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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Malaysian Proposal to Phase Out Smoking Sparks Controversy, Concerns Over Corruption
Dave Grunebaum – Voice of America: 30 March 2022

Government statistics show that 1 in 5 Malaysians 15 years of age and older smoke. There are more than 27,000 smoking-related deaths in the country annually. Malaysia has announced plans to permanently ban the sale of tobacco, vapes and e-cigarettes to anyone born after 2005 as part of a "generational end game" for smoking in the country. But there is concern that corruption will undermine the plan.

Russia's attack on Ukraine is a tragic reminder that kleptocracy kills
Eguiar Lizundia – The Hill: 28 March 2022

The devastation brought about by Russia’s offensive in Ukraine is proof that systemic corruption, or kleptocracy, can kill on a grand scale.
https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/599839-russias-attack-on-ukraine-is-a-tragic-reminder-that-kleptocracy/

For more on this theme:

Lebanese judge charges central bank chief with corruption

Tunisian president issues amnesty decree to recoup funds from corruption cases

E. Africa nations step up fight against corruption
https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202203/18/WS6233dea7a310fd2b29e51ac2.html

Saudi Arabia calls on Arab states to join regional anti-corruption network

INTERPOL Launches Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Center

Ex-Honduras first lady Rosa Bonilla convicted of corruption
https://apnews.com/article/honduras-caribbean-embezzlement-tegucigalpa-9761f7e61fb9a35f103b-63111d8930e9

Beating Corruption Needs Attitude Change
https://www.herald.co.zw/editorial-comment-beating-corruption-needs-attitude-change/
DRUG TRAFFICKING

China’s role in poaching and wildlife trafficking in Mexico
Brookings: 29 March 2021

Wildlife trafficking from Mexico to China receives little attention, but it is growing and threatens biodiversity. Moreover, wildlife trafficking, drug trafficking and money laundering have become intertwined in Mexico.


How ‘The Russians’ Took Hold of Ireland’s Heroin Trade
Paulie Doyle, Migle Kranceviciute and Sarunas Cerniauskas – VICE: 30 March 2022

A violent gang of heroin dealers from Lithuania fueled Ireland and Northern Ireland’s drug trade by forcing trafficking victims to sell drugs, a joint investigation by VICE World News and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project reveals.


For more on this theme:
Buddhist Monks Keep Getting Arrested for Corruption, Murder and Drug Trafficking

‘An extradition foretold’: Honduras reacts to ex-president’s fate

Singapore hangs drug trafficker in resumption of executions
https://apnews.com/article/covid-health-executions-singapore-drug-trafficking-840b590e-2240c05629a594e1b1b79e7

PDEA: Online drug trafficking on the rise
https://www.philstar.com/nation/2022/03/27/2170198/pdea-online-drug-trafficking-rise

Drugs, Drug Trafficking, and Pandemic in Argentina

Lebanon’s role in Syria’s Captagon trade
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/syria-lebanon-captagon-ocindex/

Raid Highlights Role of Bolivia Private Aerodromes in Cocaine Corridor

Chile Becomes Increasingly Fertile Ground for Marijuana Plantations
https://insightcrime.org/news/chile-becomes-increasingly-fertile-ground-marijuana/

Philippines boosts narcotics surveillance ahead of full reopening
https://www.arabnews.com/node/2053841/world

Argentine Gendarmerie Seizes Drugs Hidden in Timber Shipments
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Millennia of Indigenous history faces erasure as mining grips Brazil’s Tapajós
Maurício Angelo – Mongabay: 24 March 2022

Archaeological studies in the Tapajós region of Brazil’s Pará state have unearthed rich historical knowledge about the human occupation of the Amazon, recording some of the most ancient relics found in the Americas. But the region has become the target of industrialized illegal mining, which is threatening to erase tens of thousands of years of historical discoveries.

Brazil’s Southern Port of Paranaguá Offers Alternative Route for Europe Cocaine
Chris Dalby – InSight Crime: 28 March 2022

The culmination of a three-year investigation has showcased the important role Brazil’s port of Paranaguá plays in supplying cocaine to Europe, with gangs there in close contact with the Italian mafia.

