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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

In one nation’s battle with corruption, more than an ounce of prevention
The Christian Science Monitor: 3 February 2022

Indonesia’s frustration with corruption has led the government to focus more on reinforcing virtues such as honesty and accountability than on trying to capture and punish corrupt actors. One result: Its ranking on a corruption index improved last year.


Interview With Dashdavaa Zandraa, Mongolia’s Anti-Corruption Chief
Bolor Lkhaajav – The Diplomat: 4 February 2022

“Fighting corruption is more about eliminating the conditions that create corruption than about corrupt officials,” says the director-general of Mongolia’s Independent Authority Against Corruption.

https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/interview-with-dashdavaa-zandraa-mongolias-anti-corruption-chief/

For more on this theme:

Former top Chinese anti-graft inspector gets suspended death sentence for corruption

Jail Term for Former Liberian Defense Minister Offers Ray of Hope to Anti-Corruption Forces in Africa

Honduras: Poor, violent and corrupt

Report: Demand for Rosewood Fosters Corruption Across West Africa

Corruption in Tajikistan is ‘systemic’

UN envoy proposes freezing assets of Afghanistan’s corrupt ex-officials

US, Nigerian religious leaders partner to fight corruption
https://dailypost.ng/2022/01/30/us-nigerian-religious-leaders-partner-to-fight-corruption/

US Reveals Former Honduras President’s Place on Central America Corruption List
https://insightcrime.org/news/us-honduras-former-president-corruption-list/
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Liquid Cocaine - a Rising Trend Among Colombia’s Traffickers
Maria Fernanda Ramirez – InSight Crime: 9 February 2022

As Colombian traffickers and police continually try to outfox each other, liquid cocaine has returned as an increasingly popular method for smuggling drugs.


Colombia launches new strategy to tackle drug trade
Luis Jaime Acosta – Reuters: 3 February 2022

Colombia has launched a new strategy to fight drug trafficking, aiming to control cyberspace to tackle criminal groups involved in the cocaine trade, as well as block their financial transactions, Defense Minister Diego Molano said.


For more on this theme:

Montenegro Port Tightens Rules to Curb Drug Smuggling

Synthetic Drugs are Different, Our Response Must be Too
https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/synthetic-drugs-are-different-our-response-must-be-too

A New Drug That Contains Meth and Heroin Is on the Rise in Afghanistan

Narcotrafficking in Brazil Speeds Up Amazon Rainforest Destruction and Increases Violence

Are Arrests of Venezuela Officials Simply For Show?

Government commission: Synthetic drug trafficking a ‘national security’ emergency

‘Laced cocaine’ tragedy exposes reality of post-pandemic drug trade in Argentina

Bolivia Anti-Drug Chief Target of Both Bolivia and United States

Anti-drug judge shot dead in southern Iraq
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/06022022

Guinea-Bissau: Are drug cartels behind the attempted coup?
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Despite crackdown, ‘demand keeps China’ on wildlife smuggling map
Holly Chik – The Star: 4 February 2022

China will continue to be a major destination for the illegal wildlife trade because of the demand for such products, particularly for traditional Chinese medicine, according to The Hague-based Wildlife Justice Commission.


For more on this theme:

Mexican town protects forest from avocado growers and cartels
https://apnews.com/article/business-world-news-mountains-mexico-caribbean-32a4508534bfff00cf-341119de733d5d

Vietnam’s timber legality program not making a dent in risky wood imports

As China replants its own forests, it is destroying the world’s
https://hongkongfp.com/2022/01/30/as-china-replants-its-own-forests-it-is-destroying-the-worlds/

Maritime conflict heats up as China’s fishing fleet goes dark in Argentine waters

An Indo-Pacific test case: Tackling illegal fishing with counternarcotics tactics
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/01/an-indo-pacific-test-case-tackling-illegal-fishing-with-counternarcotics-tactics/

Illegal overfishing by Chinese trawlers leaves Sierra Leone locals ‘starving’

Poachers target SA’s private game reserves

Demand for sea cucumbers turns India-Sri Lanka waters into trafficking hotspot

In Colombia, Escobar’s hippos spawn another problem: Wildlife trafficking

Preventing the next pandemic is vastly cheaper than reacting to it: Study
https://news.mongabay.com/2022/02/preventing-the-next-pandemic-is-vastly-cheaper-than-reacting-to-it-study/
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Cryptocurrencies Facilitate an Already Murky Human Trafficking Problem
Alexandra Kelley – Nextgov: 9 February 2022

A U.S. House committee hearing highlighted the problematic combination of virtual currencies and a lack of data surrounding human trafficking in the U.S.


