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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Peru’s fight against corruption: ‘Encouraging’ or ‘horrible’?
Howard LaFranchi – Christian Science Monitor: 20 March 2023

For Gino Costa, a past member of Peru’s Congress and a former United Nations human rights official, the country’s recent history of corruption has been “terrible” but it has also been encouraging.

https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2023/0320/Peru-s-fight-against-corruption-Encouraging-or-horrible

Dominican Republic Corruption Investigation Inches Toward Ex-President
Juan Diego Posada and Javier Villalba – InSight Crime: 23 March 2023

Former high-ranking government officials, including several ex-ministers, have been hit with a string of corruption-related charges, advancing a broad investigation into the administration of former President Danilo Medina.


For more on this theme:

Moldova to Target Corruption with New Court for Major Cases
https://balkaninsight.com/2023/03/21/moldova-to-target-corruption-with-new-court-for-major-cases/

The digital solution to fighting corruption
https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/03/18/the-digital-solution-to-fighting-corruption.html

Wartime Reconstruction — Building Barriers Against Corruption Risks
https://www.gao.gov/blog/wartime-reconstruction-building-barriers-against-corruption-risks

Sri Lanka bailout conditional on tackling corruption: IMF

Solomon Islands’ anti-corruption commission brought into question
https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/programs/pacificbeat/solomon-islands-anti-corruption/102123010

Latvian corruption watchdog commences new criminal procedure against Riga’s ex-mayor

Six Myths About China’s Anti-Corruption Campaign – Analysis

Venezuela arrests 21 in corruption crackdown, 11 more wanted

Scandal-plagued China soccer hit by new corruption probes
https://apnews.com/article/china-soccer-football-corruption-communist-party-7e3050caddcb733bb58abda-3c84ee0ee
DRUG TRAFFICKING

US Sanctions Syrian Leader Assad’s Cousins, Others Over Drug Trade

*Reuters:* 28 March 2023

The United States imposed penalties against six people, including two cousins of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, for their role in the production or export of captagon, a dangerous amphetamine, a Treasury Department statement said.


United States Treasury Press Release:

**Treasury Sanctions Syrian Regime and Lebanese Actors Involved in Illicit Drug Production and Trafficking**


Unprecedented Level of Drug Trafficking Needs Corresponding Law Enforcement Response

*Homeland Security Today:* 25 March 2023

Ranging from an increased demand for illicit firearms to the massive profits enabling crime organizations to threaten national security, the pervasive nature of drug trafficking requires reinforced and coordinated global law enforcement.


For more on this theme:

**Colombia risks losing US support in fight against drugs – attorney general**

https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/colombia-risks-losing-us-support-fight-against-drugs-attorney-general-2023-03-27/

**Drug cartel’s submarine fleet: How do drug cartels smuggle cocaine across the sea?**


**A Secret Shipyard Building Submarines for Drug Cartels Just Got Busted**


**A Snapshot of Ontario’s Drug Trafficking Networks**


**Captagon, the New Cocaine of the Middle East?**

https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/captagon-the-new-cocaine-the-middle-east

**China’s role in America’s fentanyl crisis**


**Kicking Europe’s cocaine habit: Which countries in the EU are the worst hit by addiction?**

TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

‘No one can stop it’: Illegal logging surges in Myanmar’s conflict zones
Frontier: 27 March 2023

Logging has accelerated amid the post-coup conflict, with sanctions pushing smugglers to open new routes to India. Activists and locals accuse both the military and resistance groups of profiting off the plunder.


Can a new regional pact protect the Amazon from environmental crime? (commentary)
Carolina Andrade, Melina Risso, Robert Muggah – Mongabay: 28 March 2023

Police, prosecutors, money-laundering experts and others convened in Brazil to tackle drug and environmental crimes that are growing in scale across the Amazon. The group resolved to move beyond occasional raids and destruction of machinery used by crime syndicates and toward a concerted and pan-Amazonian effort for cooperation.


For more on this theme:

Republic of the Congo cannot afford to lose its sharks

Trawling, Trafficking, Smuggling and Spoilage: East Africa’s War on Illicit Maritime Trade, and How Exercise Cutlass Express 2023 is Changing the Narrative

Mexico failed the totoaba, trade with it in protected species should be halted — CITES

Illegal Logging: The Critical Situation Threatening Costa Rica’s Environment

Illegal logging and charcoal trade killing the Congo rainforest

The trees of Lebanon: Victims of the country’s energy crisis

Palm oil deforestation hits record high in Sumatra’s ‘orangutan capital’
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

AI Regulation Still Lagging In Brazil
Wilson Center: 23 March 2023

Days after ChatGPT was launched, a committee of experts presented the Brazilian Senate with a comprehensive study on AI regulation for the country, but proposals have yet to advance.

https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ai-regulation-still-lagging-brazil

For more on this theme:

(Global) The UN Wants More Say Over the Future of the Internet. That’s Not Necessarily A Good Thing.

