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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Corrupt Chinese Officials Filled Missiles With Water, Report Says
Aadil Brar – Newsweek: 8 January 2024

Chinese officials filled missiles with water instead of rocket fuel in one example of pervasive corruption, according to a report on United States intelligence assessments of China’s military.


Albania: Fight against high-level corruption gains traction
Ani Ruci – Deutsche Welle: 4 January 2024

Former Prime Minister Sali Berisha is under house arrest while he is investigated for possible corruption. Is this the end of impunity for corruption at the highest level in Albania?


For more on this theme:

Nigerian president suspends humanitarian minister in corruption scandal

Guatemalan ex-President Perez enters house arrest after 8 years in prison

2023: A Turning Point in Albania’s Fight Against Corruption?

PM or minister, we’ll take action if you are corrupt, says Malaysia’s Anwar
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/even-if-you-are-pm-or-minister-we-will-take-action-if-you-are-corrupt-says-malaysia-s-anwar

Kazakh Anti-Corruption Agency Recovers $120 Million After Investigation Probes

You Can Change the Narrative in Fight against Corruption, ICPC tells Youth Corpers

Xi Jinping to go after ‘ants and flies’ as he intensifies his crackdown on firms

Ukrainian defense minister reveals massive corruption in armed forces
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Belgium Plans Increased Fight Against Drug Trafficking Through EU Ports

The Maritime Executive: 5 January 2024

Belgium intends to prioritize the fight against drug trafficking through major ports in the European Union by expanding efforts to rein in rampant smuggling and corruption.


Cheap and They Don't Snitch: Drones Are the New Drug Mules

Max Daly – Vice: 5 January 2024

Drones are on the rise in the drug trafficking world, with smugglers using them to shift product across borders, into prisons — and soon to a street near you.


For more on this theme:

Jordan strikes Iran-linked drug dealers in Syria — intelligence sources


International forum tackles emerging cyber threats targeting youth by drug traffickers


Ex-Mexico drug czar seeks new U.S. trial after cartel bribery conviction


Why Have Ecuador’s Drug Trafficking Gangs Turned to Extortion?


Panama Canal Drought Impacts Drug Traffickers’ Logistics


Cocaine market sees new players, bananas and Amazon submarines: report


Drug smuggling from Syria threatens regional security

https://www.arabnews.com/node/2435886

Online video games, the latest hunting grounds for drug cartels


Taliban Maintain Poppy Crackdown, U.S. Fears Farmers’ Return to Cultivation

TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Elite appetite turns Bangladesh from source to consumer of tiger parts
Mahadi Al Hasnat – Mongabay: 9 January 2024
Previously a source country for live tigers and their parts, Bangladesh has transformed into both a consumer market and a global transit hub for the illegal trade, a new study shows.

The sound maps that predict poachers' movements
Julían Reingold – BBC: 5 January 2024
Digital monitoring tools are helping rangers protect wildlife in South America’s Atlantic Forest. Could sound-based maps pin down the poaching threat?

For more on this theme:
Philippines condemns China's actions in South China Sea against fishing vessels

Illegal wildlife trade detected on Telegram doubled from 2021 to 2023: Acres
https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/environment/illegal-wildlife-trade-detected-on-telegram-doubled-from-2021-to-2023-acres

Highway slicing through Brazil's Amazon could trigger an explosion of illegal deforestation

Illegal gold mining devastates Peruvian Amazon river and communities

GameChangers 2023: A Win Against Deforestation in the Amazon, For Now

Illegal mining, smuggling threaten Ghana's cocoa industry

Illegal mining on rise again in Amazon, says Yanomami leader

South Africa security forces ramp up clampdown on illegal miners

Guinea Orders Legal Action Over Rosewood Export Fraud
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Frontier AI Regulation: Safeguards Amid Rapid Progress
Markus Anderljung and Anton Korinek – Lawfare: 4 January 2023

Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance efforts should be escalated, integrating strong oversight, transparent reporting requirements and effective risk management of the most advanced AI systems to protect public interests.

https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/frontier-ai-regulation-safeguards-amid-rapid-progress

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) Agencies Exploring AI Use Cases Should Pay Close Attention to Governance
https://fedtechmagazine.com/article/2024/01/agencies-exploring-ai-use-cases-should-pay-close-attention-governance

(Global) A Layered Approach to IG: Cooperation or Crisis!
https://circleid.com/posts/20240108-a-layered-approach-to-ig-cooperation-or-crisis

(Japan) Japan Tells Domestic Tech Sector to Prioritize ‘Human-Centric’ AI Growth

INTERNET FREEDOM

Pakistan Internet Disrupted As Opposition Launches Election Campaign
Agence France Presse: 7 January 2024

Internet and social media services across Pakistan were severely disrupted on January 7 as the party of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan prepared to launch a massive online campaign ahead of elections next month.