For more on this theme:
Probe finds palm oil firm illegally clearing forest in Sumatra wildlife haven

Brazilian Organized Crime Destroys the Amazon with Illegal Mining

Keeping Oil from the Fire: Tackling Mexico’s Fuel Theft Racket

Wild meat hunting and trade threatens global sustainability, researchers say

Madagascar’s insistence on using seized rosewood rattles conservationists
https://news.mongabay.com/2022/03/madagascars-insistence-on-using-seized-rosewood-rattles-conservationists/

Application launched to help prevent illegal wildlife trade

Coalition against online wildlife trafficking shares little evidence of success (analysis)

First of its kind project launches new tools to combat Wildlife Trafficking In India’s Airports
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

How Corporations Can Fight Human Trafficking
Jeff Jani – Entrepreneur: 30 March 2022

This $150 billion business of misery is only growing larger thanks to instant app communication, but corporations can help fight it: Here’s how.
https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/420968

For more on this theme:
Now is the time to tackle modern slavery in your organisation

Interpol to help Moldova investigate human trafficking of Ukrainian refugees

What counts for victims of trafficking?
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/what-counts-victims-trafficking

International Engagement Strategy on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

How the sex trade preys on Ukraine’s refugees

ORGANIZED CRIME

In Brazil, Some Internet Providers Suspected of Organized Crime Ties
Voice of America: 29 March 2022

Reuters discovered that internet service in many neighborhoods in Brazil’s major cities has been taken over by suspected criminals. They reportedly are not afraid to use threats and violence to control internet service. Now, tens of thousands of Brazilians have poor-quality internet service that makes millions of dollars for suspected criminals.

For more on this theme:
“Rampant corruption and organised crime” still inherent in Mozambique – report

Organized Crime’s Illegal Mining Destroys Large Areas of Ecuador
https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/organized-crimes-illegal-mining-destroys-large-areas-of-ecuador/

Golden Triangle Gambling Zone the World’s ‘Worst’ SEZ, Group Says
https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/golden-triangle-gambling-zone-the-worlds-worst-sez-group-says/
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET FREEDOM

Russians Need VPNs. The Kremlin Hates Them
Morgan Meaker – Wired: 30 March 2022
VPNs are divided between trying to help Russians stay connected to the global web and steering clear of President Vladimir Putin’s messy politics.

For more on this theme:
(Iran) Iran: Human Rights Groups Sound Alarm Against Draconian Internet Bill
(China) China Streamers Scrub Keanu Reeves Titles over His Support for Tibet
https://www.adweek.com/blognetwork/china-streamers-scrub-keanu-reeves-titles-over-his-support-for-tibet/94915
(Vietnam) Vietnam says over 3,200 “toxic” social media posts removed in Q1
(China) Where Is the Red Line on China’s Internet?
https://www.cfr.org/blog/where-red-line-chinas-internet

CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Vietnam Outlines Plan to Develop Digital Government, Economy
Samaya Dharmaraj – OpenGov: 31 March 2022
Vietnam has outlined goals for digital infrastructure, e-government, and the digital economy and society.

For more on this theme:
(Hong Kong) Hong Kong urged to continue improving data governance
(Ukraine, Russia) Ukraine is inventing a new way to fight on the digital battlefield
https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1089660395
CYBER STATECRAFT

Digital strategic autonomy: the EU needs to go beyond legislation
Justin Nogarede – Euractiv: 31 March 2022

This European Commission has been adamant that Europe needs to become more strategically autonomous when it comes to digital technologies that have become crucial to the functioning of public services, healthcare and education.

For more on this theme:
(EU, U.S.) EU, U.S. Announce Breakthrough in Transatlantic Data Transfer Saga, But Mum on Details
(China) China's Plan for Digital Dominance
https://warontherocks.com/2022/03/chinas-plan-for-digital-dominance/
(Global) Emerging Cyber Threats: No State Is an Island in Cyberspace
https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2022/03/25/emerging_cyber_threats_no_state_is_an_island_in_cyberspace_823744.html

CYBERCRIME

The Rise of Illegal Crypto Mining Hijackers – And Big Tech’s Response
Eliza Gkritsi – CoinDesk: 23 March 2022

Big tech firms like Google and Amazon are on high alert about cryptojacking threats to their cloud servers. As this type of attack grows more prevalent, consumer awareness remains the key to cyber defense, experts say.

