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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Corruption Perceptions Index
Transparency International: January 2024
The 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows that corruption is thriving across the world. The CPI ranks 180 countries and territories around the globe by their perceived levels of public sector corruption.

CPI 2023: Corruption and (in)justice
Roberto Martinez B. Kukutschka – Transparency International: 30 January 2024
Corruption and justice are closely linked: Where justice prevails, there is little room for corruption, but where corruption thrives, it throws the scales of justice out of balance.

For more on this theme:
Malaysian anti-corruption agency asks another Mahathir son to declare assets as probe expands

Pakistan’s Imran Khan and His Wife Sentenced to 14 Years in Prison on Corruption Charges

Japan PM Kishida is fighting a party corruption scandal. Here’s a look at what it’s about
https://apnews.com/article/japan-politics-kishida-party-scandal-corruption-9a24f47e73552422a1a41a1f537e0760

Ukraine says it uncovered $40 million corruption scheme in weapons procurement

Cultivating gender equality could cut corruption, research suggests

Video: Why can't Indonesia solve the problem of corruption?
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-25/political-dynasties-have-long-ruled-indonesia-%E2%80%93/103387412

Why is Bangladesh so weak at fighting corruption?
https://www.tbsnews.net/features/panorama/why-bangladesh-so-weak-fighting-corruption-779666

He Hunted Corrupt Chinese Officials. Now He’s Set to Be Foreign Minister.
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Drug-fueled organized crime in Ecuador, reaches new levels
Jorge Valencia – NPR: 28 January 2024

Organized drug gangs are threatening to consume Ecuador in some of the worst violence seen in years. How did it get this bad and what are the government’s options?

For more on this theme:

AI monitoring system targets illegal drug sales online
https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2024/01/113_366822.html

Record Amount of Cocaine Smuggled Through Belgian Ports in 2023

Mining Industry Sees a Way to Navigate Narco Crisis in Ecuador

Drugs on the front line
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/ukraine-synthetic-drugs-ocindex/

Record Seizures in Bolivia Suggest Growing Role in Cocaine Exports

Record Cocarine Seizure Blow to Ecuador’s Gangs

Threats to a governor put spotlight on drug trafficking violence in Argentina

Germany calls for more global action against drug smugglers

How smuggling gangs use drones to deliver drugs across the border

Fentanyl Boom Fails to Lower Cocaine Demand

A Belgian port seized tons of cocaine. Criminals tried to take it back

Cocaine washes up on beaches across Sydney as police warn of growing drug trade

No end to Bengaluru’s battle with drugs
https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/no-end-to-bengalurus-battle-with-drugs-2856972
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Brazili intercepts illegal flight over Indigenous land invaded by gold miners
Reuters: 30 January 2024

The Brazilian Air Force said it fired warning shots at a plane and forced it to land for violating a no-fly ban over the Yanomami Indigenous reservation.


For more on this theme:

New network aims to stop wildlife trafficking, care for animals
https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-east/animals/2024/01/30/new-network-aims-to-stop-wildlife-trafficking-care-for-animals-

Opinion: Peru's revised forestry law will undermine citizens' human rights

Illegal logging a danger to forestry industry: Chibamba

NGA seeks ideas for using data to predict illegal fishing

Temperatures rising: Illegal and unregulated fisheries, climate change, and armed conflict at sea

Brazil indigenous group report: government efforts to improve Yanomami living conditions and stop illegal mining are ‘insufficient’

Illegal miners blow up high-voltage tower at Peru’s Poderosa

Military involvement in reining in illegal mining successful – Modise
ORGANIZED CRIME

Violence and organized crime, the great challenges for development in Latin America and the Caribbean
Carlos Felipe Jaramillo – The World Bank: 30 January 2024

The region has 9% of the global population and one-third of the world’s total deaths by homicide.


