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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Making Anti-Corruption Reforms Stick in the Northern Triangle
Will Freeman – Council on Foreign Relations: 12 March 2021
The U.S. has committed to support prosecutors in the Northern Triangle of Central America in their fight against impunity. But corrupt courts, business associations and legislatures could derail the progress if they are not reformed in time.
https://www.cfr.org/blog/making-anti-corruption-reforms-stick-northern-triangle

For more on this theme:

Can blockchain curb South Africa’s rampant corruption?
https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/opinion/can-blockchain-curb-south-africas-rampant-corruption-f88f-2b9e-c0dc-4cf2-b644-d55386b7a5a0

Libya gets new unified government as corruption allegations swirl
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/10/libyan-parliament-approves-unity-government

Peru Presidential Candidate Fujimori Faces New Graft Charges

Myanmar Junta Lobs Corruption Claim at Senior NLD Leaders
https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/myanmar-junta-lobbs-corruption-claim-at-senior-nld-leaders/

Indonesia’s Corruption Eradication Commission in dire straits
https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/03/16/indonesias-corruption-eradication-commission-in-dire-straits/

Rage Spreads in Paraguay as Virus Surges, Exposing Corruption

Saudi Arabia arrests hundreds in its latest corruption crackdown

Is ‘rampant’ corruption crippling Malawi’s COVID-19 response?

Australia’s proposed anti-corruption commission creates ‘retrograde’ system

Western Balkan Civil Society Avoiding Fight Against Corruption, Crime: Report
https://balkaninsight.com/2021/03/15/western-balkan-civil-society-avoiding-fight-against-corruption-crime-re-port/

North Macedonia to Probe Corruption Concerns in Vaccine Procurement Affair
https://balkaninsight.com/2021/03/12/north-macedonia-to-probe-corruption-concerns-in-vaccine-procure-ment-affair/
DRUG TRAFFICKING

The Fuel Not the Fuse: Drug Trafficking and Ecuador’s Prison Violence
Shane Sullivan – InSight Crime: 22 March 2021

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime have been blamed for deadly riots among rival gangs in Ecuador’s prisons, but the carnage has more to do with how the country’s gangs intersect with the drug trade. Drug trafficking was likely an accelerant of Ecuador’s deadly prison riots, though not the direct cause, as officials have claimed.


Drug Trade Is Firmly in Women’s Hands in this African Country
Benjamin Moscovici – Der Spiegel: 18 March 2021

Little functions in the Horn of Africa without the drug khat, and trade in the popular, amphetamine-laden leaf is proving to be crisis-proof. Khat sellers, mostly women, have risen to become their family’s main breadwinners.

https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/khat-in-djibouti-drug-trade-is-firmly-in-women-s-hands-in-this-african-country-a-40251ad8-9f3f-4fd5-99ea-59fc0d121989

For more on this theme:
Salta, Argentina
https://insightcrime.org/argentina-organized-crime-news/salta-argentina/
Formosa, Argentina
https://insightcrime.org/argentina-organized-crime-news/formosa-argentina/
Chaco, Argentina
https://insightcrime.org/argentina-organized-crime-news/chaco-argentina/
Corrientes, Argentina
https://insightcrime.org/argentina-organized-crime-news/corrientes-argentina/

Nigeria Seeks Global Action to Combat Drug Trafficking

Drug abuse: India needs yet bolder steps

US claims seller of encrypted phones violated racketeering and drug laws

U.S. jury convicts Honduran man in drug trafficking case linked to President Hernandez

Revived Drug Routes, Evolving Street Gangs in El Salvador
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Illegal wildlife trade intrinsically linked to drugs and weapons trafficking, report finds
Namita Singh – Independent: 18 March 2021

A recent study found the routes, networks and methods used for illegal trafficking of wildlife are intrinsically linked to the illicit trade of drugs, weapons and other products. If addressed, this could prove hugely beneficial to disrupting illicit activities.


Full report:
Shared Skies
https://routespartnership.org/industry-resources/publications/sharedskies/view

For more on this theme:
Illegal wildlife trade tackled in new federal government trial of world-first X-ray technology

Species traded legally through Hong Kong with inadequate traceability

The Covid-19 question: How do we prevent future pandemics?

