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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Anti-Corruption Commission Confronts Guatemala’s ‘Continuum of Impunity’
Alex Papadovassilakis – InSight Crime: 12 March 2024

Santiago Palomo was minutes from boarding a flight to New York when he got a call from Guatemala’s newly inaugurated president, Bernardo Árâvalo, who offered him a new role heading the government’s flagship anti-corruption commission as the country looks to reignite its long fight against graft.


For more on this theme:

Slovakia’s Top Court Hinders PM’s Efforts to Change Criminal Code in His Favour

Anti-corruption progress at the Summit for Democracy is essential to safeguarding democracy
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/anti-corruption-progress-at-the-summit-for-democracy-is-essential-to-safeguarding-democracy/

How Leaders Can Fight Corruption With Moldova’s Stanislav Pavlovschi

Why Laos’ Communists cannot do anti-corruption

China’s war on corruption doubles punishment for bribery as tough new rules take effect

China’s Belt and Road Initiative plagued by corruption and political backlash: report

Promoting Accountability for Corruption that Fuels South Sudan’s Conflict
https://www.state.gov/promoting-accountability-for-corruption-that-fuels-south-sudans-conflict/

Corrupt, brutal and unprofessional? Africa-wide survey of police finds diverging patterns

Eco-Solve South East Asia and Oceania regional consultation

Fighting corruption’s threat to democracy
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/fighting-corruptions-threat-to-democracy/

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DRUG TRAFFICKING

Illicit Drugs Are Undermining Pacific Security
Jose Sousa-Santos – United States Institute of Peace: 9 March 2024

A network of local and transnational criminal enterprises has expanded the “drug highway” into a regional problem.

https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/illicit-drugs-are-undermining-pacific-security

EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis
European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction: 7 March 2024

Illicit drugs are one of the main profit-generating activities of organized crime and are estimated to represent 20% of global illicit proceeds.


For more on this theme:

Former Honduran president found guilty in drug trafficking trial

Ex-Honduras first lady announces run for presidency days after husband’s drug trafficking conviction
https://apnews.com/article/honduras-president-drug-trafficking-hernandez-cecda5df1d44d2db2dc74cfc53a3925b

Pioneering Dutch Cocaine Trafficker Sentenced to Life in Prison

Commission on Narcotic Drugs side event: evolving drug trends in Central and West Africa

CBP: America’s Front Line Against Fentanyl
https://www.cbp.gov/frontline/cbp-americas-front-line-against-fentanyl

Fighting cocaine trafficking still a U.S. priority – official

Authorities struggle to protect Bolivian national park from drug-fueled deforestation

Drug trafficking, more powerful than ever, floods Europe with cocaine

The Surinamese Cocaine Trafficker Endlessly Evading Justice

Syria avoids regional cold shoulder despite Captagon drug trade
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Facing illegal wildlife trade in the European union: A call for comprehensive measures
University of Lisbon – Phys.org: 8 March 2024

The European Union is a major hub for those species whose international trade is not regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and measures recently adopted in the region to mitigate it are not enough.


New method predicts harvest location to reveal illegal timber exports
University of Gothenburg – Phys.org: 14 March 2024

Researchers are trying to combat illegal logging with a new process that can reveal where a tree has been harvested.


For more on this theme:
Brazil cracks down on illegal gold miners
https://www.climatechangenews.com/2024/01/03/brazil-cracks-down-on-gold-miners/

Venezuela military evicts hundreds from illegal gold mine

How We Uncovered the Modus Operandi of Criminals Smuggling Illegal Gold out of Venezuela

How Illegal Fishing Ships Hide
https://nautil.us/how-illegal-fishing-ships-hide-526064/

West Africa's coast was a haven for piracy and illegal fishing — how technology is changing the picture
https://theconversation.com/west-africas-coast-was-a-haven-for-piracy-and-illegal-fishing-how-technology-is-changing-the-picture-222803

Rehabilitation of Guatemalan fauna highlights opacity of illegal wildlife trade

Pet and Wildlife Trafficking: A Dark Truth About Wild Farms Exposed by UK Nonprofit

Factsheet: Netted In Illegal Wildlife Trade – Sharks of India

AI Enhances Understanding of Global Wildlife Threats: Study
ORGANIZED CRIME

How Money Laundering Rules Could Be Used to Tackle Deforestation
Isabella Kaminski – DeSmog: 8 March 2024

A first-of-its-kind legal complaint in France aims to hold banks accountable for their work with companies that contribute to the practice.

