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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

**Study: Seafarers Bear the Burden of Port Corruption**
The Maritime Executive: 25 February 2020

Most vessel operators refuse to pay bribes with a ship’s general funds, forcing the seafarers to pay out of their pockets, according to a report from Cardiff University. “Most major companies aren’t allowing us to give any [bribes],” said a third mate interviewed for the study. “Now we don’t know where to account these things, and the demands can be really huge. ... What we do is we end up using the [ship’s] welfare fund of the seafarers.”


For more on this theme:

- **Egypt upholds sentence of top customs official on corruption**
  https://apnews.com/6a27195d8784a1896f4207a2b539a204
- **Algerian President’s Son Acquitted in Corruption Case**
- **UNIAN: 80% of Ukrainians consider anti-corruption efforts unsuccessful**
- **‘You had to pay’: Angola’s deep-seated corruption legacy**
  https://news.yahoo.com/had-pay-angolas-deep-seated-corruption-legacy-045119826.html
- **World Bank Grapples With Study Linking Foreign Aid to Corruption**
- **Two Top Former Uzbek Officials Convicted On Corruption Charges**
  https://www.rferl.org/a/two-top-ex-uzbek-officials-convicted-corruption/30453695.html
- **Colombia’s prosecution vows to investigate fugitive politician’s corruption claims**
- **Swiss Bank Sanctioned for Corruption**
- **How can Kenya escape the corruption trap?**
  https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001361552/how-can-kenya-escape-the-corruption-trap
- **Corruption Is The Main Cause Of Nation’s Woes**
  https://www.zimeye.net/2020/02/27/corruption-is-the-main-cause-of-nations-woes/
- **Pakistan court orders release of former PM jailed for corruption**
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Illegal drugs ‘almost as easy to get as pizza’
BBC: 27 February 2020

Drugs have never caused more harm to society, but law enforcement stands little chance of stopping the menace, according to a leaked United Kingdom government report. An unprecedented number of children and teenagers are being drawn into the drug trade through gangs and grooming over social media, the report claims.


Full Report:

Review of drugs: phase one report

Colombia offensive against drug traffickers clearing national parks to plant coca
MercoPress: 25 February 2020

“The police are not going to withdraw from the national parks where the criminals are trying to settle,” Carlos Holmes Trujillo, Colombia’s defense minister, told reporters in Bogota. “We are going to harden the military offensive to remove them from their dens.”


For more on this theme:

DEA: The U.S. opioid crisis is ‘ever-increasing’

Imprisonment does more harm than good for drug users
https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/02/18/imprisonment-does-more-harm-than-good-for-drug-users.html

Mexico's War On Drugs Has Destroyed Everything (I Watched It Happen)
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/mexicos-war-drugs-has-destroyed-everything-i-watched-it-happen-124556

White House Disburses Record Funds for High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program
https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/white-house-disburses-record-funds-high-intensity-drug-trafficking-areas-program/

Mexican Drug Cartels Are Violent — But They're Not Terrorists
https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/mexican-drug-cartels-are-violent-but-theyre-not-terrorists/

Under Pressure From Trump, Extraditions to U.S. From Mexico Soar

Watchdog: Trump administration lacks strategy to fight Afghanistan's dangerous heroin trade
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

The Coronavirus Could Finally Kill the Wild Animal Trade
Lindsey Kennedy and Nathan Paul Southern – Foreign Policy: 25 February 2020
China just banned the trade and consumption of wild animals. Experts think the coronavirus jumped from live animals to people at a market, making it another in the long list of zoonotic diseases.

Wildlife cybercrime on the rise in ASEAN
The ASEAN Post: 25 February 2020
Illegal wildlife trading is huge in Southeast Asia, and now the traffickers are dealing with social media to remain anonymous. Online trading in illicit wildlife is on the rise.
https://theaseanpost.com/article/wildlife-cybercrime-rise-asean

For more on this theme:
100,000 Children Stand Against Wildlife Crime
https://www.herald.co.zw/100-000-children-stand-against-wildlife-crime/

How Artificial Intelligence Can Help Stop Pangolin Trafficking

What AI Hears in the Rainforest
https://www.outsideonline.com/2409501/artificial-intelligence-hears-rainforest

