer George Sayward said he saw officers parked next to his barn who told him they were hoping for a possible sighting of the convicts.

Sayward said he heard one officer tell another to call in 100 more men: "The next thing I know, there were a ton of them, by the busload."

State police said more than



Clockwise from main: Officers have been searching outbuildings around the town of Willsboro, 30 miles from the prison at Dannemora; armed teams are also searching woods and swamps; Richard Matt; the note inmates left for guards; the pair used power tools to escape; David Sweat



Obama took Pentagon advice

● **UNITED STATES**

Obama to send 450 troops to Iraq

THE United States will send up to 450 more troops to Iraq to boost the training of local forces, the White House has said.

The move is a response to recent setbacks at the hands of the Islamic State, and Baghdad's appeals for more help.

Under the plan, the number of US training sites in Iraq would increase from four to five, enabling a larger number of Iraqis to join the fight against the Islamist terror group.

Most of the fighters would be Sunni tribal volunteers.

The White House said President Barack Obama made the decision at the request of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and based on advice from Pentagon leaders.

● **CHINA**

Village shooting leaves five dead

FIVE people have died in a shooting in a village in China's northern Hebei province, state media reported.

Two police officers and the suspected gunman were among the dead, with at least three others injured in the incident.

A police statement said Liu Shuangrui, 55, first shot dead two of his neighbours in the rural farming county of Suning with a double-barrelled shotgun before opening fire on police, killing two officers and injuring two more.

He was then shot dead by police at the scene.

Mass shootings are rare in China, as access to firearms is strictly controlled.

A statement by local authorities said Liu had suffered from "long-term schizophrenia".

kidnapping and dismembering his own boss in 1997.

SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

New York governor Andrew Cuomo said: "If it was in a movie script, you would have said it was overdone".

The prison break immediately evoked comparisons to the Shawshank Redemption, the 1994 Hollywood film based on acclaimed author Stephen King's 1982 novella, which tells the story of a convict's escape from prison using a chisel and crawling through a sewage pipe.

Cuomo added: "These are really desperate individuals with long backgrounds and terrible crime. They'll be desperate because they do not want to go back."

The escape has also been compared to historical jailbreaks including the infamous 1962 escape from Alcatraz prison, in which three inmates crafted dummies to fool the prison guards, dug holes in their cells with spoons and built a makeshift raft to flee the island.

The convicts were never to be seen or heard from again.

They were presumed to have drowned in the waters surrounding the island, most likely unable to reach the shore due to strong currents.

"There's an echo of Alcatraz," said Keramet Reiter, a professor of criminology at the University of California.

Reiter added: "But the fact that we can sort of rattle off two or three examples [of prison breaks] that we can remember speaks to how rare these escapes are.

"It's absolutely an aberration

when you look at the numbers."

Only 2 per cent of America's then 780,000 prisoners managed to escape 22 years ago.

But now escapes represent about 1 per cent of the prison population, which has increased dramatically in the past four decades –

from around 300,000 people in 1978 to more than 1.5 million inmates in 2013.

SIMILAR ESCAPE

This action movie-like escape was not the only recent New York prison break. On May 31, an inmate jumped the fence at the Rochester Correctional Facility, but was caught the next day.

A corrections officer sustained serious leg injuries and was hospitalised after falling down stairs while chasing the inmate.

The convict, Chukuma Challenger, had returned to the minimum security prison from a day of work release.

The correctional officer on duty was processing the inmate back in when he suspected the inmate was intoxicated.

After testing Challenger for alcoholic beverages, the officer escorted the inmate towards a secure unit at the facility.

During the escort, Challenger ran and was able to hop a fence and get out of the prison grounds on foot.

At approximately 5am the next morning, the inmate was captured a short distance from the correctional facility.

Challenger was immediately transferred to Wende Correctional Facility, a maximum security prison, in Alden. He is facing felony assault and escape charges.



400 officers were in the area looking for the convicts.

The escape from the 3,000-inmate state prison has raised suspicions the men had help on the inside.

Investigators have been questioning prison staff and outside contractors to try to find out who supplied the inmates with the power tools they used to escape.

Contractors have been doing

renovations at the 170-year-old prison – a massive, castle-like structure that looms over Dannemora's main street.

A \$100,000 (£65,000) reward is being offered in exchange for information leading to the capture of the convicts.

Sweat was convicted in 2002 for killing a sheriff's deputy and was serving a life sentence without parole. Matt was serving 25 years to life for