For more on this theme:

'Significant' money laundering through property market
https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/significant-money-laundering-property-market.1079268

Organised crime may be profiting from student loan fraud worth £60m – report
https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/jan/18/organised-may-be-profiting-from-student-loan-worth-60m-report

Intelligence-led investigations can curb Ethiopia's kidnappings
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/intelligence-led-investigations-can-curb-ethiopias-kidnappings

Why Ecuador's Criminal Organizations Can Pose a 'Formidable Challenge' to the Government

The deep roots of Latin America’s organized crime problem
https://brazilian.report/opinion/2024/01/24/latin-america-organized-crime-problem/

The internationalization of organized crime in Brazil
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-internationalization-of-organized-crime-in-brazil/

Criminal Organisations Party to an Armed Conflict and the Question of Targeting
https://lieber.westpoint.edu/criminal-organisations-party-armed-conflict-question-targeting/

Chinese crime and geopolitics in 2024

Organized crime and the role of women in criminal networks in focus at OSCE lecture
https://www.osce.org/secretariat/562209

Interview: Technology ‘supercharging illicit economies’ in Southeast Asia

Countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Vow to Combat Transnational Crime

Venezuela 2024: Elections and Criminal Consolidation
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Effective AI regulation requires understanding general-purpose AI
Aylin Caliskan and Kristian Lum – Brookings: 29 January 2024
The latest generation of AI models are more general-purpose than previous generations, creating challenges for regulation.
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/effective-ai-regulation-requires-understanding-general-purpose-ai/

For more on this theme:
(Global) It takes a village to regulate AI
(Russia) Another Brick In The Great Kremlin Firewall: Mass Internet Outages Part Of ‘Sovereign Internet’
(India) Govt seeks ideas to push AI-driven e-governance

INTERNET FREEDOM

Europe sanctions Russian internet censorship agency and its leader
Daryna Antoniuk – The Record: 29 January 2024
The European Council said the para-governmental organization called the Safe Internet League “aids the Russian government in enforcing censorship practices.”
https://therecord.media/europe-russia-internet-censorship-sanctions

For more on this theme:
(Turkey) Turkey: Internet censorship before local elections
(Russia) Russia further ramps up internet censorship
https://www.computing.co.uk/news/4165619/russia-ramps-internet-censorship
(China) Chinese controls ‘more efficient’ as country marks 30 years online
(Kenya) Kenya lost $27m during Telegram shutdown in 2023
https://www.theafrican.co.ke/tea/business/kenya-lost-27m-during-telegram-shutdown-in-2023-4490520
CYBER STRATEGY AND RISKS

The State of Cyber Defense Cooperation in ASEAN
Gavin Harris – Real Clear Defense: 31 January 2024

To address the severe threats to their economies and critical infrastructure, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) must strengthen the ASEAN Cyber Defense Network and continue to integrate their military cyber defense agencies.

https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2024/01/31/the_state_of_cyber_defense_cooperation_in_asean_1008628.html

For more on this theme:

(Canada, Philippines) Canada, PH to work together vs cybersecurity threat

(Nepal) Empowering Nepal's Digital Economy: The Role of Data Centers and Cloud Services and the Stakeholder Perspectives

(Israel) Israel must double down on cyber in time of crisis
https://www.calcalistech.com/ctechnews/article/rkz9instk

(Israel) How a Group of Israel-Linked Hackers Has Pushed the Limits of Cyberwar
https://www.wired.com/story/predatory-sparrow-cyberattack-timeline/

CYBERATTACKS

Cyber ‘Kidnapping’ Scams Target Chinese Students
Voice of America: 15 January 2024

Criminals are targeting students around the world and pretending to kidnap them.


For more on this theme:

(Cuba) Cuba delays Feb. 1 fuel price hike, cites cyberattack

(U.S.) Cyberattacks on state and local governments rose in 2023, says CIS report

(Ukraine) Ukraine's prisoners of war agency hit by cyberattack
https://therecord.media/ukraine-claims-cyberattack-on-russia-s-defence-ministry

(Ukraine, Russia) Ukraine Claims Cyberattack On Russia's Defence Ministry
CYBERCRIME

**UN Cybercrime Convention: Time Is Running Out to Address Draft’s Urgent Risks to Human Rights**
*Maria Paz Canales – CircleID: 22 January 2024*

Soon, final negotiations will begin on a document that has elicited widespread concern from civil society, industry groups and some states due to the serious risks it poses to privacy and the freedom of expression.