For more on this theme:

(Africa) Africa’s internet blackout costs increase fivefold to $1.74 billion
https://www.benjamindada.com/africas-internet-blackout-costs-increased-five-fold-to-1-74-billion/

(Global) Internet Freedom Shrinks, Starting with China and Russia

(Malaysia) Social media giants respond to Malaysia’s rising content restrictions

(India) InternetShutdowns Cost India a Hefty $584 Mn in 2023
CYBER STRATEGY AND RISKS

Africa’s deep think in being an AI leader
The Christian Science Monitor: 8 January 2024

Young people are generating advances in artificial intelligence to ensure Africa is an equal partner in the new digital innovation.


For more on this theme:
(Australia) Uncertainty Is the Biggest Challenge to Australia’s Cyber Security Strategy

(India) India’s Cybersecurity Challenge: Threats and Strategies

(Global) Brazil’s G20 opportunity: A consensus on digital data
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/brazils-g20-opportunity-a-consensus-on-digital-data/

(China) The Dangers of China’s Influence in the Cloud

CYBERATTACKS

NoName Cyberattacks Escalate, Targeting Diverse Sectors in Finland
Samiksha Jain – The Cyber Express: 10 January 2024

The recent wave of distributed denial-of-service attacks has targeted a wide array of critical sectors in Finland.

https://thecyberexpress.com/cyberattack-on-finland-organization/

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) US retail mortgage lender loanDepot struggles with cyberattack

(Europe) European Central Bank set to Stress Test 109 Banks to Assess Cyberattack Response and Recovery

(Russia, Ukraine) Russian hackers infiltrated Ukrainian telecom giant months before cyberattack
https://therecord.media/russians-infiltrated-kyivstar-months-before

(Spain) Major Spanish network provider disrupted by cyberattack
CYBERCRIME

This new cybercrime technique makes it easier for criminals to send fake emails
Sead Fadilpašić – TechRadar: 4 January 2024

Hackers can use a flaw in SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) servers to spoof legitimate email addresses.
https://www.techradar.com/pro/security/this-new-cybercrime-technique-makes-it-easier-for-criminals-to-send-fake-emails

For more on this theme:

(Global) Unifying forces: The synergy of cybersecurity and fraud prevention teams

(U.S.) DOJ to up tempo of cybercrime operations in 2024, senior official says
https://therecord.media/doj-to-increase-cybercrime-efforts

(Global) Survey Finds Most Companies Not Protecting Travelers From Cybercrime
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/survey-finds-most-companies-not-protecting-travelers-from-cybercrime/

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Public-private collaboration is key for water sector cybersecurity
Nick Creath – WaterWorld: 14 December 2023

Threat actors have shifted their focus to the operational technology systems of critical infrastructure providers. Collaborative cybersecurity can help minimize disruptions.
https://www.waterworld.com/water-utility-management/article/14302725/public-private-collaboration-is-key-for-water-sector-cybersecurity

For more on this theme:

(Singapore) Singapore wants datacenters, clouds, regulated like critical infrastructure
https://www.theregister.com/2023/12/20/singapore_proposes_treating_data_centers/

(Global) Energy infrastructure: facing up to the cyber threat

(Russia, Ukraine) Russia Hacked Residential Cameras in Ukraine to Spy on Air Defense, Critical Infrastructure

(Global) In search of a zero trust solution for critical defense infrastructure
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Intelligence assessment raises risk of Hezbollah attack on U.S. soil, personnel abroad
i24NEWS: 11 January 2024
The Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah, with an international network of operatives, reportedly has greater capabilities than the Islamic State group or al-Qaida.

