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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Honduras repeals ‘secrets law’ in fight against corruption
*Reuters: 2 March 2022*

Honduran lawmakers have repealed legislation that critics dubbed the “official secrets law” for classifying public documents on national security and defense, marking one of the first efforts under a new leftist administration to curb corruption.


For more on this theme:

- **New law ‘important step towards combatting corruption’ says presidency (updated)**
  https://cyprus-mail.com/2022/02/18/new-law-important-step-towards-combatting-corruption-says-presidency/

- **Perceptions of corruption are growing in Australia, and it’s costing the economy**

- **Looking beyond the tip of Vietnam’s corruption iceberg**

- **Honduras asks UN to create Anti-Corruption Commission**
  https://ticotimes.net/2022/02/18/honduras-asks-un-to-create-anti-corruption-commission

- **Turkish journalist shot dead amid corruption investigation**

- **S.Africa’s Zuma, Mantashe referred for criminal investigations, graft inquiry says**

- **Nigeria’s All Too Familiar Corruption Ranking Begs Broader Questions Around Normative Collapse**
  https://www.cfr.org/blog/nigerias-all-too-familiar-corruption-ranking-begs-broader-questions-around-normative-collapse

- **Amid Anti-Corruption Drive, Tokayev Faces Questions About Offshore Wealth**

- **VP hopefuls: Digitalization to improve tax collection, curb corruption**

- **In Guatemala, A Fresh Crackdown on Prosecutors**
  https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/in-guatemala-a-fresh-crackdown-on-prosecutors/
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Albanian Drug Traffickers Jockey for Position in Ecuador
Scott Mistler-Ferguson – InSight Crime: 28 February 2022

The assassination of a suspected Albanian drug trafficker in Ecuador is another reminder of the increasing presence of Balkan trafficking groups in the South American country.

The Convergence of Illicit Networks on Social Media: the Human Smuggling-Drug Trafficking Nexus
Nilda M. Garcia – Small Wars Journal: 28 February 2022

Mexican drug cartels have a strong social media presence. These communication outlets provide major opportunities for drug cartels to engage in public relations strategies, gain legitimacy, incite fear, and diversify criminal activities involving extortion, drug sales and human smuggling.

For more on this theme:
Paraguay, Brazil and Dubai Figure into Massive Transatlantic Cocaine Ring

The Perpetual Cocaine War of Colombia's Putumayo
https://insightcrime.org/noticias/the-perpetual-cocaine-war-of-colombias-putumayo/

US lifts ban on avocados from Mexico after drug cartel threat
https://nypost.com/2022/02/18/us-lifts-ban-on-avocados-from-mexico-after-drug-cartel-threat/

Gangs Are Hanging Bodies From Bridges as Ecuador's Drug Violence Soars

A rocky road: Drug trafficking and corruption in central Asia
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/central-asia-ocindex/

Paraguay: The New Safe Haven for Brazilian Traffickers, Money Launderers

Drug Addiction and Poverty in Tajikistan
https://www.borgenmagazine.com/poverty-in-tajikistan/

Drug trafficking in Bissau: The seized cocaine has vanished

Were These Doctors Treating Pain or Dealing Drugs?
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

**Mexican drug cartels expand into illegal wildlife trade**

*Marion Langford – News.com.au: 27 February 2022*

Mexican drug cartels are strong-arming local fishing communities and killing jaguars while expanding into the illegal wildlife trade.


**On the case: Identifying corruption by reviewing wildlife crime court cases**

*Dominique Prinsloo, Sacha Riley-Smith and James Stevens – TRAFFIC: March 2022*

A thorough investigation into a wildlife-crime court case can disrupt organized criminal groups by identifying higher-level individuals for arrest, conviction and sentencing.