New Wildlife Crime Unit cracks down on ivory traffickers in Uganda
https://www.prweb.com/releases/new_wildlife_crime_unit_cracks_down_on_ivory Traffickers_in_Uganda/preweb16927437.htm

China’s Ban on Wildlife Trade a Big Step, but Has Loopholes, Conservationists Say

This vital anti-poaching school needs our support
https://thehill.com/changing-america/opinion/484855-this-vital-anti-poaching-school-needs-our-support

Myanmar transit route for China’s wildlife trade
https://nenow.in/environment/myanmar-transit-route-for-chinas-wildlife-trade.html

World is running out of time to save threatened species, says Emirati environmentalist

Old mobile phones are spying on illegal loggers
https://theecologist.org/2020/feb/25/old-mobile-phones-are-spying-illegal-loggers

In Chernobyl’s radioactive forest, arson and timber smuggling
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Bolivia Struggles to Help Its Human Trafficking Victims
Max Radwin – InSight Crime: 26 February 2020

Human traffickers operate with impunity in Bolivia, and the country fails to help human trafficking victims on multiple fronts, according to the nation’s Ombudsman’s Office.


How the coronavirus outbreak could hit refugees and migrants

A surge in coronavirus cases outside China has raised concerns the outbreak could be particularly devastating for vulnerable refugee and migrant populations in countries hobbled by conflict.

https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/02/27/Coronavirus-Iran-refugees-IDPs-Italy-Europe-disease

For more on this theme:

Counter Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia - online course
https://reliefweb.int/training/3525434/counter-human-trafficking-southeast-asia-online-course

A system with no guarantee: People smuggling rife in Pakistan

EU launches €18m project to fight human trafficking
https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2020/02/20/eu-launches-e18m-project-to-fight-human-trafficking/

Ghana Makes Strides Against Human Trafficking

Monaco should do more to combat human trafficking – Council of Europe

MOL Updates on “Progress in Human Trafficking Cases”

Cabinet passes Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan
https://avas.mv/en/78717

European Union approves new Libya mission

The Impact Of India’s Citizenship Amendment Act On Bangladeshis In India

Irregular migration, trafficking and smuggling of migrants: A dilemma for states
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Cyberspace and Geopolitics: Assessing Global Cybersecurity Norm Processes at a Crossroads

As cyber threats multiply, efforts to establish international norms for cyber activity have created a disjointed ecosystem. Is the fragmentation a cause for concern or an opportunity to promote cyber stability and security?


For more on this theme:

(Global) Hundreds of Millions of PC Components Still Have Hackable Firmware
https://www.wired.com/story/firmware-hacks-vulnerable-pc-components-peripherals/?mid=1%23cid=9541506

(Global) The evolution of the internet and geopolitics

(Global) Tim Draper Backed Aragon, Disrupts Traditional Governance With A Decentralized Court

INTERNET FREEDOM

Facebook, Google and Twitter Rebel Against Pakistan’s Censorship Rules

As Pakistan cracks down on internet companies by imposing rules on internet censorship, some of the social media companies are fighting back.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Governments play a dangerous game when they start to shut down the internet, says Professor Dame Wendy Hall

(China, Global) Apple investor vote sounds ‘warning’ over China app takedowns
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-apple-shareholders/apple-investor-vote-sounds-warning-over-china-app-takedowns-idUSKCN20K1PV

(China) Protecting the Truth About the Coronavirus in China
https://www.thenation.com/article/world/china-journalism-coronavirus/
PRIVACY AND SECURITY

An awakening over data privacy
Alvin Powell – The Harvard Gazette: 27 February 2020

A Harvard expert and internet privacy advocate says the American public is finally waking up to the dangers of sharing their information with the government and large corporations.


For more on this theme:
(Global) Global governance of data

(Global) Putting AI to use in business needs strong data governance

(EU) Digital decolonisation: The EU’s new ideas on data and artificial intelligence
https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_digital_decolonisation_the_eus_new_ideas_on_data_and_artificial

(Global) The future of cybersecurity
https://www.bmmagazine.co.uk/business/the-future-of-cybersecurity/

(Global) Why do we really need cyber security in digital health care

CYBER STATECRAFT DEVELOPMENT

Big Tech’s honeymoon with the world’s second-largest internet market is ending
Rishi Iyengar – CNN: 26 February 2020

India is poised to make some changes to the rules by which it allows global tech firms to operate, signaling that the golden days of profiting off India’s huge market may be over.