For more on this theme:
CNN correspondent explains why ISIS would want to target Iran

Historic ‘animosity’ between IS group and slain General Soleimani prompted deadly bombings in Iran

Islamic State in Sinai: A Deep Dive on Wilayat Sinai

The Islamic State's High Stakes War in the Philippines
https://thediplomat.com/2023/12/the-islamic-states-high-stakes-war-in-the-philippines/

Trends in Terrorism: What's on the Horizon in 2024?

New Hizb ut-Tahirir Networks Uncovered in Southern India

The Future of Terrorist Use of Improvised Explosive Devices: Getting in Front of an Evolving Threat

Extremist Groups Spread Disinformation Online To Provoke Conflict During Indonesian Election – Analysis

Shabaab says it rejects Red Sea access deal between Ethiopia and Somaliland

Pro-Taliban Media Campaign Highlights Regional Threats to Afghanistan’s Neighbours
https://gnet-research.org/2023/12/22/pro-taliban-media-campaign-highlights-regional-threats-to-afghanistans-neighbours/
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

For more on this theme:

Artificial Intelligence as a Terrorism Enabler? Understanding the Potential Impact of Chatbots and Image Generators on Online Terrorist Activities

Al Shabab shows its reach on land as it ventures into piracy on the high seas

Crackdown on material designed to ‘educate’ future terrorists

Maldives turning out to be leading hub for Islamic radicalization, terrorism, drug trafficking: Sources
https://organiser.org/2024/01/10/215432/world/maldives-turning-out-to-be-leading-hub-for-islamic-radicalization-terrorism-drug-trafficking-sources/

Islamic State announces new global campaign to rally members and supporters

ISRAEL/HAMAS

Is the Middle East on the Verge of a Wider War?
Mona Yacoubian – United States Institute of Peace: 8 January 2024
Three months after the Hamas terror attack on Israel, reverberations from the ensuing conflict in Gaza threaten to engulf the region in a wider war.
https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/01/middle-east-verge-wider-war

For more on this theme:

Israeli strike kills an elite Hezbollah commander in the latest escalation linked to the war in Gaza

Hezbollah hits Israeli base, says it does not want wider war

Uprooting terror infrastructure in Gaza shaping to be long, complex process

Show me their money: Bringing down Hamas through their pockets
https://www.calcalistech.com/ctechnews/article/1qnn6u23m
ISRAEL/HAMAS

For more on this theme:

Israel has a long track record of assassinating its enemies. Will it work against Hamas?

From Houthis to Hezbollah, a look at the Iran-allied groups rallying to arms around Middle East
https://apnews.com/article/hamas-hezbollah-houthis-iran-militant-groups-745bfc36e23997ee3f0b-c499a9f5c16d

Hamas Terrorism Isn't 'Self-Defense' Against 'Occupiers' – OpEd

Can Targeted Assassinations Win the War for Israel?
https://time.com/6552144/israel-assassination-hamas-strategy/

Israel-Hamas war threatens global shipping as risk of wider conflict intensifies

Is Israel Winning the War on the Tunnels in Gaza?
https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/01/06/israel-hamas-war-gaza-tunnel-networks-ground-campaign/

History Tells Us How the Israel-Hamas War Will End
https://time.com/6549715/history-israel-hamas-war-end/

EU, US warn against Israel-Hamas war expanding into regional conflict
https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-diplomat-josep-borrell-lebanon-israel-hamas-war/

How mental health experts are handling the Israel-Hamas war's lasting impact on children
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-mental-health-experts-are-handling-the-israel-hamas-wars-lasting-impact-on-children

UN Experts Demand Accountability for Sexual Torture During Hamas’ Terror Attack on Israel
https://www.voanews.com/a/7431230.html

SKorea’s Spy Agency: Hamas Used North Korean Weapons Against Israel

Hamas Still Operates in the West Bank. What is Israel Doing About It?