(Global) Time for an International Cyber Court?
https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/03/26/time-for-an-international-cyber-court/

(Brazil) Meta, Google defend Brazilian law on responsibility for internet content

INTERNET FREEDOM

The United States Convenes Freedom Online Coalition Member States and Other Stakeholders in Washington, D.C.
U.S. Department of State: 28 March 2023

The United States, as the 2023 chair of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC), convened the 36 members. The FOC is a coalition of governments dedicated to advancing internet freedom globally.

https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-convenes-freedom-online-coalition-member-states-and-other-stakeholders-in-washington-d-c/

For more on this theme:

(China) An influential Chinese blogger disappeared from the internet. This woman says she knows why

(China) Chip war and censorship hobble Chinese tech giants in chatbot race

(Germany) They Posted Porn on Twitter. German Authorities Called the Cops
https://www.wired.com/story/germany-twitter-porn-police/
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Lack of skills, immature judicial system weaken SA’s cyber security stance
Christopher Tredger: 24 March 2023

The deficiencies could thwart efforts to enforce South Africa’s Cyber Crimes Act.
https://www.itweb.co.za/content/LPwQ57lbNwkqNgkj

For more on this theme:
(India) Government of India, MeitY Organizes 2-Day Event to Promote Universal Acceptance and Multilingual Internet

(Global) The Digitalization of Democracy: How Technology is Changing Government Accountability
https://www.ned.org/digitalization-democracy-technology-changing-government-accountability/

(Oceania) How does Oceania’s internet compare to the rest of the world?

CYBERATTACKS

Medibank hit by second class-action lawsuit for cyber breach
Mary Or – Insurance Business Australia: 30 March 2023

Medibank has been served with another lawsuit for disclosures on its security systems that led to a serious data breach last October.

For more on this theme:
(Australia) Latitude Financial cyber-attack worse than first thought with 14m customer records stolen

(Global) GoAnywhere Zero-Day Attack Hits Major Orgs
https://www.securityweek.com/goanywhere-zero-day-attack-hits-major-orgs/

(Asia) Security breach. Ransomware attack: Sun Pharma says business operations impacted
CYBERCRIME

Chinese Hackers Targeting Outer Layers of Networks for Cyber Attacks, Using New Malware for “Multi-Year” Intrusions
Scott Ikeda – CPO Magazine: 27 March 2023

A new report from Google’s Mandiant finds that Chinese hackers are now focusing on the outer layers of target networks, even antivirus software and firewalls, as an entry point for cyberattacks and a place to dwell for years while evading detection.


For more on this theme:

(North Korea) North Korean APT43 Group Uses Cybercrime to Fund Espionage Operations
https://thehackernews.com/2023/03/north-korean-apt43-group-uses.html

(Global) Cybercrime, fraud using ChatGPT on the rise, says Europol
https://www.scmagazine.com/brief/cybercrime/cybercrime-fraud-using-chatgpt-on-the-rise-says-europol

(U.K.) UK's NCA infiltrates cybercrime market with fake DDoS sites
https://www.hackread.com/nca-cybercrime-market-fake-ddos-sites/

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

New Zealand’s critical infrastructure vulnerable to hackers – Cyber security expert
Anan Zaki – RNZ: 28 March 2023

An international cybersecurity expert thinks New Zealand’s critical infrastructure remains vulnerable, and warns consumers will pick up the tab as firms face costly system upgrades.


For more on this theme:

(U.S.) Cybersecurity Advisory Committee Discusses Work to Help ‘Target-Rich, Cyber-Poor’ Sectors

(Australia) Australia: New SOCI Critical Infrastructure Risk Management Program Rules now in effect

(U.S.) New Marine Transportation System Resilience Assessment Guide Encourages Unified Approach to Risk Mitigation

(Global) Securing the Undersea Cable Network
https://www.lawfareblog.com/securing-undersea-cable-network
ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

ISIS would return to Syria in 'one to two years' if US forces leave, says top general
Ellie Sennett – The Nation: 23 March 2023

The head of United States Central Command defended Washington’s presence in Syria, warning that without U.S. troops, the Islamic State group would return to the war-torn country.