For more on this theme:
(Global) How to Protect Democracy From Future Cyber Threats
https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/81067

(Romania) Romanian Digitalization Agenda - the Government takes one step forward by setting up the Authority for the Digitalization of Romania

(Canada) Book excerpt: How safe is Canada from cyber attacks? The answer isn’t totally reassuring
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Singapore university to establish facility that studies social impact of internet
Eileen Yu – ZDNet: 28 February 2020

The National University of Singapore is establishing a new facility to use artificial intelligence and data science technologies to study the implications of internet use on the local population.

For more on this theme:
(India) Need for digital content in Indian languages: VP Naidu

(U.S.) Digital prosperity: How broadband can deliver health and equity to all communities
https://www.brookings.edu/research/digital-prosperity-how-broadband-can-deliver-health-and-equity-to-all-communities/

(Oceania) Cyber policy critical for Oceania’s economic future

THREATS, ATTACKS AND VULNERABILITIES

Mexico’s economy ministry hit by cyber attack
Adriana Barrera – Reuters: 24 February 2020

Mexico has become the most recent country to announce a cyber attack. The Ministry of Economy spotted an attack on some of its important servers. The Mexican ministry said no sensitive information or data has been compromised.

For more on this theme:
(Rwanda) Rwandan Government data center offline after cyber attack

(Australia) Cyber attack forces cancellation of wool sales across Australia

(Global) How cybercriminals target organizations with new and old security threats
CYBER PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Stavridis Warns of Russia and China Cyber Attacks
Robert K. Ackerman – Signal: 21 February 2020

According to retired U.S. Navy Adm. James Stavridis, the U.S. is underprepared for the threat posed by Russia and China on the cyber front. “We ought to be very concerned in particular about our electric grid and our financial system, both of which are targets of China and Russia,” he said.

https://www.afcea.org/content/stavridis-warns-russia-and-china-cyber-attacks

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) Move Slow and Break Nothing
https://www.cfr.org/blog/move-slow-and-break-nothing
(U.S.) Bulk power transmission grid in the US is highly vulnerable to cyber attacks
(Canada) Strengthening Canada’s Energy Systems Against Cyber Threats

COMBATING TERRORISM AND CYBER CRIME

EU Considers Sanctions Against Chinese, Russian Groups Over Hacking
Nikos Chrysoloras, Jonathan Stearns and Alexander Weber – Bloomberg: 26 February 2020

The European Union may target a Russian and a Chinese entity, as well as several individuals, with sanctions over cyber attacks despite the fact that it may inflame tensions with both nations.


For more on this theme:
(U.K.) UK Parliament faces cyber attacks ‘every minute of every day’
https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2020/02/uk-parliament-faces-cyber-attacks-every-minute-of-every-day/
(U.S.) Cyber Attack Attempts on Judiciary Top 24 Million, Congress Told
(Europe) Major European financial infrastructures join forces against cyber threats
(Scotland) Cybercrime: How Can Our Police Forces Adapt to Changing Cyber Threats?
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS

How IS uses hacked accounts to flood Twitter with propaganda
Marc Owen Jones – Middle East Eye: 17 February 2020
ISIS is still trending on Twitter despite the defeat of the physical “caliphate.”
https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/how-uses-hacked-accounts-flood-twitter-propaganda

Al-Qaeda and Islamic State groups are working together in West Africa to grab large swaths of territory
Danielle Paquette and Joby Warrick – The Washington Post: 22 February 2020
Al-Qaïda and Islamic State affiliates in the Sahel region of West Africa are coordinating operations and carving out respective areas of influence in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Normally at war with one another, this cooperation among the terrorist groups is especially worrisome.