How IoT protects animals, reveals behaviors on World Wildlife Day

Illegal loggers seek other income to save forest
https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/03/10/illegal-loggers-seek-other-income-to-save-forest

Illegally Harvested Timber Sold ‘Under Cover’ in Attapeu Province in Laos

Grassroots Activists Work to Save Remaining Cardamom Mountains Rainforest
https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/grassroots-activists-work-to-save-remaining-cardamom-mountains-rainforest/

Illegal fishing: The great threat to Latin America’s marine sanctuaries

Colombia Proposes Centralizing Gold Sales to Fight Crime

Indonesia: Danger Lurks At Illegal Gold Mines

ClientEarth: EU must go digital to crack down on illegal fishing
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Lack of evidence, financial help found hurting Bangladesh trafficking cases
Naimul Karim – Reuters: 22 March 2021

Many of the thousands of human trafficking cases that are stuck in Bangladesh’s justice system are being hampered by a lack of evidence from foreign authorities and scant financial support for victims, a study by nongovernmental organization Justice & Care said.

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-trafficking-court-idUSKBN2BE1FK

For more on this theme:

Libyan military frees more than 100 migrants from traffickers

Fighting human trafficking through a drinks company

Human trafficking risk as seasonal workers feel like ‘slaves’
https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/politics/scottish-politics/2047903/seasonal-workers-scheme/

U.N. forced labour drive hits target with backing of 50 nations

People smuggler put migrants to work in his north west cannabis farms

Maritime migrant smuggling hits record high

How COVID-19 Put The Brakes On Moroccan Smuggling Trade

Mozambican children face exploitation in illegal mining
https://www.africanews.com/2021/03/19/mozambican-children-face-exploitation-in-illegal-mining/

Irregular Migration to Europe: How a New Pact is Shifting Old Routes
https://globalriskinsights.com/2021/03/irregular-migration-to-europe-how-a-new-pact-is-shifting-old-routes/

Canned tuna brands making ‘glacial progress’ in tackling modern slavery

Guyana to enact human smuggling legislation
ORGANIZED CRIME

Cyber security experts launch guidelines to help police crackdown on organised crime

University of Bristol: 22 March 2021

A new center established by the University of Bristol to help protect citizens online has created a shared data science framework to help law enforcement investigate organized crime.

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-03/uob-cse032221.php

For more on this theme:

Special Report: In Brazil, organized crime siphons billions from gas stations

Fake Vaccines Are ‘Liquid Gold’ In Pandemic Crime Wave Worth Billions, Says Interpol

New major interventions to block encrypted communications of criminal networks

MONEY LAUNDERING

Swiss Revise Money Laundering Rules
Katharina Bart – Finews.com: 19 March 2021

Swiss lawmakers passed a revision to anti-money-laundering laws after two years of wrangling. The final version is drawing fierce criticism for allowing loopholes for lawyers and other key advisors to the wealthy.


For more on this theme:

US institutions face money laundering risks with cash payments

Suriname’s corruption and money laundering challenges
https://theglobalamericans.org/2021/03/suriname-s-corruption-and-money-laundering-challenges/

Anti-money laundering technology must operate in a collaborative ecosystem

Bankers And Regulators Want More Cooperation To Combat Money Laundering
https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/anthonycormier/fincen-files-impact-bankers-regulators-seek-cooperation

They Exposed an Alleged Money Laundering Network. Then They Were Sentenced to Death.
INTERNET FREEDOM

China rebukes LinkedIn for failing to control political content: Report
Asian News International: 19 March 2021
Officials said the social network had failed to block objectionable political content, a sign of the sacrifices LinkedIn must make to remain in the vast but difficult market.

For more on this theme:
(Russia) Russia’s Not-So-Great Firewall Is Good Enough to Sway Apple
https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-03-21/russia-s-not-so-great-firewall-is-good-enough-to-sway-apple
(China) China Clamps Down on Software Used to Disguise Voiceprints
(Turkey) Turkish social media law consolidates news censorship under ‘right to be forgotten’
https://cpj.org/2021/03/turkish-social-media-news-censorship/

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

U.S. Supreme Court rebuffs Facebook appeal in user tracking lawsuit
Andrew Chung – Reuters: 22 March 2021
The U.S. Supreme Court declined to consider an appeal by Facebook last week that would have derailed a $15 billion lawsuit over whether the social media website illegally tracked users about a decade ago.