For more on this theme:

Chinese suspect to plead guilty in Singapore’s multibillion-dollar money-laundering case

Britain consults on easing burden of anti-money laundering checks

ED conducts searches in ‘illegal’ sand mining linked money laundering case

US Sanctions Transnational Al-Shabaab Money Laundering Network

African countries on the global dirty money watchlist in 2024 – FATF

Anti-money laundering swoops seize millions in assets
https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/03/13/anti-money-laundering-swoops-seize-millions-in-assets/

Political Violence in Mexico's 2024 Elections: Organized Crime Involvement

Transnational Organized Crime and the Pacific Islands
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/transnational-organized-crime-and-the-pacific-islands/

Andean Community Seeks to Curb Organized Crime

Interpol Financial Fraud assessment: A global threat boosted by technology

Hundreds rescued from love scam centre in the Philippines

On the line: Can exposure reporting disrupt organized environmental crime?
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/exposure-reporting-environmental-crime-disruption/
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

**AI and Product Safety Standards Under the EU AI Act**
Hadrien Pouget and Ranj Zuhdi – Carnegie: 5 March 2024

For the European Union’s Artificial Intelligence Act to set a global benchmark for regulation, the resulting standards need to balance detail and legal clarity with flexibility to adapt to the emerging technologies.


*For more on this theme:*  
**(Global) Digital Sovereignty and Internet Standards**

**(Global) AI: What are the pros and cons of regulation?**

**(Global) AI bias: the organised struggle against automated discrimination**
https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/medialse/2024/03/07/ai-bias-the-organised-struggle-against-automated-discrimination/

INTERNET FREEDOM

**The Cost of Blocking the Internet**
Katharina Buchholz – Statistica: 12 March 2024

By first throttling and then blocking access to social media and news outlets in the aftermath of its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has caused the most expensive online blockages of 2022 and 2023.


*For more on this theme:*  
**(Turkey) Tech companies asked to resist internet censorship ahead of Turkish elections**

**(China) How Microsoft's Bing Helps Maintain Beijing's Great Firewall**

**(Global) The Countries Shutting Down the Internet the Most**

**(Pakistan) In Pakistan, threats continue to internet access, including social media**
https://therecord.media/pakistan-internet-social-media-restrictions-outages

**(Burma) Myanmar Junta cuts internet and phone lines in 80 townships: Report**
CYBER STRATEGY AND RISKS

The Five Bears: Russia’s Offensive Cyber Capabilities
Oscar Rosengren – Grey Dynamics: 7 March 2024

The group constitutes an integral part of Moscow’s offensive capabilities. State-sponsored Advanced Persistent Threat groups are part of a network, making Russia one of the strongest actors in cyberspace today.

https://greydynamics.com/the-five-bears-russias-offensive-cyber-capabilities/

For more on this theme:

(China) How China Seeks to Dominate the Information Age
https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/how-china-seeks-dominate-information-age

(U.S., Africa) Tracking Progress of the U.S. Digital Transformation With Africa Initiative

(Africa) Security and Trust in Africa’s Digital Financial Inclusion Landscape

(EU) Cyber solidarity package: Council and Parliament strike deals to strengthen cyber security capacities in the EU

(U.S.) One Year In: The President’s National Cybersecurity Strategy is Driving Change and Protecting the Nation

CYBERATTACKS

The French government says it’s being targeted by unusual intense cyberattacks
The Associated Press: 11 March 2024

France said several of its services have been hit with “unprecedented intensity,” and a special crisis center was activated to restore online services.

https://apnews.com/article/france-cyberattacks-government-targeted-f57a4114d627422274bf1d3d3e74

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) How a cyberattack crippled the U.S. health care system
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-a-cyberattack-crippled-the-u-s-health-care-system

(Japan, North Korea) Japan Blames North Korea for PyPI Supply Chain Cyberattack

(South Africa) Cyberattack Targets Regulator Database in South Africa
Broke Cyber Pros Flock to Cybercrime Side Hustles
Becky Bracken – Dark Reading: 8 March 2024

Burned-out professionals dealing with layoffs and stressful working conditions are increasingly finding a better way to earn a buck: cybercrime.