For more on this theme:

Terror group remains ‘strong in Syria’ as jihadists ‘regroup in Iraq’

ISIS-Somalia Militants Sighted Training in Bari Mountains, Northeast Puntland

Did The War Against Islamic State Just Get Worse?
https://www.forces.net/news/did-war-against-so-called-islamic-state-just-get-worse

Islamic State-Inspired Knife Attack Exposes the Vulnerability of the Maldives

Has Turkey’s Incursion into Syria Opened the Door for an Islamic State Comeback?
https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/has-turkeys-incursion-into-syria-opened-the-door-for-an-islamic-state-comeback/

ISIS loses more than half its fighters from US airstrikes and Taliban ground operations

How ISIS operates in Iraq’s disputed territories

Why a U.S.-Taliban Peace Deal Could Strengthen ISIS in Afghanistan
FOREIGN FIGHTERS

What's Behind Indonesia's Refusal to Repatriate Suspected Islamic State Militants?
Erin Cook – The Diplomat: 19 February 2020

Indonesia confirmed it would not be allowing Indonesian nationals who fought abroad for ISIS to repatriate and stripped them of their citizenship. The implications of this decision will affect not only Indonesia, but the region as well.

Kosovo offers Europe a test run for handling of former jihadis
Malcolm Brabant – Public Broadcasting System: 27 February 2020

Kosovo is setting an example for reforming extremists that the U.S. would like the rest of Europe to follow. But many European nations fear the return of their foreign fighters and doubt the ability of those extremists to be reformed.
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/kosovo-offers-europe-a-test-run-for-handling-of-former-jihadis

For more on this theme:

AFP issues arrest warrants for women suspected of joining Islamic State
https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/worldtoday/warrants-issued-for-australian-women-islamic-state-fighters/11987132

Thousands of Foreign ISIS Fighters in Syria Will Go on Trial Starting in March

Escaping IS: What Exiting an Armed Group Actually Takes
https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/02/19/escaping-is-what-exiting-an-armed-group-actually-takes/

Foreign fighters: ‘One of the most serious dimensions’ in global counter-terrorism struggle

Will SDF-Affiliated Courts Try European Foreign Fighters?
https://www.lawfareblog.com/will-sdf-affiliated-courts-try-european-foreign-fighters

Leaving ISIS Fighters In Limbo
https://kcbsradio.radio.com/media/audio-channel/leaving-isis-fighters-in-limbo

We must help Syrians bring ISIS to justice
https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/editorial/we-must-help-syrians-bring-isis-to-justice-1.984515
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

As Yemen’s war intensifies, an opening for al-Qaeda to resurrect its fortunes

Recent escalations in Yemen’s conflict might just give al-Qaïda the time it needs to regroup after the death of one of its leaders.


What's Next for Hezbollah After Soleimani?
Andrew Devereux – The Jamestown Foundation: 25 February 2020

What impact will Qasem Soleimani’s death have on Tehran’s most important proxy ally – the Lebanese political and militant force, Hezbollah?

https://jamestown.org/program/whats-next-for-hezbollah-after-soleimani/

For more on this theme:

How jihadists are fuelling inter-communal conflict in Burkina Faso

Is the time ripe for ultimate eclipse of al-Qaeda in Yemen?

Hezbollah’s Failure to Stop the New Lebanon
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/hezbollah%E2%80%99s-failure-stop-new-lebanon-124071

ISWAP, terror group in Nigeria, rebrands, reversing tradition

Whither al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula?
https://jamestown.org/program/whither-al-qaeda-in-the-arabian-peninsula/

US imposes sanctions against Hezbollah-linked Lebanese companies
https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-imposes-sanctions-against-hezbollah-linked-lebanese-companies

Kenyan Police Seek Civilian Help Against al-Shabab

Cracks widen in Shabaab as ailing leader expels commanders

3 Terrorist Camps Discovered in Tunisia’s Kasserine Mountains
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

Canada’s terrorism offenders are coming out of prison still radicalized
Stewart Bell – Global News: 27 February 2020

Three terrorists in Canada were released from prison last year. None is known to have committed violence since leaving prison, but parole board reports obtained by Global News suggest Canadian terrorism offenders are still radicalized when they are released.