For more on this theme:
(China) China Considers Creating State-Backed Company to Oversee Tech Data
(China) Clubhouse is being investigated by a French internet watchdog, following a complaint over data privacy
(U.S., Global) Second Google Privacy Case Moves Forward
https://www.courthousenews.com/second-google-privacy-case-moves-forward/
**CYBER STATECRAFT**

**EU Council Adopts New Cybersecurity Strategy**
Akshaya Asokan – Gov Info Security: 24 March 2021

The European Union Council adopted conclusions on the EU’s cybersecurity strategy for the digital decade. This strategy outlines the framework for action to protect EU citizens and businesses from cyber threats, promote secure information systems and protect a global, open, free and secure cyberspace.

https://www.govinfosecurity.com/eu-council-adopts-new-cybersecurity-strategy-a-16260

*For more on this theme:*
  https://rusi.org/commentary/what-integrated-review-means-uk-cyber-strategy
- **(China, India) China’s cyber-war with India**  
- **(India) Data Of 26K Indian Websites Leaked In 2020 Amid Delays In National Cybersecurity Policy**  

**CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES**

**University of Northampton hit by cyber attack**
Zach Marzouk – ITPro: 24 March 2021

The University of Northampton in England said a mid-March cyberattack interrupted services to its information technology and telephone systems and servers.


*For more on this theme:*
- **(China, Australia) Days before state election, China suspected of launching cyber-attack on Western Australian parliament**  
- **(Finland, China) APT31 Fingered for Cyber-Attack on Finnish Parliament**  
- **(Japan) Japan: Cyber-attacks on virus control system up by 400%**  
CYBERCRIME

Cyber Crime Is Up -- Way Up
Peter Fretty – Industry Week: 18 March 2021

More than $4 billion was lost by American victims of cybercrime in 2020, according to a new FBI report.
https://www.industryweek.com/technology-and-iiot/article/21158482/cyber-crime-is-up-way-up

For more on this theme:
(India) Almost 300% rise in cyber attacks in India in 2020, govt tells Parliament
(U.K.) Covid fraud: £34.5m stolen in pandemic scams
(Global) Cyber criminals forging Covid-19 vaccine certificates

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

UK cyber security law forcing energy companies to report hacks has led to no reports, despite numerous hacks
Alexander Martin – Sky News: 23 March 2021

The threshold to determine whether an incident affecting energy companies is reportable has prevented any reports from being made.

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) GAO: U.S. Electric Grids Increasingly Vulnerable to Cyber Attacks
(U.S.) Is our critical infrastructure safe from cyber hacks?
(U.S.) New Cybersecurity Programs to Protect US Energy
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Foes in Afghan war see a common threat of Islamic State’s return

An unusual truce between the government and the Taliban has kept the Islamic State out of one former stronghold. But there is a peace paradox: unemployed fighters looking for work.

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/22/world/asia/islamic-state-afghanistan.html

‘Caliphate’ or Not, ISIS Expands Its Reach
Didier Lauras – Agence France-Presse: 19 March 2021

ISIS still holds a powerful attraction for some people despite territorial setbacks. The group is “building and retaining a cellular structure which allows it to carry out terrorist attacks,” according to Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command.


For more on this theme:

Kyrgyzstan Repatriates Dozens Of Children Born To Militants In Iraq

European Parliament calls for repatriation of children from Syrian camps

ISIS in Sinai leader killed in clash with Egyptian forces – report

Islamic State claims responsibility for killing 33 Malian soldiers
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-security/idUSKBN2BD0IT

Islamic State kills hundreds in massacres across the Sahel

ISIS Still a Focus of Counter-Terror Vigilance in U.S.
https://thecrimereport.org/2021/03/18/isis/

ISIS Returns With Force
https://theowp.org/isis-returns-with-force/

ISIS Magazine: Stop Dancing on ‘Tok-Tok’ and Making ‘Aimless and Stupid’ YouTube Videos

Canadian mothers in ISIS detention camp fear their children are being judged on the actions of their parents
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Boko Haram Won’t Stop Targeting Schools in Nigeria
Philip Obaji Jr. – Foreign Policy: 23 March 2021

Boko Haram’s attacks and kidnappings bring it publicity and riches while weakening Nigeria’s security forces.