For more on this theme:
(Global) Interpol: Criminals Increasingly Use AI, Crypto and Online Scams

(Global) One reason school cyberattacks are on the rise? Schools are easy targets for hackers
https://www.npr.org/2024/03/11/1236995412/cybersecurity-hackers-schools-ransomware

(U.S.) FBI: Cybercrime cost Americans over $12.5B in 2023

(China) Chinese Cybercrime: Discretion Is the Better Part of Valor
https://www.govinfosecurity.com/chinese-cybercrime-discretion-better-part-valor-a-24592

(Cambodia) Scam Victims Say Human Trafficking Still a Problem in Cambodia

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

White House advisory group says market forces ‘insufficient’ to drive cybersecurity in critical infrastructure
Derek B. Johnson – CyberScoop: 7 March 2024

An industry-led group is calling for the federal government to develop economic incentives for small and medium-sized businesses, simplify cyber regulations and provide clear liability protections around information sharing.

https://cyberscoop.com/nstac-white-house-advisory-group-critical-infrastructure/

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) Dragos CEO: Digitization in critical infrastructure will spur attacks

(EU) EU to Implement “Cyber Shield” Legislation to Safeguard Critical Infrastructure
https://www.cryptopolitan.com/eu-to-implement-cyber-shield-legislation/

(U.S.) Article: Cyber Threats are Here to Stay: 3 Tips for Defending U.S. Critical Infrastructure Under Siege
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/article-cyber-threats-are-here-to-stay-3-tips-for-defending-u-s-critical-infrastructure-under-siege/

(Africa) Infrastructure Cyberattacks, AI-Powered Threats Pummel Africa
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

US Intel: ISIS, al Qaeda, Hamas, & Hezbollah
Wilson Center: 14 March 2024
The annual assessment covers global terrorist threats and the impact of the Israel-Hamas war.

Violence in the Mideast, rising threats from Islamic State group in Afghanistan pressure US, allies
Violence fueled by Iran presents the most likely threat to the United States as the risk of an attack on U.S. and Western interests abroad is increasing.
https://apnews.com/article/iran-middle-east-mideast-attack-treat-bc88b3364ebc2cf7dfbea4568eb4d96

For more on this theme:
US Sanctions Money Launderers Connected to Al-Shabab

New UNODC research on child recruitment and exploitation by terrorist groups shows need for a united front on child protection

Rethinking Risk: Reducing Harm to Nonprofits in the Push to Counter Terrorism Financing

The true cost of fake fashion

ISIS Is at Least Twice as Big as We First Thought It Was
https://uk.style.yahoo.com/style/isis-least-twice-big-first-thought-113000969.html

Hostage to violent extremism: Kidnapping in northern Benin
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/hostage-to-violent-extremism-kidnapping-in-northern-benin/

The Islamic State on the March in Africa
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/islamic-state-march-africa

NIA Dismantles Remaining Islamic State Cells in India
https://jamestown.org/program/nia-dismantles-remaining-islamic-state-cells-in-india/

TTP Activity Causes Continued Deterioration in Pakistani-Afghan Relations

Tenth SG report states ISIL continues to adapt and evolve despite death of its leader
ISRAEL/HAMAS

Israel Needs a New Strategy

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s “total victory” is not possible, but demilitarizing Hamas and stabilizing Gaza still are, especially with help from Egypt and other key players.
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israel-needs-new-strategy

For more on this theme:

Judy Asks: Has The War in Gaza Irreversibly Damaged Europe’s Credibility?
https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/91963

Middlemen Push Up Prices As Gazans Struggle To Survive

Israel’s Hezbollah problem could outlast its war in Gaza

‘Not an exaggeration’: Fears rise of Israeli incursion into Lebanon to push back Hezbollah

Here’s what keeps the IDF up at night concerning Hezbollah
https://thehill.com/opinion/international/4509613-heres-what-keeps-the-idf-up-at-night-concerning-hezbollah/

Lebanese-Israeli fighting looks set to scuttle plans for historic land border settlement

Five ways Israelis have changed, after 5 months of war
https://www.npr.org/2024/03/09/1236537541/israel-five-months-hamas-war

Ramadan begins in Gaza with hunger worsening and no end to the war in sight
https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-03-11-2024-c6835d50f91ddf0443e07fddf5e3229f

Israel, Hamas Trade Blame for Deadlocked Negotiations

Inside Israel's allegations against U.N. workers in Gaza

Biden: Netanyahu ‘hurting Israel’ by not preventing more civilian deaths in Gaza
https://apnews.com/article/biden-netanyahu-israel-hamas-gaza-civilians-ceasefire-2d4e5657db45cbe2bb793f06f74c913

