

THE MARSHALL CENTER

transnational weekly



A CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICE FROM THE MARSHALL CENTER

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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

China Sentences Ex-Finance Chief to Death on Corruption

Bloomberg: 5 January 2021

A former executive at one of China's largest state-controlled asset management firms was sentenced to death for alleged corruption, bigamy and solicitation of \$277 million in bribes.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-05/china-sentences-former-huarong-chairman-to-death-over-bribery>

The crisis within a crisis: COVID-19 and corruption

Hendi Yogi Prabowo – The Jakarta Post: 28 December 2020

Less than two weeks after then-Indonesian Fisheries Minister Edhy Prabowo was arrested on corruption charges in November, then-Social Affairs Minister Juliari Batubara was named a corruption suspect by the Corruption Eradication Commission. These cases raise questions about the effectiveness of the internal control systems within the ministries' inspectorates.

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/12/28/the-crisis-within-a-crisis-covid-19-and-corruption.html>

For more on this theme:

Microsoft initiative will use AI to sniff out bribes, theft and other government corruption

<https://www.geekwire.com/2020/microsoft-initiative-will-use-ai-sniff-bribes-theft-government-corruption/>

Corruption gnawing at the heart of South Africa's ruling ANC party

<https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/focus/20210106-corruption-gnawing-at-the-heart-of-south-africa-s-ruling-anc-party>

Corruption Scandals Stain Bukele's Image Ahead of Key Elections in El Salvador

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29328/corruption-scandals-stain-bukele-s-image-ahead-of-el-salvador-elections>

Odebrecht fined \$50 mn in Colombia over corruption

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201228-odebrecht-fined-50-mn-in-colombia-over-corruption>

Fighting the Good Fight Against Corruption and Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) In Nigeria

<https://gfintegrity.org/fighting-the-good-fight-against-corruption-and-illicit-financial-flows-iffs-in-nigeria/>

Could blockchain technology clean up corruption in the halal industry?

<https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2020/12/25/could-blockchain-technology-clean-up-corruption-in-the-halal-industry>

Mexico probes alleged corruption in COVID-19 vaccine rollout

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-mexico-vaccine/mexico-probes-alleged-corruption-in-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-idUSL4N2JA2EL>

Transparent system of governance in public sector to help reduce corruption — economy ministry

<https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/3166714-transparent-system-of-governance-in-public-sector-to-help-reduce-corruption-economy-ministry.html>

DRUG TRAFFICKING

Hit hard by the pandemic, Mexico's drug cartels tweaked their playbook

Steve Fisher and Kirk Semple – The New York Times: 29 December 2020

The brutal cartels, like legitimate companies, struggled as governments imposed border closures and lockdowns and had to get creative.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/world/americas/mexico-pandemic-drug-trade.html>

In a village of widows, the opium trade has taken a deadly toll

David Zucchino and Najim Rahim – The New York Times: 27 December 2020

Afghan men in an impoverished border settlement die trying to smuggle opium into Iran, leaving behind loved ones forced to survive on their own.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/27/world/asia/afghanistan-iran-opium.html>

For more on this theme:

UN agencies finalize a framework to measure illicit financial flows

<https://unctad.org/news/un-agencies-finalize-framework-measure-illicit-financial-flows>

Under New Bill Pictures Of Drugs Can Be Used In Evidence In Jamaica Courts.