*For more on this theme:*

(Vietnam) Vietnam Law Enforcement to Tackle Growing Cybercrime

(Nigeria) Tinubu tasks EFCC to sustain fight against internet crimes
https://blueprint.ng/tinubu-tasks-efcc-to-sustain-fight-against-internet-crimes/

(Global) Generative AI is the Pride of Cybercrime Services
https://blog.checkpoint.com/research/generative-ai-is-the-pride-of-cybercrime-services/

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

**US Disrupted Chinese Hacking Operation Aimed at Critical Infrastructure: Report**
*Eduard Kovacs – Security Week: 30 January 2024*

The U.S. disabled parts of a botnet-powered cyber campaign conducted by the threat actor Volt Typhoon.


*For more on this theme:*

(Global) Guarding the Gates: A Look at Critical Infrastructure Security in 2024

(Global) Unprecedented surge in critical infrastructure cyberattacks

(U.S.) Veolia’s Municipal Water division suffers ransomware cyberattack

(U.S., China) FBI: China seeks to ‘wreak havoc’ by targeting US water, electricity
**TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD**

**Islamic State Trying to Rise Under the Radar**  
*Jeff Seldin – Voice of America: 31 January 2024*

The Islamic State group is pushing a new campaign it says is focused on killing the group’s enemies wherever they can be found.  

*For more on this theme:*

**US warned Iran that ISIS-K was preparing attack ahead of deadly Kerman blasts, a US official says**  
[https://apnews.com/article/kerman-us-warning-isis-k-bombings-bcb47f04165b3eb7b9bc7b-4868c8399c](https://apnews.com/article/kerman-us-warning-isis-k-bombings-bcb47f04165b3eb7b9bc7b-4868c8399c)

**US Sanctions Two ISIS-Affiliated ‘Cybersecurity Experts’**  

**Unveiling the Motivations: Tajik ISKP’s Calculated Strikes on Iran**  
[https://thediplomat.com/2024/01/unveiling-the-motivations-tajik-iskps-calculated-strikes-on-iran/](https://thediplomat.com/2024/01/unveiling-the-motivations-tajik-iskps-calculated-strikes-on-iran/)

**Iran’s Connection To Hamas, Hezbollah, The Houthis — And Now 3 U.S. Soldier Deaths**  

**US takes aim at IRGC and Hezbollah financial networks with new sanctions**  

**Unraveling Extremism In Pakistan: Historical Roots And Contemporary Evaluation – OpEd**  

**The pragmatic approach to counter international terrorism**  

**We all have a role in fighting violent extremism**  
[https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/we-all-have-a-role-in-fighting-violent-extremism-4490954](https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/we-all-have-a-role-in-fighting-violent-extremism-4490954)

**Behind the Dangerous Resurgence of ‘Al Qaeda’ in Bangladesh**  

**Beyond Boko Haram: Bandits rise as Nigeria’s new terror threat**  
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

For more on this theme:

Afghan Journalist Detained In Taliban’s Continued Crackdown On Independent Media
https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-taliban-journalist-detained/32787205.html

The Plight of Hazaras Under the Taliban Government

Africa now ‘global epicentre’ of terrorism: UN chief

Terrorists from Tajikistan have become a global menace
https://globalvoices.org/2024/01/22/terrorists-from-tajikistan-have-become-a-global-menace/

Hizb ut-Tahrir proscribed as terrorist organization

UNGA President calls on international community to redouble efforts to eliminate global terrorism

Israel–Hamas War’s Impact on Afghan and Pakistani Jihadist Ecosystem

Al Qaeda opens 8 new training camps, 5 madrasas, and a facilitation network to Iran in Afghanistan

A predictive AI-model developed to detect extremist users and ISIS-related content on X

While Small in Number, Tajik Fighters an Asset for Islamic State-Khorasan

The Islamic State in Khorasan between Taliban counter-terrorism and resurgence prospects

West Africa: The New “Epicenter” of Global Terrorism?