Al-Qaida Is Diminished, but Don’t Write Its Obituary Just Yet
Colin P. Clarke – World Politics Review: 19 March 2021

To some, the al-Qaida core that was led by Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is a relic of a bygone time. But it has proved remarkably resilient in the past. Even with al-Qaida suffering and its leadership decimated, it’s too early to write the group’s obituary just yet.
https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29506/if-ayman-al-zawahiri-really-is-dead-don-t-write-al-qaida-s-obituary-just-yet

For more on this theme:
A Brief Understanding Of The History Of Terrorism – Analysis

Weaponized Drones: The Next Terrorist Modus Operandi in Southeast Asia?

Taliban expect US withdrawal, vow to restore Islamic rule

Taliban Rejects Afghan President’s Proposal For New Election

Fuel for terrorism
http://www.millenniumpost.in/opinion/fuel-for-terrorism-434730?infinitescroll=1

ASIO chief: COVID pandemic has been a shot in the arm for extremists

US Intelligence Says ISIS and Al-Qaeda Are Planning to Attack Southern Nigeria

Jihadi Movements 2021: ISIS, al Qaeda and Hayat Tahrir al Sham

ASIO’s language shift on terrorism is a welcome acknowledgment of the power of words
https://theconversation.com/asios-language-shift-on-terrorism-is-a-welcome-acknowledgment-of-the-power-of-words-157400

Untangling Taliban’s Ties With Al-Qaeda ‘Extremely Difficult’
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

Teen terrorism inspired by social media is on the rise. Here's what we need to do.
Farah Pandith and Jacob Ware – NBC News: 22 March 2021

When radicalization occurs in the living room and acts of terrorism no longer require complex planning, even teenagers can take part in them. We need to redesign our counterterrorism strategy to account for child and adolescent development and gender differentiation, so we can design more sensitive and targeted countermeasures.


For more on this theme:

Mozambicans fleeing insurgency risk radicalisation, U.N. fears
https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-mozambique-insurgency-idUSKBN2BC0CQ

To fight terrorism, a German imam makes daily trek to prison
https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2021/0323/To-fight-terrorism-a-German-imam-makes-daily-trek-to-prison

How electoral processes fuel extremism in Kenya

Lessons Learned from U.K. Efforts to Deradicalize Terror Offenders
https://ctc.usma.edu/lessons-learned-from-u-k-efforts-to-deradicalize-terror-offenders/

IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

Russia outsources disinformation efforts to foreign troll farms
Gopal Ratnam – Roll Call: 23 March 2021

Ghana, Mexico and Nigeria are among countries where Russia contracts with local hackers to aim disinformation at the United States.

https://www.rollcall.com/2021/03/23/russia-outsources-disinformation-efforts-to-foreign-troll-farms/

For more on this theme:

Russia, China, and the US Push for Influence in Africa

Russia wants to be a power to be reckoned with in the Indian Ocean
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/russia-wants-be-power-be-reckoned-indian-ocean

Analysis: U.S. sanctions on Russia will send a signal, if not deter
IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

What Laws Constrain This Russian Private Military Company?
Zarko Perovic – Lawfare: 23 March 2021
The Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, has played a strategically important role in countries such as Syria, Ukraine and Libya — and it’s found itself repeatedly on the receiving end of U.S. sanctions. But are the group’s actions legal?

For more on this theme:
Mozambique Turns to Green Berets After Russians Fail Against al-Shabaab

What's next for Russia's relations with Hezbollah?
https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/03/whats-next-russias-relations-hezbollah

UN envoy demands foreign fighters and mercenaries exit Libya
https://apnews.com/article/libya-middle-east-elections-united-nations-89021b1d1f3e6c-c09e39e52ee29500fc

Wagner mercenaries are still digging trenches between Sirte and Jufra

Wagner Mercenaries Use Chemical Weapons In CAR – OpEd

Iranian Proxy Attacks on Americans ‘Not Helping Climate in US’ for Reviving Iran Talks, US Envoy Says

Yemeni Rebels Attack Aramco Refinery in Saudi Capital

Iranian Proxy Militia Opens New Recruitment Center in Aleppo, Syria