<https://www.thestkittsnevisobserver.com/under-new-bill-pictures-of-drugs-can-be-used-in-evidence-in-jamaica-courts/>

Report: Rise in coke and ice trade

<https://www.fijitimes.com/report-rise-in-coke-and-ice-trade/>

Casinos, COVID or Drugs? Why China Is Building a Fence on Myanmar Border

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/casinos-covid-or-drugs-why-china-building-fence-myanmar-border>

Why Agra is fast turning into a narcotics hub

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/why-agra-is-fast-turning-into-a-narcotics-hub-1755509-2021-01-03>

Gangland 'dial a drug' dealers using Telegram app to flood Scotland with heroin and cocaine

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/gangland-dial-drug-dealers-using-23272808>

DEA: Drug-traffickers are hiring 'smurfs' to do their dirty work

<https://foxsanantonio.com/news/yami-investigates/dea-drug-traffickers-are-hiring-smurfs-to-do-their-dirty-work>

Militant Groups Behind Illegal Drug Trade in Afghanistan: Mol

<https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-168938>

Colombia targets repeat of last year's coca eradication in 2021

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-drugs-idUSKBN2992FQ>

TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Mexico City's Roaring Trade in Wildlife Trafficking

Alessandro Ford – InSight Crime: 4 January 2021

Seizures of rare fauna in the Mexico City area, including the rescue of more than 15,000 animals in a recent operation, raise important questions about the modus operandi of wildlife trafficking in Mexico's capital, long regarded as a key hub for the trade.

<https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/mexico-city-wildlife-trafficking/>

The black-market trade in wildlife has moved online, and the deluge is 'dizzying'

Rene Ebersole – National Geographic: 21 December 2020

Online wildlife trafficking is turning into a prosperous business. Illegal markets selling wildlife such as caracals and servals alongside the exotic horns and hides of other animals have found eager consumers online.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/animals/2020/12/the-black-market-trade-in-wildlife-has-moved-online-and-the-deluge-is-dizzying>

For more on this theme:

Four South American countries prepare to challenge Chinese fishing abuses at COM9

<https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/four-south-american-countries-prepare-to-challenge-chinese-fishing-abuses-at-comm9>

Reptiles Vulnerable To Exotic Pet Trade

<https://theaseanpost.com/article/reptiles-vulnerable-exotic-pet-trade>

Trade in wild animals is thriving online, despite risk of disease transmission

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-12/obu-tiw122220.php

Elephant ivory continues to be disguised and sold on eBay

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-01/uok-eic010421.php

Stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade: The reformed poacher who became a ranger

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/reformed-poacher-ranger-stop-illegal-wildlife-trade-b1764029.html>

Liberia: Communities Use New App to Track Illegal Logging

<https://frontpageafricaonline.com/front-slider/liberia-communities-use-new-app-to-track-illegal-logging/>

Satellite alerts seen helping fight deforestation in Africa

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-climate-forests/satellite-alerts-seen-helping-fight-deforestation-in-africa-idUSKBN2992B6>

Tech helps reduce illegal logging in Sarawak, says Abang Johari

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2020/12/23/tech-helps-reduce-illegal-logging-in-sarawak-says-abang-johari/>

Pandemic drives more people to risk lives in India's illegal mica mines

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-mica-slavery-feature/pandemic-drives-more-people-to-risk-lives-in-indias-illegal-mica-mines-idUSKBN29B03H>

ORGANIZED CRIME

GameChangers 2020: 3 Ways Criminal Groups Overcame Coronavirus

Chris Dalby, Alex Papadovassilakis and Juan Diego Posada – InSight Crime: 29 December 2020

Organized crime groups were thrown for a loop by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether they won or lost in 2020 depended on three variables: preexisting relationships with the state, the diversity of their criminal portfolios, or their hierarchical structures and ability to maintain order and discipline within their own ranks.

<https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/gamechangers-2020-criminal-governance/>

For more on this theme:

GameChangers 2020: Tren de Aragua and the Exportation of Venezuelan Organized Crime

<https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/criminal-winner-tren-de-aragua/>

China's Challenges to Global Democracy

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/chinas-challenges-to-global-democracy/>

Spain dismantles top Russian-speaking organised crime network that had infiltrated public institutions

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/spain-dismantles-top-russian-speaking-organised-crime-network-had-infiltrated-public-institutions>

In Iguala, Mexico, murder and threats by organized crime shut down the news

<https://cpj.org/2020/12/in-iguala-mexico-murder-and-threats-by-organized-crime-shut-down-the-news/>

Organized Crime Emerged in Kosovo After the War, Global Initiative Finds

<https://exit.al/en/2020/12/28/organized-crime-emerged-in-kosovo-after-the-war-global-initiative-finds/>

PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET FREEDOM

In 2020, Covid-19 hit internet freedom

Milana Nikolova – Emerging Europe: 24 December 2020

The coronavirus pandemic is accelerating a dramatic decline in global internet freedom. For the 10th consecutive year, users have experienced an overall deterioration in their rights.