Israel-Palestinian bitterness deepened by Hamas attack and war

China’s Game in Gaza
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-game-gaza
ISRAEL/HAMAS

For more on this theme:

Hamas using top-grade Chinese weapons in Gaza, including assault rifles and grenade launchers, says Israel

Europe rattled by Israel-Hamas war
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/commentary/2024/01/09/world/europe-israel-hamas-war/

Evaluating Social Media’s Role in the Israel-Hamas War

How the term “genocide” is misused in the Israel-Hamas war

Israel and Palestine as it Stands: An Analysis
https://theatlasnews.co/analysis/2024/01/04/israel-and-palestine-as-it-stands-an-analysis/

The Promise and Risk of South Africa’s Case Against Israel

Israel intelligence analysis failure underestimating Hamas capabilities
https://lansinginstitute.org/2024/01/10/israel-intelligence-analysis-failure-underestimating-hamas-capabilities/

Many ideas, but little agreement, over what a postwar Gaza could look like
https://www.npr.org/2024/01/06/1223086658/gaza-governance-israel-hamas-palestinian-authority-voluntary-migration

Is China Benefiting From Instability In The Middle East? – Analysis

The October 7 Massacre And The War In Gaza: Impact On Bahrain And The United Arab Emirates – Analysis

‘Rules of War’ are Complicated, not only in Gaza
https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column/opinion/rules-of-war-are-complicated-not-only-in-gaza

Why the ICJ Cannot Order Israel to Stop the War in Gaza as a Provisional Measure

After 3 months of devastation in the Israel-Hamas war, is anyone ‘winning’?
https://theconversation.com/after-3-months-of-devastation-in-the-israel-hamas-war-is-anyone-winning-220644

The Language of Soviet Propaganda
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Russia Enters Third Year of War Diminished, Degraded, and Joyless
Pavel K. Baev – The Jamestown Foundation: 8 January 2024

Despite putting on a strong front, Russian President Vladimir Putin increasingly struggles to shield the failure to achieve any progress in Russia’s most recent offensive in Ukraine from the domestic population and likely will see even more failures this year.

For more on this theme:

The New Year Brings Greater Censorship and Repression in Russia

Despite Moscow’s Bravado, Russia Faces Mounting Problems With Oil and Gas Exports

U.S. Sanctions Hamper Russia’s LNG Strategy in the Arctic

Ukraine: It’s Not ‘Retaliation’ When You’re Fighting for National Survival
https://cepa.org/article/ukraine-its-not-retaliation-when-youre-fighting-for-national-survival/

Crypto Boosts Ukraine — and Russia
https://cepa.org/article/crypto-boosts-ukraine-and-russia/

Recapping “Cyber in War: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict”

Testing European Unity on Ukraine
https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/01/testing-european-unity-on-ukraine/

Explainer: Ukraine considers changing mobilisation rules as war with Russia drags on

Ukraine War Maps Show Ground Won, Lost Amid Fears of New Russian Push

How strong is Russian public support for the invasion of Ukraine?

Interview: Russia Bets It Can ‘Outlast The Attention Span Of The West’ To Defeat Ukraine

Putin’s Long Shadow in the Balkans

Remarks at a U.N. Security Council Briefing on Ukraine
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Deported Ukrainian children sent to ‘survival training’ with Belarus military

Russia’s State TV Shows Off Chinese Tech Inside Tanks Bound for Ukraine

Crimea: Can Ukraine Retake This Occupied Land from the Russian Military?
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/crimea-can-ukraine-retake-occupied-land-russian-military-208435

Ukraine should pivot from offense to defense and rebuild what it controls, expert says

Russia’s winter onslaught tests Ukraine’s firepower

Russia is using North Korean missiles in Ukraine, U.S. says. That’s bad news for Asia

Ukraine is on the front lines of global cyber security
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraine-is-on-the-front-lines-of-global-cyber-security/

Russian revanchism must be defeated in Ukraine
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/commentary/2024/01/04/world/defeat-russian-revanchism-ukraine/  

Neutrality After Russian Invasion Of Ukraine: Example Of Switzerland And Some Lessons For Ukraine — Analysis

The case for a new Ukrainian Constitution
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/the-case-for-a-new-ukrainian-constitution/  

Russia: The Continuing Rehabilitation of Stalin

A central bank’s voice rising above the roar of gunfire
https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/central-banks-voice-rising-above-roar-gunfire

Ukraine recap: Zelensky's defiant new year speech foreshadows tough 2024 as government tightens conscription laws

NATO Shelves Cold War-Era Treaty Limiting Military Buildup In Europe After Russia Withdraws — Analysis