For more on this theme:
(Global) The Rise in Cyber Crime: What is it Costing Businesses?
(Japan) Law enacted to create cybercrime bureau at Japan police agency
(Russia, Global) Sanctions Hitting Russian Cyber-Criminals Hard
CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

**Ukrainian telecom company's internet service disrupted by 'powerful' cyberattack**
*By Christopher Bing and Raphael Satter – Reuters: 28 March 2022*

Ukraine’s state-owned telecommunications company Ukrtelecom experienced a disruption in internet service after a “powerful” cyberattack, according to government officials and company representatives.


For more on this theme:

(Global) [Hackers Turn Conti Ransomware Against Russia as Twitter Suspends Some Anonymous Accounts](https://www.hstoday.us/featured/hackers-turn-conti-ransomware-against-russia-as-twitter-suspends-some-anonymous-accounts/)


(Russia, Ukraine, U.S.) [Report: US Concludes Russia’s Military Was Behind Viasat Hack](https://www.pcmag.com/news/report-us-concludes-russias-military-was-allegedly-behind-viasat-hack)

(Global) [How the Russian/Ukraine war may lead to an explosion in Ransomware attacks](https://securityboulevard.com/2022/03/how-the-russian-ukraine-war-may-lead-to-an-explosion-in-ransomware-attacks/)

INTERNET PRIVACY

**Smart devices spy on you – 2 computer scientists explain how the Internet of Things can violate your privacy**
*Roberto Yus and Primal Pappachan – The Conversation: 14 March 2022*

In 2007, it would have been hard to imagine the revolution of useful apps and services that smartphones ushered in. But they came with a cost in terms of intrusiveness and loss of privacy. As computer scientists, we find that with internet connectivity extended to devices in homes, offices and cities, privacy is in more danger than ever.


For more on this theme:
(Global) [Forget state surveillance—it’s advertisers who know you best](https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/forget-state-surveillance-its-advertisers-who-know-you-best/)
ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigeria’s North East
International Crisis Group: 29 March 2022
An ISIS franchise is tightening its hold on parts of northeastern Nigeria near Lake Chad.
https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b180-after-shekau-confronting-jihadists-nige-
rias-north-east

For more on this theme:
ISIS fighters’ children ‘left to fester’ in Syria camps, says charity
https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/syria/2022/03/23/isis-fighters-children-left-to-fester-in-syria-
camps-says-charity/
2 women with links to ISIS escape camp in northeast Syria: report
Syria:-report
The risks of an ISIS comeback
https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/isis-return/
Fueling Insurgency: Liquified Natural Gas, ISIS, and Green Berets in Mozambique
ISWAP: Seven Years After Becoming An ISIS Franchise
https://humangiemedia.com/iswap-seven-years-after-becoming-an-isis-franchise/
SDF’s Luqman Khalil: ISIS threat still exists
Fighting, Fishing, and Filming: The Islamic State’s Maritime Operations
https://cimsec.org/fighting-fishing-and-filming-the-islamic-states-maritime-operations/
Islamic State takes advantage of Ukraine war to increase attacks
https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/islamic-state-takes-advantage-ukraine-war-increase-at-
tacks
The Death Of Islamic State (IS) Leader Abu Ibrahim Al-Qurashi: A Window To Stop The Cycle Of Violence Ideology – Analysis
a-window-to-stop-the-cycle-of-violence-ideology-analysis/
The Strategic Patience of Dawlah Islamiyah in Mindanao
Addressing Islamist Militancy in the Southern Philippines
https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/philippines/323-addressing-islamist-militancy-south-
ern-philippines

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TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Weapons Losses Fueling Africa's Militant Groups
Eric G. Berman – Africa Center for Strategic Studies: 28 March 2022
Loss of munitions and other lethal materiel from African armed forces and peace operations is a key factor sustaining militant groups.
https://africacenter.org/spotlight/weapons-losses-fueling-africa-militant-groups/

Drones: Militant Game Changer in the Middle East?
Rueben Dass – The Defense Post: 24 March 2022
Commercial drones are widely available and weaponizing them does not require much skill.
https://www.thedefensepost.com/2022/03/24/drones-militants-middle-east/

For more on this theme:
‘They promised’: Taliban rescind pledge, cancel girls’ education

When Hate Goes Viral

Examining Digital Currency Usage by Terrorists in Syria

Becoming Armies: When, Why, and How Jihadist Groups Choose to Fight Conventionally
https://mwi.usma.edu/becoming-armies-when-why-and-how-jihadist-groups-choose-to-fight-conventionally/