<https://emerging-europe.com/news/in-2020-covid-19-hit-internet-freedom/>

For more on this theme:

(Russia) Russia may block Facebook, YouTube over ‘censorship’

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/russia-may-block-facebook-youtube-over-censorship/2093712>

(India) World’s Worst Internet Shutdowns Cost India \$2.8 Billion in 2020

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-05/world-s-worst-internet-shutdowns-cost-india-2-8-billion-in-2020>

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Shifts in Public Opinion on Internet Privacy (Chart)

Zia Muhammad – Digital Information World: 22 December 2020

Privacy used to be one of the biggest concerns among internet users. But after the turmoil of 2020, people seem less worried about their privacy online.

<https://www.digitalinformationworld.com/2020/12/shifts-in-public-opinion-on-internet.html#>

For more on this theme:

(Global) Great, now even WhatsApp requires data-sharing with Facebook

<https://www.inputmag.com/culture/great-now-even-whatsapp-requires-data-sharing-with-facebook>

(Global) It’s time to accept that disinformation is a cyber security issue

<https://www.computerweekly.com/opinion/Its-time-to-accept-that-disinformation-is-a-cyber-security-issue>

(Turkey) Turkey counts on local initiatives, solutions for cybersecurity

<https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/turkey-counts-on-local-initiatives-solutions-for-cybersecurity/news>

CYBER ATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Cyber attack in Finland hits email accounts of MPs and parliament

Euronews: 28 December 2020

Finland's Parliament was the target of a cyber attack this past autumn, according to a statement released by the parliamentary press office. The attack was detected by Parliament's internal technical surveillance and is now being scrutinized by the National Bureau of Investigation.

<https://www.euronews.com/2020/12/28/cyber-attack-in-finland-hits-email-accounts-of-mps-and-parliament>

For more on this theme:

(U.S., Russia) FBI, CISA, NSA Officially Blame Russia for SolarWinds Cyber Attack

<https://thehackernews.com/2021/01/fbi-cisa-nsa-officially-blames-russia.html>

(Japan) Japanese Companies Fall Victim To Unprecedented Wave of Cyber Attacks

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/japanese-companies-fall-victim-to-unprecedented-wave-of-cyber-attacks/>

(Malaysia) Cyber attack on Armed Forces network detected

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/12/29/cyber-attack-on-armed-forces-network-detected>

CYBER CRIME

International sting shuts down 'favorite' VPN of cybercriminals

Joe Warminsky – CyberScoop: 22 December 2020

The FBI and European police announced the sting against the Safe-Inet service. The VPN company was billed as cyber criminals' favorite by Europol.

<https://www.cyberscoop.com/safe-inet-takedown-fbi-interpol/>

For more on this theme:

(Russia) Cyber crime has cost Russia \$49 bln in 2020, Sberbank says

<https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-sberbank-cyber/cyber-crime-has-cost-russia-49-bln-in-2020-sberbank-says-idUSL8N2J813E>

(India) 'Cyber Yodha' to train people to fight cyber crime launched

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/south/cyber-yodha-to-train-people-to-fight-cyber-crime-launched-932606.html>

(Global) COVID sees 400% surge in cyber crime

<https://itbrief.com.au/story/covid-sees-400-surge-in-cyber-crime>

CYBER PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Prioritising critical infrastructure during a global pandemic

Satya Gupta – Techerati: 6 January 2021

Companies across all critical infrastructure sectors – from energy production to health care to manufacturing – must assume that sophisticated attackers are already inside the network.