*For more on this theme:*

**China’s illegal, unregulated fishing in Indian ocean poses challenges**


**Where trafficked pangolins originate is a puzzle, hobbling efforts to save them**

https://news.mongabay.com/2022/02/where-trafficked-pangolins-originate-is-a-puzzle-hobbling-efforts-to-save-them/

**Demand for Chinese Traditional Medicine Fuels Illegal Wildlife Trafficking in Africa**


**Study: Small Groups Responsible for Smuggling Elephant Tusks**

https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/study-small-groups-responsible-for-smuggling-elephant-tusks/6445818.html

**Asia's Unceasing Pangolin Demand**

https://www.traffic.org/news/asias-unceasing-pangolin-demand/

**These tiny succulent plants are being poached by the thousands**

https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/22935166/succulent-plant-poaching-jared-margulies

**Big-data tracking technologies can uncover wildlife secrets and improve conservation efforts**


**Five ways AI is saving wildlife – from counting chimps to locating whales**


**Brazil's Amazon gold mining to be “stimulated” by Bolsonaro's decree (commentary)**

PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Q & A: Women need to be leaders in internet governance
SciDev.Net: 24 February 2022

Learning how to code changed Baratang Miya’s life. She is the founder and head of GirlHype, a nonprofit that empowers disadvantaged young women and girls to connect to the digital world, learn how to write code and build a career in tech. Her message to the United Nations Internet Governance Forum was that women must be included in internet governance to ensure that girls and women are not left behind.

For more on this theme:
(EU, Japan) Net positive: Europe, Japan, and the benefits of small-scale cyber-security cooperation

(Global) Ukraine wants Russia to be severed from the global internet. Experts say it’s a risky idea

(Singapore) Singapore will have to chart its own way in Internet governance, says news veteran Patrick Daniel

INTERNET FREEDOM

Iranian activist disappears after criticizing internet bill
The Associated Press: 26 February 2022

An Iranian activist went missing after criticizing a proposed bill by hard-liners to implement highly restrictive internet policies, his family said.
https://apnews.com/article/technology-iran-media-social-media-dubai-685dd71ae6299f9411c703cb-bec0cc7a

For more on this theme:
(Russia, Ukraine) How protesters in Russia and Ukraine are avoiding internet censorship — and jail

(Russia) Russia Intensifies Censorship Campaign, Pressuring Tech Giants
PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Public-private partnership must combat cybersecurity challenges: IT minister
Deeksha Bhardwaj – Hindustan Times: 1 March 2022

Rajeev Chandrasekhar, India’s union minister of state for information and technology, said the country is dealing with increased cybersecurity threats by revamping its policies and focusing on existing systems to address challenges.


For more on this theme:
(U.S.) Nakasone emphasizes growing partnerships between CYBERCOM and academia

(GLOBAL) As Tanks Rolled Into Ukraine, So Did Malware; Then Microsoft Entered the War.
https://indianexpress.com/article/world/as-the-tanks-rolled-into-ukraine-so-did-malware-then-microsoft-entered-the-war-7795622/

(U.K.) Two cats are better than one when fighting cybercrime
https://www.techradar.com/features/two-cats-are-better-than-one-when-fighting-cybercrime

(Scotland) CyberScotland Partnership supports almost 1,300 businesses, new figures show
https://futurescot.com/cyberscotland-partnership-supports-almost-1300-businesses-new-figures-show/

CYBERCRIME

A Cyber Weapon to Fight Cyber Fraud: Artificial Intelligence

Organized crime is very active in the private and public sectors. From banks to major retailers and federal governments to small businesses, fraudsters aren’t discerning when choosing a target.


For more on this theme:
(Ghana) Ghana’s efforts at tackling cyber-crime laudable — Ursula

(GLOBAL) Cybercrime: Dark web carding forum users are getting worried after a string of shutdowns

(India) 274 Haryana cops trained to crack cyber crime cases
CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Cyberattack on Nvidia results in data leak, credential theft
Naomi Eide and David Jones – Cybersecurity Dive: 1 March 2022

Leading U.S. chipmaker Nvidia said a threat actor attacked its information technology network, stealing employee credentials and proprietary information. The company confirmed that the threat actor, which it did not identify, has begun leaking the information online.