Do De-Radicalization and Rehabilitation Programs Work?
Jideofor Adibe – The National Interest: 24 February 2020

There are few alternatives to deradicalization attempts, despite little evidence that such programs are effective.
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/do-de-radicalization-and-rehabilitation-program-work-125251

For more on this theme:
I Want Repentant Boko Haram Members To Enter Mainstream Politics — Senator Gaidam

PERSPECTIVE: Ideological Factors of Radicalization
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/perspective-ideological-factors-of-radicalization/

Macron to limit teacher exchanges to control how Islam is taught in France
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/france-to-end-imam-teacher-deals-to-counter-foreign-interference

Lessons from London: You can’t fix jihad
https://thehill.com/opinion/international/484161-lessons-from-london-you-cant-fix-jihad

Combatting online extremism: Tech Against Terrorism
https://www.army-technology.com/features/combatting-online-extremism-tech-against-terrorism/

How the internet fosters far-right radicalization

Why conspiracy theories can act as radicalization multipliers of far-right ideals

To defeat far-right terrorism, we must counter the ideas behind it
https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2020/02/defeat-far-right-terrorism-we-must-counter-ideas-behind-it
WHITE NATIONALIST TERRORISM

New Jersey just raised its threat level for white supremacists to ‘high,’ well above ISIS and al Qaeda
Leah Asmelash and Sheena Jones – CNN: 22 February 2020

New Jersey says white supremacist extremism is one of the U.S. state’s greatest terrorism threats — higher than al-Qaida and the Islamic State — and in doing so has positioned itself as a national leader in countering domestic terrorism inspired by racism, experts say.

White-Supremacist Violence Is Terrorism

The author, a former commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan and now president of the Brookings Institution, stresses the need to address violent and hateful ideologies on the homefront. He argues that we must take the domestic threat as seriously as foreign threats.

For more on this theme:

Foreign Fighters and the Global War for White Supremacy
https://www.fairobserver.com/more/international_security/far-right-foreign-fighters-white-supremacy-history-azov-battalion-international-security-news-88711/

As Domestic Terrorists Outpace Jihadists, New U.S. Law Is Debated

Why homegrown right-wing threat has ASIO’s attention

Interpol official warns of dramatic rise in extremist right-wing violence.

Confronting the Rise in Anti-Semitic Domestic Terrorism

UK to ban neo-Nazi Sonnenkrieg Division as a terrorist group
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/24/uk-ban-neo-nazi-sonnenkrieg-division-terrorist-group

White extremists are on the rise around the world — emboldened by ‘heroes’ and hate music

Shooting Rampage Exposes German Racism
https://www.voanews.com/europe/shooting-rampage-exposes-german-racism
IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES

The United States Needs to Declare War on Proxies
Svante E. Cornell and Brenda Shaffer – Foreign Policy: 27 February 2020
The U.S. should look beyond just Iranian proxies and take on the proxy forces of other countries, such as Russia.
https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/27/russia-iran-suleimani-the-united-states-needs-to-declare-war-on-proxies/

For more on this theme:
Stay vigilant, Iran isn’t done with its revenge
Hezbollah Unveils Statue Of Iran’s Soleimani Near Israeli Border
After Soleimani Killing, Iran and Its Proxies Recalibrate in Iraq

IRREGULAR WARFARE: SOFT POWER

China, Australia, and the Soft Power of Rugby in the South Pacific
Thomas Wilkinson – The Diplomat: 22 February 2020
Samoa will host a rugby tournament, thanks to Chinese funding. But Australia sees the sport as its own soft power advantage.

China’s Military Can’t Deliver on Humanitarian Promises
Elizabeth Phu and Anish Goel – Foreign Policy: 26 February 2020
The humanitarian and medical assistance wing of the People’s Liberation Army has been virtually nonexistent during the coronavirus crisis. Why is one of China’s biggest soft power forces missing in action both domestically and within the region during this outbreak?

For more on this theme:
Soft Power Performances Reveal Just How Much Global Reputation African Countries Are Lacking
https://weetracker.com/2020/02/28/soft-power-performances-lacking-africa/
Is China’s New Generation of Vloggers Becoming an Unexpected Soft Power Asset?
https://radiichina.com/chinese-vloggers-li-ziqi/
A Hard Touch of China’s ‘Soft Power’ in Central Asia