<https://www.techerati.com/features-hub/opinions/prioritising-critical-infrastructure-during-a-global-pandemic/>

For more on this theme:

(U.S., Iran) Iranian Cyber Actors Responsible for Website Threatening U.S. Election Officials

<https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/iranian-cyber-actors-responsible-for-website-threatening-us-election-officials>

(U.S.) SolarWinds Hack Infected Critical Infrastructure, Including Power Industry

<https://theintercept.com/2020/12/24/solarwinds-hack-power-infrastructure/>

(U.S.) New cyber defense feed protects government systems in live trial across four states

<https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/94257-new-cyber-defense-feed-protects-government-systems-in-live-trial-across-four-states>

CYBER EXERCISES AND TRAINING

Principles of Effective Cybersecurity Wargames

Peadar Callaghan and Amy Ertan – Info Security Group: 21 December 2020

Simulation exercises allow large groups to practice incident response and bolster resilience, something that benefits training in the private and public sectors.

<https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/next-gen-infosec/principles-of-effective/>

For more on this theme:

(Portugal) Cyberbit Supports Major Multinational Training Simulation Exercise USA

<https://www.prnewswire.com/il/news-releases/cyberbit-supports-major-multinational-training-simulation-exercise-874354825.html>

(Global) G-7 Fundamental Elements of Cyber Exercise Programmes

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g-7-fundamental-elements-of-cyber-exercise-programmes/g-7-fundamental-elements-of-cyber-exercise-programmes>

(U.S.) Training firm offers cybersecurity awareness training for businesses and their employees

<https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/94275-training-firm-offers-cybersecurity-awareness-training-for-businesses-and-their-employees>

PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

'Islamic State': Weakened, but still dangerous

Kersten Knipp – Deutsche Welle: 1 January 2021

ISIS is only a shadow of its former self. The aura of its earlier years is gone; it does not have the organizational or symbolic momentum it had before the so-called caliphate was defeated. Though the group is down, it is not yet out.

<https://www.dw.com/en/islamic-state-weakened-but-still-dangerous/a-56089044>

ISIS and the Crime-Terror Nexus in America: A Counterpoint to Europe

Raphael D. Marcus – Center on National Security: December 2020

The nexus between criminality and terrorism globally is well established. Some of the most devastating ISIS attacks in Europe of the past decade have had links to criminal networks. But what of the crime-terror nexus in the United States?

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b16a000e17ba39f6f3825ba/t/5fdd19304424484a2e229ded/1608325433589/CNS+Crime+Terror+Nexus+Report+December+2020.pdf>

For more on this theme:

ISIL claims deadly Chechnya knife attack

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/1/isil-claims-knife-attack-in-capital-of-russias-chechnya-region>

ISIS Magazine Encourages Terrorists to Try Vehicle Arson, 'Sharpened Pencil' Attacks

<https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/isis-magazine-encourages-terrorists-to-try-vehicle-arson-sharpened-pencil-attacks/>

Islamic State claims responsibility for attack on Pakistan's Shi'ite Hazara minority that kills 11

<https://www.reuters.com/article/pakistan-killings-minority/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-attack-on-pakistans-shiite-hazara-minority-that-kills-11-idUSKBN2980HH>

Erbil worked with Germany, Finland on return of ISIS-linked women and children: KRG

<https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/21122020>

Islamic state claims responsibility for Wednesday's Syria bus attack

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-attack/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-wednesdays-syria-bus-attack-idUSKBN2951H2>

How the Army Out-Innovated the Islamic State's Drones

<https://warontherocks.com/2020/12/how-the-army-out-innovated-the-islamic-states-drones/>

Mozambique's jihadists force Total to suspend gas project

<https://apnews.com/article/international-news-islamic-state-group-mozambique-91fd3cfdfe7f279d-10ccc63deabf5193>

TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Illegal Gold Mining Funding Armed Groups in Sahel: Interpol

Agence France-Presse: 21 December 2020

During a seven-day operation, law enforcement officers intercepted illicit firearms, ammunition and explosives, and disrupted the trafficking networks used to supply terrorists across West Africa and the Sahel.