Should the Houthis Have Remained on U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organizations List?
https://www.hstoday.us/featured/should-the-houthis-have-remained-on-u-s-foreign-terrorist-organizations-list/

Nigeria: 7,000 Boko Haram, other fighters surrender in a week

Attacks intensify as Somalia prepares for presidential election

South Africa poorly prepared to deal with terrorism – report

Haqqanis imposing their radical will on Afghanistan
https://asiatimes.com/2022/03/haqqanis-imposing-their-radical-will-on-afghanistan/

Threats Within: Canada’s spy service boosts attention to ‘ideological’ domestic extremism
RADICALIZATION

**Report: Leading European Neo-Nazi Group Exports Antisemitism Across Scandinavia and Beyond**
*Homeland Security Today: March 2022*

A new report from the Anti-Defamation League identifies the Nordic Resistance Movement of Sweden as the region’s most dangerous right-wing extremist group, saying the virulently antisemitic hate group poses “an ongoing and serious public security threat” and is exporting hate abroad.


*For more on this theme:*

**Welcome to the Challenge of E-extremism**

**Understanding the Game: Bridging Research Gaps at the Nexus of Gaming and Extremism**

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**IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER**

**Ukraine War Puts US Cities, States on Cyber Alert**
*Jenni Bergal – Pew: 24 March 2022*

President Joe Biden urges U.S. companies to be on high alert because of “evolving intelligence” that Russia is exploring options for potential cyberattacks against critical infrastructure targets. Even before Biden’s warning, state and local governments were busy shoring up their cybersecurity.


*For more on this theme:*

**Supo: Russian cyber attacks, espionage pose growing threat to Finnish national security**
https://yle.fi/news/3-12380786

**China, Iran, North Korea, Russia and others using Ukraine invasion in phishing attacks: Google**

**Russia Won't Play the Cyber Card, Yet**

**Russia’s Ukraine Invasion Makes DOD Tech Officials Ask ‘Are We Postured for That Kind of Fight?’**
https://www.nextgov.com/emerging-tech/2022/03/russias-ukraine-invasion-makes-dod-tech-officials-ask-are-we-postured-kind-fight/363589/

**Europe should take aim at its true data threat: Russia**
IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

For more on this theme:

‘I can fight with a keyboard’: How one Ukrainian IT specialist exposed a notorious Russian ransomware gang

Russia and China ‘most likely’ behind state-sponsored cyber threats: Trellix

Managing U.S.-China Tensions Over Public Cyber Attribution
https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/03/28/managing-u.s.-china-tensions-over-public-cyber-attribution-pub-86693

China mounting cyber-attacks to fulfill political objectives: Think tank

Researchers tie Ukraine cyber intrusion attempt to suspected Chinese threat actor ‘Scarab’

Chinese cyberattacks on NATO countries increase 116% since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine: study
https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/chinese-cyberattacks-nato-increase-ukraine

Why Russia’s cyber apocalypse has failed to materialise
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/03/28/russias-cyber-apocalypse-has-failed-materialise/

Video: Belarusian Cyber Partisans Explain Why They’re Hacking to Stop Russia

Ukraine’s volunteer online army: Meet the ‘cyber elves’ fighting Russian trolls on Facebook
https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2022/03/24/ukraine-war-facebook-elves-russia-trolls/9457834002/?gnt-cfr=1

Ukraine’s IT army: Who are the cyber guerrillas hacking Russia?

Leaked hacker logs show weaknesses of Russia’s cyber proxy ecosystem

Inside the Ukrainian Crypto Startup Waging Cyberwar on Russia
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

How Russia May Reprise Its Syrian Playbook in Ukraine
Mona Yacoubian – United States Institute of Peace: 30 March 2022

From its goal of a post-West world to a strategy of civilian terror, Moscow’s war in Europe echoes its Middle East intervention.

https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/03/how-russia-may-reprise-its-syrian-playbook-ukraine

For more on this theme:

Putin’s Truth-Twisters and Non-War in Ukraine

Ukrainians disrupt and derail Russian offensive as war moves to new phase

Europe Soliciting Support from African Leaders for Ukraine
https://www.indepthnews.net/index.php/the-world/africa/5187-europe-soliciting-support-from-african-leaders-for-ukraine

Corruption hinders Russia’s attempts to replace losses with old vehicles — Ukraine
https://www.jpost.com/international/article-702428