Full report:

Human and Drug Trafficking: Actions Needed to Address Gaps in Federal Data to Counter Illicit Activities

For more on this theme:

How IT can help fight human trafficking

InfraGard National Members Alliance and NEC Corporation of America Join Forces in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

Homeland Security eyes robot dogs to patrol the southern border
https://techcrunch.com/2022/02/02/homeland-security-eyes-robot-dogs-to-patrol-the-southern-border/

Frontex Launches New Operation at EU Land Borders

Powerful Guatemalan Family Busted for Smuggling Migrants Who Ended Up Dead

Morocco: Mining tunnels along Algeria border used for irregular migration
https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220201-morocco-mining-tunnels-along-algeria-border-used-for-irregular-migration/

Raid against Sumatran official uncovers use of slave labor on oil palm farm
https://news.mongabay.com/2022/01/raid-against-sumatran-official-uncovers-use-of-slave-labor-on-oil-palm-farm/
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE
About Those Facebook Ads Calling for More Internet Regulation
Will Duffield – National Review: 7 February 2022
Social-media giant Facebook is making a case for some rather self-serving new rules.
https://www.nationalreview.com/2022/02/about-those-facebook-ads-calling-for-more-internet-regulation/

For more on this theme:
(Global) Metaverse security: How to learn from Internet 2.0 mistakes and build safe virtual worlds

(Global) 14 experts say how the net's worst problems could be solved by 2035

(Global) What is Web 3 and why will it affect the way everyone interacts on the internet?
https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/money/web-3-next-generation-internet-26161096

INTERNET FREEDOM
Peng Shuai Tells the West She Is Safe. But Her Name Is Still Censored for Chinese People.
Viola Zhou and Alan Wong – VICE: 7 February 2022
Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai’s denial of her previous sexual assault allegation is nowhere to be found on the Chinese internet.

For more on this theme:
(Kazakhstan) How Kazakhstan's control of information can turn into a regime weakness
https://www.openglobalrights.org/how-kazakhstans-control-of-information-can-turn-into-a-regime-weakness/

(Russia) Content Moderation Case Study: Russia Slows Down Access To Twitter As New Form Of Censorship (2021)

(Global) Watchdog group pushes Google, YouTube parent company for government censorship requests
CYBER PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Reviewing the UK's New Cybersecurity Strategy
James Coker – Infosecurity Magazine: 2 February 2022

The United Kingdom has launched its first cybersecurity strategy. It focuses on enhancing the security of the nation’s public services to reduce the risk of shutdown by hostile actors.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Tired: Breaking Up Big Tech. WIRED: Opening it Up
https://www.wired.co.uk/article/big-tech-open-data

(Europe) The EU is on the Cusp of Banning Personalized Ads, While Campaigners Deliberately Ignore the Costs to European Businesses

(U.S.) Building the Cybersecurity Workforce America Needs
https://www.nextgov.com/ideas/2022/02/building-cybersecurity-workforce-america-needs/361514/

CYBERCRIME

Opening Forensic Labs, Training Sleuths, Hiring Consultants: Centre Reboots India's Cybercrime Fight
News 9 : 18 February 2022

While India is rapidly going digital in most spheres and the number of internet users is soaring, cyberthreats are also growing. To combat the situation, the Ministry of Home Affairs is strengthening a mechanism to deal decisively with virtual crimes.


For more on this theme:

(U.S., Philippines) Improved cybercrime policies seen from BAP, DOJ pact
https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1167064

(U.S.) How ransomware attacks on 23 Texas sites changed the way cyber criminals operate

(India) Timely reporting helps cops solve three cyber crimes

(Global) Out-of-Control Cybercrime Will Cause More Real-World Harm
https://www.wired.com/story/cyber-criminals-physical-harm/
CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

News Corp cyber-attack: firm says it believes hack linked to China
Jim Waterson – The Guardian: 4 February 2022

Hacking of emails at a Rupert Murdoch company raises fears for the safety of journalists’ confidential sources.

