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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

**Lebanon's central bank chief appears before corruption hearing**
*Al Jazeera: 16 March 2023*

Riad Salameh had previously rejected the presence of European investigators at the hearing, causing it to be postponed.


**Cloete Murray: South African corruption investigator shot dead**
*Samuel Horti – BBC: 20 March 2023*

A South African accountant who was investigating high-level corruption cases has been killed along with his son.


*For more on this theme:*

**Venezuela's Maduro to replace oil minister, police arrest officials in corruption sweep**

**Dominican police arrest 19 in high-profile corruption case**

**South Korean opposition leader indicted for alleged corruption**

**Zhao Weiguo: Chinese regulator accuses chip tycoon of corruption**

**Mercedes-Benz site searched over suspected corruption – newspaper**
https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/mercedes-benz-site-searched-over-suspected-corruption-newspaper-2023-03-21/

**Zambian Officials Arrest Auditor General, Others on Corruption Charges**

**US: Corruption, gender-based violence of concern in Albania, Kosovo**

**Iraq PM says fighting corruption and restoring citizens’ confidence is his main goal**
https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iraq/2023/03/19/iraq-pm-says-fighting-corruption-and-restoring-citizens-confidence-is-his-main-goal/
DRUG TRAFFICKING

The ‘Deadliest Drug’ In America Explained: How Xylazine — An Animal Tranquilizer — Is Getting Mixed With Fentanyl
Arianna Johnson – Forbes: 22 March 2023

Xylazine-laced fentanyl has been found in 48 states, creating what experts call the “deadliest drug” in the United States, which results in side effects including necrosis, amnesia, blurred vision and death.


Cocaine trafficking surges following COVID-19-related slowdown
United Nations News: 16 March 2023

Routed through new hubs and expanded criminal networks, cocaine trafficking has made a dramatic comeback following an initial slowdown caused by the pandemic, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime said in a new report.


For more on this theme:
- Examining Costa Rica’s Role in International Drug Trafficking
  https://ticotimes.net/2023/03/21/examining-costa-ricas-role-in-international-drug-trafficking
- Exclusive: Amid U.S. pressure on fentanyl, Mexico raises drug lab raids data
- 5 Takeaways From UN Global Report on Cocaine 2023
- Europe Narco-Sub Heralds More to Come
- Matamoros, a Symptom of Mexico’s Larger Illness
- The Northeast Cartel and Criminal Hegemony in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico
- U.S. Sanctions Narco Boss from Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mexican Cartels Bolster Foothold and Alliances in Colombia
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Indonesian campaigns getting money from illegal logging, mining, watchdog says
Hans Nicholas Jong – Mongabay: 21 March 2023
As Indonesia gears up for legislative and presidential elections, authorities have warned of the pattern of dirty money that flowed into past campaigns.

SpaceX’s Starlink devices found in illegal mining sites in the Amazon
Julia Jones – CNN: 16 March 2023
Five Starlink internet devices were found during raids by Brazil’s environmental police. The equipment itself is not illegal, but it can be used for illegal activities. Communications can be challenging in the Amazon, and the small satellite dishes aided in communications between illegal miners.

For more on this theme:
An assessment of wildlife trade between Madagascar and Southeast Asia

Sighting of tiger helps detect illegal logging inside national park

An overview of the timber traceability systems in the Congo Basin countries

Emerging deforestation frontier in southwestern Amazon sees increase in burnings

UN denounces new attacks on Indigenous people in Nicaragua’s largest reserve

Brazil tackles illegal miners, but finds their mercury legacy harder to erase

Illegal Gold Mining Operations in Venezuelan Amazon on the Rise

Skylight becoming key tool in fight against IUU fishing
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

EU mulls setting global digital standards with UN Global Digital Compact
Luca Bertuzzi – EURACTIV: 21 March 2023

The European Union intends to push for its digital rules to become international standards at a United Nations convention intended to produce a vision of the digitalized society.