For more on this theme:

(Poland) Poland sees more cyberattacks on government servers, official says

(UAE) Dubai-based Gems Education hit by cyber attack

(Japan) Toyota Idles Japan Plants as Supplier Hit by Cyberattack

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

Ransomware is top attack vector on critical infrastructure
John P. Mello Jr. – CSO: 24 February 2022

An annual cybersecurity review finds that protection of industrial systems needs much improvement, and more government regulation is possible if improvements aren’t made.


For more on this theme:

(U.K.) The cyber threat against critical infrastructure
https://www.techradar.com/features/the-cyber-threat-against-critical-infrastructure

(U.S.) BlackByte Ransomware Group Attacked at Least Three Critical Infrastructure Companies and the San Francisco 49ers

(Australia) A Guide to Critical Infrastructure Assets in Australia
https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=3433892e-e062-4a89-bec7-6f871c84330f
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

UN's counter-terror committee warns ISIS is expanding and exploiting Afghanistan
In its latest report to the United Nations Security Council on ISIS, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate says the group needs to be “closely monitored” following the death of its leader, Muhammad al-Mawla, also known as Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi.

Internal Divisions to Stall ISIS Appointing New Leader
Waleed Abdul Rahman – Asharq Al-Awsat: 2 March 2022
The Cairo-based Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Terrorism confirmed that ISIS is always preoccupied with internal divisions after losing its leaders. The group intends to reorganize and appoint a successor for the late Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi.

Resurgence of Isis spreads fear in Syria as fresh violence reopens old wounds

Crisis looms in Syria camps, jails holding foreign nationals
https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-europe-middle-east-syria-109927ade3b86bf8f4190cee-96204bcb

German woman charged with membership in Islamic State group
https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-europe-middle-east-syria-germany-0d39801d492f279db-b3c039905b8365e

Lebanon foils three planned suicide attacks, interior minister says

Islamic State group claims attacks on Nigeria soldiers
https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-africa-niger-nigeria-west-africa-1bb03fd-178c921586ed9bdf105ae5761

The Islamic State's leader died this month. What type of leader might come next?

The Islamic State Is Capitalizing on Lebanon’s Economic Collapse
https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/21/the-islamic-state-is-capitalizing-on-lebanons-economic-collapse-2/
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Global Terrorism Index 2022: Sub-Saharan Africa emerges as global epicentre of terrorism, as global deaths decline
The Institute of Economics and Peace: 2 March 2022

The 2022 Global Terrorism Index reveals that despite an increase in attacks, the impact of terrorism continues to decline.

Full report:
Global Terrorism Index 2022

For more on this theme:
How Jihadists Are Creating Turmoil Across West Africa
https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/how-jihadists-are-creating-turmoil-across-west-africa/2022/02/18/65fd95f6-90d7-11ec-8ddd-52136988d263_story.html

Jihadism and coups in West Africa’s Sahel region: a complex relationship

South Africa Sending Fresh Troops to Mozambique to Fight Islamist Insurgents

Al-Shabaab In Somalia Spends Millions On Weapons – Report

What We Have and Haven't Learned About Terrorism Financing
https://www.lawfareblog.com/what-we-have-and-havent-learned-about-terrorism-financing

Drones evolving into terrorists’ ‘weapon of choice’ in the region, experts warn

The Militant Drone Threat Is No Longer New. Why Does It Still Feel Novel?

Global Counterterrorism in (and After) a Pandemic

Syrian jihadi group escalates campaign against foreign fighters in Idlib
https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/02/syrian-jihadi-group-escalates-campaign-against-foreign-fighters-idlib

Women Join Cameroon Militias to Fight Boko Haram
IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

Conti gang says it’s ready to hit critical infrastructure in support of Russian government

Lucian Constantin – CSO: 25 February 2022

The ransomware group’s claims follow a threat from the hacktivist group Anonymous to conduct cyberattacks against Russian targets.