TTP backed by Al Qaeda, Afghan Taliban: UN
ISRAEL/HAMAS

Top UN court orders Israel to prevent genocide in Gaza but stops short of ordering cease-fire

Ike Corder and Raf Casert – The Associated Press: 26 January 2024

The United Nations’ top court ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza, but the panel stopped short of ordering an end to the military offensive.

https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-genocide-court-south-africa-27cf84e16082cde-798395a95e9143c06

For more on this theme:

The Gaza War and the Danger of Extremism
https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/91464

Governing Gaza After the War: The Israeli Perspectives
https://carnegieendowment.org/2024/02/01/governing-gaza-after-war-israeli-perspectives-pub-91515

Pressure mounts on Israeli government to secure a deal to free hostages

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-745bfc36e23997ee3f0bc499a9f-5c16d

How the Houthis joined the Israel-Gaza crisis
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-the-houthis-joined-the-israel-gaza-crisis/

What is Hamas and why is it fighting with Israel in Gaza?

Israel and Lebanon are prepping for a war neither wants, but many fear it’s becoming inevitable
https://apnews.com/article/israel-lebanon-hezbollah-war-preparedness-civilians-military-aafd7a0048dceb-810456b93ceecf543c

As Israel and Hezbollah fight heats up, France takes on role of mediator

Iran’s Regional Armed Network
https://www.cfr.org/article/irans-regional-armed-network

Document spells out allegations against 12 UN employees Israel says participated in Hamas attack
https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-01-29-2024-4c49c2fb89c3bfd4963f2260b34943c1
ISRAEL/HAMAS

For more on this theme:

What Is UNRWA, Aid Provider in Gaza Accused of Militant Links?

Analysis: Is Israel winning the war against Hamas?
https://abcnews.go.com/International/analysis-is-israel-winning-war-hamas/story?id=106795525

Israel vows to fight Hamas all the way to Gaza's southern border. That's fueling tension with Egypt
https://apnews.com/article/israel-egypt-gaza-war-border-philadelphia-corridor-2b8c101ef0cb591552e264f-11b1e99f8

Qatar's prime minister warns an intolerable Gaza situation poses regional risk

Israel-Palestinian conflict: what is the two-state solution and what are the obstacles?

Video shows why it's so hard for Israel to drive Hamas out of Gaza

Rage in Gaza isn't directed only at Israel. Some are angry with Hamas too

Points of Clarity | Is the Israel-Hamas War Already Becoming a Wider Conflict?
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/video/points-clarity-israel-hamas-war-already-becoming-wider-conflict

Understanding the Economic Ramifications of the Hamas-Israel War on Israel
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/video/understanding-economic-ramifications-hamas-israel-war-israel

U.K. mulls recognizing a Palestinian state to advance two-state solution, defuse Israel-Hamas war

Antisemitic acts have risen sharply in Belgium and France since the Israel-Hamas war began
https://apnews.com/article/belgium-antisemitism-israel-hamas-war-holocaust-denial-5ff82ca75a001304fc-1838bad023e0c7

At least half of Gaza's buildings damaged or destroyed, new analysis shows

How China Is Leveraging the Israel-Hamas War
https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/01/31/china-israel-hamas-global-south-us-foreign-policy/

What is Russia's role in the Israel-Gaza crisis?
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-is-russias-role-in-the-israel-gaza-crisis/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

A midwinter update on Ukraine
Constanze Stelzenmüller – Brookings: 26 January 2024

With the second anniversary of Russia’s invasion approaching and the European continent in the grip of deep winter, the Kremlin is redoubling its attacks against Ukraine on land and from the skies.
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-midwinter-update-on-ukraine/