For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Social Media Isn't a Public Function, but Maybe the Internet Is

(Africa) The AFRINIC Saga — a Firestorm in Haven
https://circleid.com/posts/20230317-a-firestorm-in-haven

(Global) Web3 vs. The Metaverse: What’s the Difference?
https://www.makeuseof.com/web3-vs-metaverse/

INTERNET FREEDOM

Shanghai court jails blogger for seven years over ‘subversive’ posts
Gao Feng – Radio Free Asia: 23 March 2023

A court in Shanghai has handed a seven-year jail term to the author of a programming and politics blog who evaded government detection for about 12 years after finding him guilty of “incitement to subvert state power,” Radio Free Asia reported.


For more on this theme:
(Hong Kong) Distributors pull plug on Winnie the Pooh cult horror flick in Hong Kong

(India) India Cuts Off Internet to 27 Million People to Catch One Man

(India) Rights not loading: Internet shutdowns disrupt lives
CYBER STRATEGY AND STATECRAFT

What is the National Cybersecurity Strategy? A cybersecurity expert explains what it is and what the Biden administration has changed
Richard Forno – The Conversation: 20 March 2023


For more on this theme:
(U.K.) Government sets out strategy to protect NHS from cyber attacks

(Australia) 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy: Leading the Charge
https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=6b2f9aa5-e5c1-4f5e-a067-72c0e8b73286

(GLOBAL) The Unsung Hero Of Cybersecurity: Teamwork
https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/03/21/the-unsung-hero-of-cybersecurity-teamwork/?sh=1d10e83329a0

CYBERATTACKS

Australia’s Latitude Group, IPH hit by cyber attacks amid wave of hacks
Mehr Bedi – Reuters: 16 March 2023

Digital payments firm Latitude Group Holdings and intellectual property services provider IPH reported data breaches, joining a host of other Australian firms targeted by hackers.

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) San Francisco Battles Rising Cybercrime ‘Tsunami’ After Oakland Hit Hard

(Russia, India) Russian hacker group Phoenix hit Indian health ministry website:
CloudSEK

(ITALY) Ferrari rejects ransom demand after cyber attack
CYBERCRIME

How the future of cyber crime could involve fake voice messages from loved ones
Patrick Ryan – The Nation: 17 March 2023

Imagine receiving a voice message from your spouse saying they had an emergency and need you to make an urgent payment from your bank account. Many, if not most of us, would send it without a second thought. However, cybersecurity experts have said that we should not be so quick to believe everything we hear in the years to come.


For more on this theme:

(U.S.) FBI Annual Internet Crime Report Finds Hot New Trend in Online Scams: “Pig Butchering”

(Global) Solving the cybercrime problem

(China, Russia, Global) Chinese SilkLoader Malware Sold to Russian Cyber-Criminals

(Global) International Crime Collaboration Could Slow North Korean Cyber Activity
https://www.oodaloop.com/archive/2023/03/16/international-crime-collaboration-could-slow-north-korean-cyber-activity/

(Global) How Cyber-Criminals are Circumventing Multifactor Authentication
https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/blogs/cybercriminals-circumventing-mfa/

(India) How India waged war against cyber crime on an industrial scale

(Russia, Global) How Russia’s Ukraine War Disrupted the Cybercrime Ecosystem

(Australia) Fighting cyber crime a key driver of the Australian Federal Police’s new command structure
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

U.S. Commander: ISIS in Afghanistan 6 Months Away From Foreign Attack Capability
Paul D. Shinkman – U.S. News & World Report: 16 March 2023

“They can do an external operation against U.S. or Western interests abroad in under six months with little to no warning,” says the Army general in charge of regional operations.