https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/feb/04/new-corp-hack-murdoch-media-firm-believes-hackers-links-china

For more on this theme:
(U.K.) UK foreign ministry suffered serious cyber attack earlier this year – documents

(U.K.) KP Snacks Hit by Cyber-Attack

(Portugal) Vodafone Portugal hit by hackers, says no client data breach

(Russia, Ukraine) Russian APT Primitive Bear attacks Western government department in Ukraine through job hunt

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

Cyber attacks on European oil facilities spreading
Alex Scroxton – Computer Weekly: 4 February 2022

Following a cyberattack on distribution facilities in Germany, more incidents have been reported in Belgium and the Netherlands, but it is too early to necessarily draw a link between them.


For more on this theme:
(Global) 80% of Critical Infrastructure Organizations Experienced Ransomware Attacks Last Year

(U.S.) FBI: Ransomware Attackers Have Code to Halt Critical Infrastructure
https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2022/02/fbi-ransomware-attackers-have-code-halt-critical-infrastructure/361808/

(U.S.) UTSA’s New Cyber Center to Defend Critical Infrastructure
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Violence Erupts at Syrian Camp for ISIS Families, Leaving a Child Dead
The violence at Al Hol erupted at a time of escalating tensions in this region between the area’s dominant military power, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, and resurgent Islamic State group militants.
https://indianexpress.com/article/world/syria-al-hol-camp-violence-isis-7765388/

Killing of Islamic State Leader Signals Why U.S. Presence in Mideast Will Continue
Max Boot – Council on Foreign Relations: 3 February 2022
The death of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi is unlikely to pose a major setback for the Islamic State group, which has mounted serious attacks in Iraq and Syria this year.

For more on this theme:
Uganda, Congo Intensify Fight Against Islamic State-Linked Group
Revealed: how fake passports allow IS members to enter Europe and US
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/31/revealed-how-fake-passports-allow-is-members-to-enter-europe-and-us
Afghanistan Tops 2021 Global Survey of Islamic State Casualties
Attacks raise fears of Islamic State resurgence in Sinai
https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/02/attacks-raise-fears-islamic-state-resurgence-sinai
U.S. Offers $10M Reward for Information on ISIS-K Leader Sanaullah Ghafari
Adm. Stavridis: ‘Inevitable’ new ISIS leaders will emerge
Factbox: Pushed into the shadows, Islamic State still has global reach
Islamic State likely to pick battle-hardened Iraqi as next leader - officials, analysts
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Is the Taliban’s Campaign Against the Islamic State Working?
Franz J. Marty – The Diplomat: 10 February 2022

The Taliban claim to have defeated the self-declared Islamic State group’s Afghan chapter, but exclusive information obtained by The Diplomat online magazine indicates that its success is not what it seems.

https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/is-the-talibans-campaign-against-the-islamic-state-working/

Al Qaeda, Islamic State reconstituting in Afghanistan: US official
Indo-Asian News Service: 10 February 2022

A top U.S. official has claimed that the al-Qaida and Islamic State terror groups are “reconstituting” in Afghanistan.


For more on this theme:

Lebanon will not ‘hand over’ Hezbollah weapons: Foreign minister

How al-Shabaab uses clan conflicts in Mandera to advance their mission

UN report indicates al-Qaeda and ISIS enjoy safe haven in Turkish-controlled Idlib

Al-Qaeda still present in Afghanistan, Indians among its recruits, says UNSC report

After Qurayshi’s death, who are Mideast’s most wanted terrorists?
https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/02/after-qurayshis-death-who-are-mideasts-most-wanted-terrorists

Al-Shabaab and the Education Crisis in Northern Kenya

Trajectories of Violence Against Civilians by Africa’s Militant Islamist Groups

Poor governance to blame for violent extremism in Africa: AFRICOM chief
RADICALIZATION

As Economy Collapses, Some Young Lebanese Turn to Militancy

As Lebanon slid deeper into economic misery over recent months, dozens of young men have disappeared from the country’s marginalized north and later surfaced in Iraq, where they are believed to have joined the Islamic State group. The migration has stoked fears of a new wave of radical recruitment, taking advantage of frustration and despair fueled by the economic meltdown and sectarian tensions.

https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-business-middle-east-lebanon-economy-d5b696be655ae-18be7ceedac4b72360e

For more on this theme:
Challenge of Recidivism to Counter-Radicalisation Programmes
https://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/recidivism-counter-radicalisation-programmes-sakidwai-280122

UN: Build on Islamic State Chief’s Death to Thwart Recruits

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

Russian ransomware attacks increased during 2021, joint review finds
Dan Sabbagh – The Guardian: 9 February 2022

Britain, the U.S. and Australia point to growth in “sophisticated, high-impact ransomware incidents.”