For more on this theme:

Anti-War Presidential Bid Causes Headache for Kremlin
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91498

Ukraine: Digital resilience in a time of war

Russia's Oil Industry Threatened by Ukrainian Drones, Western Sanctions
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91473

Top UN Court Gives Mixed Ruling On Kyiv’s Terrorism-Financing Case Against Russia

Wartime Ukraine’s Election Dilemma
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/wartime-ukraines-election-dilemma

Baltic States' Contributions to Ukraine
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/baltic-states-contributions-ukraine

What Ukraine Needs to Win
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/video/what-ukraine-needs-win

Ukraine’s strikes on targets inside Russia hurt Putin’s efforts to show the war isn’t hitting home
https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-attacks-putin-belgorod-b6dcf1f4bc00d-3967c5fe038f8dd281

Russia and Ukraine swap scores of POWs despite tensions over a plane crash last week
https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-pows-a1d16692f4eb423335a4cf4eae1d969

‘We are obliged to end the war’: A new Russian unit fights for Ukraine

As Ukraine seeks to replenish its depleted army, a divide grows among its civilians
https://www.npr.org/2024/01/31/1226251649/ukraine-russia-war-conscription-military

This is how the Ukrainian and Russian armies compare on the battlefield now

War in Ukraine Has Weakened Putin, C.I.A. Director Writes
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Ukrainian Drones Are Obstructing The New Russian Offensive

Putin Falsely Claims ’De-Nazification’ of Ukraine as Pretext for War

Russia lawmakers pass bill to confiscate assets of those who discredit army

Robots Are Fighting Robots in Russia’s War in Ukraine

How the Ukraine war ramped up Russia’s reliance on nuclear weapons

Ukraine War, Economic Uncertainty Cause Russia’s Birth Rate to Plunge

Flashpoint Ukraine: The Role of Gender in Russia’s War on Ukraine

‘Sign of the times’: Ukraine laments UN court’s ‘toothless’ ruling against Russia

NATO Chief Urges Allies to Continue Funding Ukraine’s Defense Needs

How Many People Have Died in Russia-Ukraine War?

Hold, Build, and Strike: A Vision for Rebuilding Ukraine's Advantage in 2024

Why Ukraine Is Not a Universal Resistance Model
https://warontherocks.com/2024/02/why-ukraine-is-not-a-universal-resistance-model/

The Jus ad Bellum Aspects of the Russian War in Ukraine
https://lieber.westpoint.edu/jus-ad-bellum-aspects-russian-war-ukraine/

Ukraine war has changed Britain’s relationship with the EU
https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-war-has-changed britains-relationship-with-the-eu/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Russia is spending so much invading Ukraine that the war is actually good for its economy now
https://qz.com/russian-ukraine-invasion-sanctions-war-international-mo-1851208999

Slovak Vote Shows Need for NATO Action on Russian Disinformation
https://cepa.org/article/slovak-vote-shows-need-for-nato-action-on-russian-disinformation/

Russia's Future? Look to its Literature
https://cepa.org/article/russias-future-look-to-its-literature/

Containing Russia, Securing Europe
https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/containing-russia-securing-europe/

Seizures: Kremlin Assets
https://cepa.org/article/seizures-kremlin-assets/

Strong European backing for Ukraine leaves ‘little space' for exploitation of pro-Russian politics, study shows

A Western-imposed peace deal in Ukraine risks feeding Russia’s hunger for land – as it did with Serbia

Ukraine war: Political affairs chief warns against rhetoric fuelling ‘already dangerous conflict'

Russia's War Against Ukraine: Lessons Learned in 2023 and 2024 Outlook

Russia Faces Spike in Crime and Alcoholism as War Nears Two-Year Mark

Russian Siren Song of Peace and Baltic Warnings of War

Kyiv Raises Stakes by Expanding Appeals to Ukrainian ‘Wedges' Inside Russia

Moscow Alarmed by Kyiv's Increased Interest in Ethnic Ukrainians Across Russia