For more on this theme:

Ukraine calls on hacker underground to defend against Russia


Ukraine computers hit by data-wiping software as Russia launched invasion


Why Russia Hasn't Launched Major Cyber Attacks Since the Invasion of Ukraine


Ukraine war: NHS urges hospitals to reinforce cyber security and supply chains against potential Russia attack


Hackers target Russia’s railways and power grid with cyber attacks


Belarusian hackers launch another attack, adding to chaotic hacktivist activity around Ukraine


Moscow Exchange Downed by Cyber-Attack


China-linked cyber espionage tool discovered by researchers; U.S. alerts foreign countries


Anonymous Hacking Group Declares “Cyber War” Against Russia


Facebook, Twitter remove disinformation accounts targeting Ukrainians


How Russia took over the Internet in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine

IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE – CHINA

Killing with a Borrowed Knife: Exploring Chinese Influence in Hollywood
Morgan A. Martin and Clinton J. Williamson – Small Wars Journal: 1 March 2022

China has the ability to use the U.S. entertainment industry to shape public perceptions. An examination of film as propaganda, the scope of Chinese interests in Hollywood and the Chinese Communist Party’s use of propaganda films demonstrate that China’s creeping influence has become a grave security threat.


For more on this theme:

How has China used the Winter Olympics to shape its image?

China’s ‘Influence Ops’ Spreading Worldwide: Why It’s a Serious Concern
https://www.thequint.com/news/politics/china-has-been-making-inroads-into-a-large-number-of-countries-through-its-influence-operations

Is Australia’s New Antarctica Funding Boost All About Countering China?
https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/is-australias-new-antarctica-funding-boost-all-about-countering-china/

China Expands Influence in Central America

China growing its influence in US using media ecosystem
https://theprint.in/world/china-growing-its-influence-in-us-using-media-ecosystem/837191/

Taking the low road: China’s influence in Australian states and territories

The old order of the Pacific has changed: China has a growing list of friends and ever greater influence
https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/china-and-nz/300515075/the-old-order-of-the-pacific-has-changed-china-has-a-growing-list-of-friends-and-ever-greater-influence

Google’s Removed Over 31,000 Chinese YouTube Channels for Coordinated Influence Operations in the Last 7 Months

China vs Russia in Central Asia?

China’s Relationship With Argentina Goes Far Beyond the Falklands/Malvinas Dispute
IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE – RUSSIA

Time for Bosnia to ‘get rid of Russian influence’: Analysts
Mersiha Gadzo – Al Jazeera: 28 February 2022
Vulnerable countries such Bosnia-Herzegovina now have the opportunity to shake off Russian influence and take steps to join NATO, analysts say.

For more on this theme:
Russian influence in North Macedonia is particularly present around key political events, disinformation researcher says
https://globalvoices.org/2022/02/18/russian-influence-in-north-macedonia-is-particularly-present-around-key-political-events-disinformation-researcher-says/

Russia Steadily Rebuilding Presence in Africa

US can’t let Russia create a sphere of influence
https://www.tbsnews.net/worldbiz/politics/us-cant-let-russia-create-sphere-influence-372997

RUSSIA/UKRAINE

A Ukrainian Insurgency Will Be Long and Bloody
Thomas B. Pepinsky – Modern War Institute: 3 March 2022
The Russian invasion of Ukraine has proved to be a turning point in European security. As Ukrainians mount a stiff defense against a more heavily armed Russian invasion force, analysts and observers have raised the prospect of an ongoing resistance, one led not only by Ukrainian Army units but also by civilian defense forces and ordinary citizens. This would amount to the first case of insurgent warfare within Europe in recent memory.
https://mwi.usma.edu/a-ukrainian-insurgency-will-be-long-and-bloody/

For more on this theme:
The Ukraine Crisis: Beijing’s Support of Russia and Its Limit

FACT SHEET: Joined by Allies and Partners, the United States Imposes Devastating Costs on Russia

IntelBrief: How Will Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Impact the Middle East?