UNRWA report says Israel coerced some agency employees to falsely admit Hamas links

Israel says it plans to direct Palestinians out of Rafah ahead of anticipated offensive
https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-03-13-2024-1ecdd20b754890b623f523be41591ada
ISRAEL/HAMAS

For more on this theme:

Britain updates 'extremism' definition amid Israel-Hamas war
https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2024/03/14/britain-unveils-new-extremism-definition/1931710415582/

RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Lauren Baillie on the ICC’s Latest Warrants for Russian War Crimes
Lauren Baillie – The United States Institute of Peace: 13 March 2024
For the first time, the International Criminal Court has charged high-level commanders with crimes against humanity – showing that Russia’s assault on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine is “part of a policy.”
https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/lauren-baillie-iccs-latest-warrants-russian-war-crimes

For more on this theme:

Ukraine War Takes a Toll on Russia
https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/ukraine-war-takes-toll-russia

Will Sweden’s NATO Membership Deter Russian Aggression?
https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/will-swedens-nato-membership-deter-russian-aggression

Sweden and Finland Add Both Muscle and Risk to NATO
https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/91922

Eroding Consolidation: Putin’s Regime Ahead of the 2024 “Election”
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91955

China-Europe Relations, Two Years After Russia Invaded Ukraine
https://carnegieendowment.org/2024/03/11/china-europe-relations-two-years-after-russia-invaded-ukraine-pub-91940

Why Cyber Attacks on Ukrainians Aren’t Working the Way Russia Expected

Bankers Must Stand Up in the Fight for Ukraine’s Victory

The Collapse of Ukraine’s Oligarchy in Ten Years of War
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/collapse-ukraines-oligarchy-ten-years-war

Why Russian Elites Are Silent
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/why-russian-elites-are-silent

All the autocrat’s men: The court politics of Putin’s inner circle
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

What to watch in Russia’s stage-managed presidential ‘election’

Russia warns Ukraine war could spin out of control due to action of one or two NATO countries

Putin warns again that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if its sovereignty is threatened
https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-putin-nuclear-weapons-82ced2419d93ae733161b56fd9b477d

Recent gains point to a growing Russian advantage in the Ukraine war

Ukraine war: India busts network trafficking people to Russia

Erdogan offers to host Ukraine-Russia peace summit after meeting Zelenskiy

Could the West use Russia’s own money to help Ukraine? US officials think so
https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/west-russias-money-ukraine-us-officials/story?id=107720624

Russian lawmakers seek to nullify Soviet transfer of Crimea to Ukraine

Ukraine’s New War Strategy: Dig In, Hold On, Find More Soldiers, Hope For U.S. Weaponry

EU agrees $5.5bn boost for military aid to Ukraine

Ukraine calls Russia’s election in occupied territories null and void

CIA Director: With supplemental, Ukraine can hold its own against Russia
https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2024/03/cia-director-supplemental-ukraine-can-hold-its-own-against-russia/394856/

Russia’s war machine is trying to turn Ukrainian teenagers into soldiers

Russia’s stability hinging on result of Ukraine war, says expert
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Ukrainians living under Russian occupation are coerced to vote for Putin
https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-occupied-election-voting-arrests-eb0b0d872cf55e561dc221bbc53d63d4

NATO Member Urges 'No More Red Lines' in Russia-Ukraine War
https://www.newsweek.com/nato-member-urges-no-more-red-lines-russia-ukraine-war-1878930

Holding Russia accountable for war crimes in Ukraine
https://share.america.gov/holding-russia-accountable-for-war-crimes-in-ukraine/

Belarusian Vacation Camps For Ukrainian Children More About Reeducation Than Recuperation

Crimes of Freedom: Putin's All-Out War on the Opposition
https://cepa.org/article/crimes-of-freedom-putins-all-out-war-on-the-opposition/

A defensive strategy is Ukraine's best plan to confront Russia in 2024. So why is a counteroffensive being discussed?

Veterans of War Against Ukraine Become New Russian Elite
https://jamestown.org/program/veterans-of-war-against-ukraine-become-new-russian-elite/

Presidential 'Elections' Cannot Restore Putin's Authority
https://jamestown.org/program/elections-cannot-restore-putins-authority/