<https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/12/21/illegal-mining-armed-groups-sahel/>

For more on this theme:

Al Qaeda branch claims responsibility for killing two french soldiers in Mali

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-security-france/al-qaeda-branch-claims-responsibility-for-killing-two-french-soldiers-in-mali-idUSKBN2992LU?il=0>

Somalia's al Shabaab says behind Turkish company attack, four dead

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-somalia-blast/somalias-al-shabaab-says-behind-turkish-company-attack-four-dead-idUKKBN2970CA>

Pakistan arrests alleged militant group leader Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi on terrorism financing charge

<https://www.reuters.com/article/pakistan-arrest-mumbai-idUSKBN2970C0>

Hezbollah-affiliated financial org hacked, information leaked

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/hezbollah-affiliated-financial-org-hacked-information-leaked-653690>

Fire From the Sky: The Afghan Taliban's Drones

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/fire-from-the-sky-the-afghan-talibans-drones/>

RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

Europe Terror: EU Vows to Tackle Extremism as Attacks Continue in 2020

Henry Ridgwell – Voice of America: 30 December 2020

A series of terror attacks on European soil over the course of 2020 prompted the European Union to pledge a crackdown on extremism online and within communities, alongside enhanced security at its borders.

<https://www.voanews.com/europe/europe-terror-eu-vows-tackle-extremism-attacks-continue-2020>

For more on this theme:

To counter terrorism, police to hire de-radicalisation experts

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/to-counter-terrorism-police-to-hire-de-radicalisation-experts-193242>

Isolation could push young people into extremism, police warn

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/isolation-extremism-police-covid-b1777032.html>

Despite best efforts by authorities, youths continue to be radicalised, fall prey to IS ideology

<https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2021/01/05/despite-best-efforts-by-authorities-youths-continue-to-be-radicalised-fall-prey-to-is-ideology.html>

IRREGULAR WARFARE: SOFT POWER

Soft Power and “Positive Propaganda”: How Russia Uses Cultural and Historical Stereotypes to Increase Political Influence

Kseniya Kirillova – The International Centre for Defence and Security: 21 December 2020

Six months ago, Russian pro-government media reported that the government had for the first time allocated funds from the federal budget for the so-called program to counter falsifications and distortions of the history of World War II. The three-year program will be supported by specialized subsidies to promote the Russian version of World War II for domestic and foreign audiences.

<https://icds.ee/en/soft-power-and-positive-propaganda-how-russia-uses-cultural-and-historical-stereotypes-to-increase-political-influence/>

For more on this theme:

Soft power diplomacy of China in shreds amid pandemic

<http://www.businessworld.in/article/Soft-power-diplomacy-of-China-in-shreds-amid-pandemic/26-12-2020-358236/>

IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

EU's Borrell accuses Russia of spreading COVID-19 disinformation to sell its vaccine

Reuters: 28 December 2020

“Western vaccine developers are openly mocked on multi-lingual Russian state-controlled media, which has in some cases led to absurd claims that vaccines will turn people into monkeys,” Josep Borrell, the European Union’s top diplomat, said in a blog post. “Such narratives are apparently directed at countries where Russia wants to sell its own vaccine, Sputnik V,” Borrell added.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-eu-russia/eus-borrell-accuses-russia-of-spreading-covid-19-disinformation-to-sell-its-vaccine-idINL8N2J81IG>

For more on this theme:

Leaked Documents Show How China’s Army of Paid Internet Trolls Helped Censor the Coronavirus

<https://county17.com/2020/12/21/propublica-leaked-documents-show-how-chinas-army-of-paid-internet-trolls/>