One antidote to Russia’s war on Ukraine
https://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2022/0224/One-antidote-to-Russia-s-war-on-Ukraine
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Why China Is Struggling to Deal With Russia’s War in Ukraine
Ian Johnson and Kathy Huang – Council on Foreign Relations: 25 February 2022

China is one of Russia’s closest partners but supporting the invasion of Ukraine would seriously damage Beijing’s ties with wealthy democracies and alienate Chinese citizens who oppose the invasion.

https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/china-russia-war-ukraine-taiwan-putin-xi

For more on this theme:

Russian invasion of Ukraine forces Europe to redefine its future

Ukraine invasion: why eight Nato members triggered article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty

Arab world divided on Russia-Ukraine
https://www.axios.com/arab-world-divided-russia-ukraine-wheat-imports-46b026b7-6e2f-44fc-b001-882d193008d1.html

Ukraine Invasion Tests the Ties That Bind Putin and Xi

Ukraine invasion: China’s global economic ambitions face turbulence over stance on Russian aggression

China sees strategic advantage in Russia’s Ukraine invasion

Russia’s escalation in Ukraine: Views from Asia

Ukraine invasion: why China is more likely to support Russia than in the past

How Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will impact the global food supply

How the world can influence Putin’s fateful choices in Ukraine
https://www.cfr.org/article/how-world-can-influence-putins-fateful-choices-ukraine

How China’s leadership interprets the Russia-Ukraine crisis
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2022/02/25/commentary/world-commentary/china-ukraine-thoughts/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

World Reaction to the Invasion of Ukraine
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/world-reaction-invasion-ukraine

How Russia's Future with NATO Will Impact the Arctic

Why Putin's War With Ukraine Is a Miscalculation
https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/why-putins-war-ukraine-miscalculation

As Russia attacks Ukraine, Taiwanese wonder what China will do

How Russia-Ukraine conflict could influence Africa's food supplies

Analyzing Cyber and Influence Operations in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Interpreting China's Policy Toward the Russia-Ukraine Crisis

Russia-Ukraine war: What is Putin's endgame?

African leaders condemn Russia, but some remain silent as Moscow's influence hits home
https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/03/ukraine-african-leaders-condemn-russia-invasion-but-some-remain-silent.html

IntellBrief: How Will Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Impact the Middle East?

Turkey, between a rock and a hard place on Russia

Analysis: Putin's end-game? Split Ukraine and install ‘tame’ leadership

How Zelensky changed the West's response to Russia

Analysis: Moscow battles big tech to control the narrative

Putin's Invasion Playbook All Too Familiar to Georgia
https://cepa.org/putins-invasion-playbook-all-too-familiar-to-georgia/
Russia/Ukraine

For more on this theme:

Demilitarize, Balkanize, ‘De-Nazify’: Russia’s Aggressive War Against Ukraine Begins — Analysis
https://www.eurasiareview.com/25022022-demilitarize-balkanize-de-nazify-russias-aggressive-war-against-ukraine-begins-analysis/

Russia’s Hybrid Warfare Strategy: From Crimea To Ukraine — Analysis

Russia’s war on Ukraine: European reaction and analysis
https://www.politico.eu/podcast/russias-war-on-ukraine-european-reaction-and-analysis/

The propaganda war has eclipsed cyberwar in Ukraine
https://www.technologyreview.com/2022/03/02/1046646/the-propaganda-war-has-eclipsed-cyberwar-in-ukraine/

Views from the capitals: Russia’s war on Ukraine
https://ecfr.eu/article/views-from-the-capitals-russias-war-on-ukraine/

What does the war in Ukraine mean for Africa?
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2022/02/25/what-does-the-war-in-ukraine-mean-for-africa/

ICC to begin investigation into possible war crimes in Ukraine
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/2 ICC to begin investigation into possible war crimes in Ukraine

Russia Crisis Military Assessment: Why did Russia’s invasion stumble?

There is plenty of speculation about Putin’s state of mind

How Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Could Change the Global Order Forever
https://time.com/6150874/world-order-russia-ukraine/