For more on this theme:

IntelBrief: South Africa Has Emerged as a Financial Hub for ISIS in Africa
https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2023-march-21/

ISIS Attacks Freedom Of Press In Afghanistan, Reinforcing Its Importance Even More

ISIS-Affiliated Financial Networks Double Down on Efforts to Exfiltrate Loyalists, Particularly Young Boys, from Camp Al-Hol

IS-linked extremists infiltrate ASEAN, eyeing Indonesia 2024 polls
https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Terrorism/IS-linked-extremists-infiltrate-ASEAN-eyeing-Indonesia-2024-polls

Islamic State Claims Responsibility For Killing 10 People In Eastern DRC
https://saharareporters.com/2023/03/20/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-killing-10-people-eastern-drc

A struggle between ISIS and Boko Haram for hegemony in Nigeria

A string of assassinations in Afghanistan point to ISIS-K resurgence — and US officials warn of possible attacks on American interests in next 6 months

Afghan Taliban raid in Kabul kills 3 Islamic State members

Germany arrests Syrian accused of joining Islamic State unit

In Afghanistan, Taliban Face a Growing Threat in ISKP
Countering Violent Extremism in Bangladesh

In September 2022, an anti-terrorism unit of the Bangladesh Police revealed the emergence of a new militant organization: Jama’atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya. Since then, the group has been operating underground to expand its network and raise funding.

https://eeradicalization.com/countering-violent-extremism-in-bangladesh/

Brief: South Korea Cracks Down on Cryptocurrency Transfers to Central Asian Jihadists

On January 16, two Uzbek and Kazakh citizens in South Korea were arrested for violating the country’s anti-terrorism funding laws by using cryptocurrency to fund the Syrian al-Qaida-aligned jihadist group Katibat Tavhid wal-Jihad. This case has pushed the intelligence services to reinvigorate investigation into other possible funders of terrorism in the country.


For more on this theme:

Lockdowns for Public Health Can Also Reduce Violence
https://politicalsciencenow.com/lockdowns-for-public-health-can-also-reduce-violence/

Popular Resistance Committees Attempts To Establish a Foothold in the West Bank

Why Boko Haram has lasted many years — Petirin, ex-Defence chief
https://punchng.com/why-boko-haram-has-lasted-many-years.petirin-ex-defence-chief/

Boko Haram establishes recruitment base in Niger Republic
https://dailypost.ng/2023/03/22/boko-haram-establishes-recruitment-base-in-niger-republic/

The Haqqani-Akhundzada Rift: Could Civil War Break Out in the Taliban’s Ranks?

The Deradicalization and Parole of Indonesia’s Umar Patek — the Bombmaker of Bali

Terrorism a Collective Problem and its Challenges
CRIME AND CONFLICT

Putin Becomes a Global Outlaw
Sam Greene – CEPA: 17 March 2023

The International Criminal Court’s decision means the status quo is dead. Russia’s leader now faces an uncertain future.

https://cepa.org/article/putin-becomes-a-global-outlaw/

For more on this theme:

Wanted for Crimes Against Children: Vladimir Putin
https://cepa.org/article/wanted-for-crimes-against-children-vladimir-putin/

Possible Geopolitical Consequences Of ICC’s Arrest Warrant For Putin – Analysis

Child abductions reveal the genocidal intent behind Putin’s Ukraine invasion

Russia’s Black Sea blockade is part of Putin’s war on international law

Putin the Pariah: War crimes arrest warrant deepens Russia’s isolation

ICC arrest warrant for Putin is a step toward ending Russian impunity

Russia’s energy grid attacks, torture in Ukraine, could be crimes against humanity: UN rights probe

ICC to plead for extra money to pursue Russian war crimes in Ukraine

Russia signals it will take more Ukrainian children, a crime in progress
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/03/19/world/ukraine-children-russia-abduction/

UN report finds Russia has committed “indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks” in Ukraine

In Ukraine, echoes of Nuremberg
CRIME AND CONFLICT

For more on this theme:

Ukraine Symposium – Russia’s “Re-Education” Camps: Grave Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict
https://lieber.westpoint.edu/russias-re-education-camps-grave-violations-against-children-armed-conflict/

Thousands of children forcibly deported from Ukraine and sent to Russia

US: War crimes on all sides in Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict
https://apnews.com/article/blinken-ethiopia-tigray-eritrea-war-crimes-da5d9ac7c900c58cc34b-9ca5d4156667

How an international arrest warrant for Putin puts a new spin on Xi visit to Russia
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/how-an-international-arrest-warrant-for-putin-puts-a-new-spin-on-xi-visit-to-russia

Is Amending the Rome Statute the Panacea Against Perceived Selectivity and Impunity for the Crime of Aggression Committed Against Ukraine?

RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Analysis: China’s sway over Russia grows amid Ukraine fight
Vladimir Isachenkov – The Associated Press: 22 March 2023
At one point during his Kremlin meetings, Chinese leader Xi Jinping told Russian President Vladimir Putin that they were driving global changes unseen in more than a century.
https://apnews.com/article/russia-china-putin-xi-ukraine-alliance-partnership-us-sanctions-beijing-moscow-9089f4d4b9c0d8bb259b706ffe4b0f6

For more on this theme:

Will Iran’s Conventional Army Join the Drone Export Game in Ukraine and Beyond?

Moving the Goalposts: Russia’s Evolving War Aims in Ukraine (Part Three)

Putin and Xi Are Making the War in Ukraine a Global Contest
https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/89364

Logistical Lessons From Ukraine — and What It Means for Taiwan
https://www.lawfareblog.com/logistical-lessons-ukraine%E2%80%94and-what-it-means-taiwan

Beijing’s Lean Into Moscow
https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/03/20/beijing-s-lean-into-moscow-pub-89317
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:
Analysis: China's Xi takes ‘diplomatic dance’ to isolated Russia
War in Ukraine: Russia the Loser, the US a Winner
Putin's Narrative of Betrayal Betrayed
https://cepa.org/article/putins-narrative-of-betrayal-betrayed/
Behind the Lines: Passport to the Front
https://cepa.org/article/behind-the-lines-passport-to-the-frontline/
God’s Propagandists
https://cepa.org/article/gods-propagandists/
The Kremlin's Worsening Emigree Phobia
https://cepa.org/article/the-kremlins-worsening-emigree-phobia/
Taiwan supports Ukraine and studies country's response to Russian invasion
Ukraine Symposium – A Path Forward for Food Security in Armed Conflict
https://lieber.westpoint.edu/path-forward-food-security-armed-conflict/
Why the role of crypto is huge in the Ukraine war
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/03/the-role-cryptocurrency-crypto-huge-in-ukraine-war-russia/
China’s Naval Strategists Dissect Ukraine’s USV Strike on Russia’s Black Sea Fleet Base
An update on Ukraine — security, economic, and humanitarian conditions
Having It Both Ways: Russians Both Support and Oppose War
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/having-it-both-ways-russians-both-support-and-oppose-war
Ukraine-Russia: Extension of grain export deals vital to global food security
The Bloody Toll of Russia’s War in Ukraine
https://www.lawfareblog.com/bloody-toll-russias-war-ukraine
A shrinking reservoir signals Ukraine and Russia are waging a dangerous water war
https://www.npr.org/2023/03/22/1164838051/ukraine-russia-war-kakhovka-reservoir
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

World Bank says $411bn cost to rebuild war-torn Ukraine

Ukraine Issues Warning Over Russia’s ‘Atypical Activity’ in Black Sea

Bulgarian Blasts And Russia’s War In Ukraine
https://www.rferl.org/a/bulgaria-sabotage-russia-ukraine-war/32322312.html

Russians bearing gifts shove Ukraine aside to win over Global South
https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-ukraine-war-win-global-south-fertilizer-grain/

Japan’s Kishida Offers Ukraine Support as China’s Xi Backs Russia