What Russia’s invasion of Ukraine says about its military capabilities

Russia’s ambitions, Ukraine’s resistance, and the West’s response

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine: The migration outlook

Ukraine: This isn’t the information war you were looking for
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/ukraine-isn-t-information-war-you-were-looking-for

#NotJustPutin: What Happens When the War Ends?
https://cepa.org/notjustputin-what-happens-when-the-war-ends/

Researchers analyze origins and economic disruption of Russian Ukraine invasion
https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/international-relations-security/researchers-analyze-origins-and

EU leaders send a message to China: Use your leverage to stop Putin

Putin’s war has triggered an exodus out of Russia — but the escape options are shrinking

Analysis: What Does The Ukraine War Mean For West Asia?
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Russia-Ukraine conflict: possible impact on upstream activities in Africa

Lukashenka's Fatal Mistake – Analysis
https://www.eurasiareview.com/280322-lukashenkas-fatal-mistake-analysis/

The Russia-Ukraine war may be bad news for nuclear nonproliferation
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/03/29/the-russia-ukraine-war-may-be-bad-news-for-nuclear-nonproliferation/

One month of war leaves more than half of Ukraine’s children displaced

Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_193719.htm

Ukrainian troops in Mariupol are taking ammo off Russian soldiers and smuggling in weapons to hold out against the assault

Russia has more spies in Mexico than in any other country, the US warns
https://www.theyucatantimes.com/2022/03/russia-has-more-spies-in-mexico-than-in-any-other-country-the-us-warns/

Don't Underestimate the Bear — Russia Is One of the World’s Most Effective Modern Counterinsurgents
https://mwi.usma.edu/dont-underestimate-the-bear-russia-is-one-of-the-worlds-most-effective-modern-counterinsurgents/

Russia's effort to escape diplomatic isolation
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/russia-s-effort-escape-diplomatic-isolation

How Would Those Accused of Ukraine War Crimes Be Prosecuted?
https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/what-are-war-crimes-russia-ukraine/

US, NATO ‘would respond’ if Putin used chemical weapons in Ukraine, Biden says

The Kremlin’s Next Targets? Georgia and Moldova
https://cepa.org/the-kremlins-next-targets-georgia-and-moldova/

Avoiding the Dangers of a Protracted Conflict in Ukraine

Russia's misguided ‘denazification' of Ukraine is a self-fulfilling prophecy
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

What happens in Russia if Putin can't win in Ukraine?

Rattled Russia Re-Embraces the Command Economy
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The Baltic States' Response to War against Ukraine
https://cepa.org/the-baltic-states-response-to-war-against-ukraine/

Analysis: Bogged down in Ukraine, Russia moves war goalposts

As Russia tries to focus its offensive, Ukraine seeks to scattergun

No compromises with the Kremlin: Why we must denazify Putin's Russia

Russia's military is under pressure in Ukraine and refocusing on the east is likely to be a bloody campaign

Ukrainian invasion takes bad turn — for Russia

The real reason Ukraine’s information war is so successful
https://taskandpurpose.com/analysis/ukraine-information-war/

After a month of war, Ukrainian refugee crisis ranks among the world's worst in recent history

Why China is standing by Russia on Ukraine
https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/why-china-standing-russia-ukraine

Analysis: Hard landing: Lessors lose hope of getting Russian planes back

Will Kazakhstan Become Russia's ‘Next Ukraine'? – Analysis
https://www.eurasiareview.com/24032022-will-kazakhstan-become-russias-next-ukraine-analysis/

Reaching Regular Russians
https://cepa.org/reaching-regular-russians/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Russia produces “evidence” claiming Ukraine will attack Crimea
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russian-war-report-russia-produces-evidence-claiming-
ukraine-will-attack-crimea/

A far-right battalion has a key role in Ukraine’s resistance. Its neo-Nazi history has been exploited by Putin

Understanding Central Asia’s Cautious Approach to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine

Jihadists, White Supremacists Vex Russia–Ukraine War
https://www.eurasiareview.com/30032022-jihadists-white-supremacists-vex-russia-ukraine-war-analysis/

Putin Faces the Gambler’s Dilemma
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Could the Ukraine war spill over into Poland?
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How drones are helping fuel propaganda in Ukraine
https://www.popsci.com/technology/russia-ukraine-drone-propaganda-war/

CNN military analyst explains what splitting Ukraine in 2 could look like

UK spy chief says Putin advisors fear telling truth on Ukraine
ukraine