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/feb/09/russian-ransomware-attacks-increased-during-2021-joint-review-finds

For more on this theme:
A Brief Look at Chinese Cyberwarfare

Russian Threat Actors Targeting Infrastructure
https://securityboulevard.com/2022/02/russian-threat-actors-targeting-infrastructure/

Russia has been at war with Ukraine for years – in cyberspace
https://theconversation.com/russia-has-been-at-war-with-ukraine-for-years-in-cyberspace-176221

With Russian hackers in mind, NATO takes hard look at cyber strategy

Inside Trickbot, Russia’s Notorious Ransomware Gang
https://www.wired.co.uk/article/trickbot-malware-group-internal-messages
IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE — CHINA

Boosting maritime law enforcement in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea
Michael Heazle – The Strategist: 4 February 2022

Five and a half years after the international arbitral tribunal’s rejection of China’s expansive South China Sea claims in July 2016, the international maritime order in East Asia clearly is in trouble. China’s grey-zone tactics are continuing apace.


For more on this theme:

Coercion with Chinese characteristics: How Europe should respond to interference in its internal trade
https://ecfr.eu/article/coercion-with-chinese-characteristics-how-europe-should-respond-to-interference-in-its-internal-trade/

China’s rising influence in the Balkans
https://www.gisreportsonline.com//balkans-china/

China’s Financial Diplomacy Wins Influence in Central Asian Countries

CCP’s use of overseas Chinese to influence western democracies

IOC’s Bach ‘being used’ to convey CCP’s propaganda message over Peng Shuai: analysts

China’s Digital Silk Road and Africa’s Technological Future

Modi Hosts Summit With Central Asian Leaders As India, China Compete For Regional Influence
https://www.rferl.org/a/modi-central-asia-summit-india/31674773.html

Why the US Must Take China’s Disinformation Operations Seriously
https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/why-the-us-must-take-chinas-disinformation-operations-seriously/

Understanding China’s Growing Military Outreach in Central Asia
https://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/understanding-chinas-growing-military-outreach-dkumar-030222

China Closely Watching Western Handling Of Ukrainian-Russian Tensions

China’s ‘Belt and Road’ Risk in Syria May Reap Big Rewards
IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE — RUSSIA

Russia’s Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, commercial concessions, rights violations, and counterinsurgency failure
Federica Saini Fasanotti – Brookings: 8 February 2022

Russia is intensifying its competition with the United States in Africa. In Russia’s asymmetric race, it uses state-linked actors such as the private security company the Wagner Group and the infamous St. Petersburg “troll farm” the Internet Research Agency. Both are a major threat to democracy and rule of law in Africa and beyond.


For more on this theme:
Russia Is Teaching a Master Class in ‘Decision-Centric’ Warfare
https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2022/01/russia-teaching-master-class-decision-centric-warfare/361310/

Global Strategy 2022: Thwarting Kremlin aggression today for constructive relations tomorrow
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/atlantic-council-strategy-paper-series/thwarting-kremlin-aggression-today-for-constructive-relations-tomorrow/

Xi Jinping and the CCP’s expanding technology agenda

China, Russia partner up against West at Olympics summit

Bill aims to arrest China, Russia influence in Latin America
https://apnews.com/article/europe-russia-china-arrests-florida-bac8627f64045a307ac87757bc1616a5

U.S. warns Russia may stage video as pretext to invade Ukraine

How a Russian-Led Alliance Keeps a Lid on Central Asia
https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/how-a-russian-led-alliance-keeps-a-lid-on-central-asia/

Ukraine: Russia Mobilises Disinfo Alongside Military
https://wpr.net/global-voices/ukraine-russia-mobilises-disinfo-alongside-military

False-Flag Invasions Are a Russian Specialty
https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/04/false-flag-invasions-are-a-russian-specialty/

Russian ‘soft influence’ in Serbia fuels media war against Ukraine