IntelBrief: Islamic State Khorasan Remains a Stubborn Threat in Afghanistan
The Soufan Center: 29 March 2023

Globally, the Islamic State group is dedicating more resources to its affiliates in Afghanistan and Africa, especially as its core group comes under intense assault in Syria, while some franchises that were formerly prominent continue to ebb, such as those in Southeast Asia, Libya and Egypt.
https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2023-march-29/

For more on this theme:
Norway says repatriating five from ISIS-linked camp in Syria
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/29032023

ISIS kills 15 truffle hunters in Syria: Monitor
https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2023/03/24/ISIS-kills-15-truffle-hunters-in-Syria-Monitor-

Foreign mothers of Canadian children seek escape from detention camp
https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/foreign-mothers-of-canadian-children-seek-escape-from-deten-

At least 6 killed in latest suicide attack aimed at Afghanistan’s Taliban rulers
https://www.cbsnews.com/news/afghanistan-bombing-kabul-taliban-foreign-ministry-targeted-possi-

‘Stateless’ after ISIS
https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/stateless-after-isis-6.2.1666295.5d7b275754

How Dangerous Is the Islamic State-Khorasan?

The Islamic State After the “Caliphate”: Still Remaining and Expanding

Major Foreign Terror Attack on US ‘Almost Inconceivable’ Right Now
https://www.voanews.com/a/major-foreign-terror-attack-on-us-almost-inconceivable-now-/7024409.html
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Somalia’s Latest Battles Against Al-Shabaab
*International Crisis Group: 24 March 2023*

Omar Mahmood, Crisis Group’s Somalia expert, discusses the Somali army’s latest offensive, together with clan militias, against Al-Shabaab’s Islamist insurgency.


Nearly 600 Former Boko Haram Militants Graduate From Nigeria Rehab
*Timothy Obiezu – Voice of America: 27 March 2023*

Nigerian authorities say a rehabilitation program for former Boko Haram fighters is helping weaken the group’s fighting power. Nearly 600 recent graduates tendered a public apology for their actions. Authorities say they will be reintegrated into society, but experts warn of possible relapse.


For more on this theme:

Sustaining Gains in Somalia’s Offensive against Al-Shabaab

Somalia’s clan offensive is gaining ground against Al-Shabaab

Hezbollah chief refuses comment on infiltration into Israel
https://apnews.com/article/israel-lebanon-hezbollah-infiltration-2a54e39122b4d8b1621dfcbe264c-6efa

Afghanistan school year begins without classes as students unaware and teen girls barred

UN Security Council Asks For Advice On Dealing With Afghan Taliban

Resisting the Taliban’s New Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan

Taliban Militants Fed Up With Office Culture, Ready to Quiet Quit

No good options for Pakistan as it tries to stem a new wave of militancy
https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2023/03/16/pakistan-taliban-new-wave-militancy

Taliban: Violators Of Pashtunwali – OpEd
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

For more on this theme:

The Sahel now accounts for nearly half the world’s terrorism
https://unherd.com/thepost/sahel-accounts-for-nearly-half-the-worlds-terrorism/

Speakers Warn Security Council Terrorism Spreading across Africa at Alarming Rate, Call for Greater Support, Enhanced International, Regional Cooperation

Deeply Concerned by Terrorists’ Gains in Sahel, Elsewhere, Secretary-General Tells Security Council Human-Rights Based Approach crucial to End Scourge

Taliban’s Diplomatic Presence Growing in Central Asia

Hunger and Terrorism: The Humanitarian Crisis in the Lake Chad Basin Region

Al-Shabab Has Lost Third of its Territory, US Ambassador Says

Reclaiming Al Shabaab’s Revenue
https://africacenter.org/spotlight/reclaiming-al-shabaabs-revenue/

No Justice, No Peace: Al-Shabaab’s Court System
https://hir.harvard.edu/no-justice-no-peace-al-shabaabs-court-system/

Maturing HAMAS Information Operations Gives Iran Another Asset in the Region

The Taliban in government: A grim new reality is settling in

The Role of Technology and Innovation in Countering Extremism and Terrorism

Education and awareness are key to stopping online radicalization
https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/education-and-awareness-are-key-to-stopping-online-radicalisation/
CRIME AND CONFLICT

The vulnerable millions: Organized crime risks in Ukraine's mass displacement
Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime: 29 March 2023

The risks of human trafficking were quickly flagged by many in the international community in the wake of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/ukraine-conflict-crime-displacement-risk-trafficking-smuggling/

For more on this theme:

How the ICC’s Warrant for Putin Could Impact the Ukraine War

Russian troops’ cruelty goes far beyond the laws of war

UN decries torture, killing of Ukrainian and Russian POWs
https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-pow-russia-war-united-nations-29bc27d06d6bad359c957f0b0aa9f929

Kyiv urges Russians not to adopt Ukraine’s ‘stolen’ children

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

US supports creation of a special tribunal for ‘aggression’ against Ukraine
https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/us-supports-creation-special-tribunal-aggression-against-ukrain

Core International Crimes Committed In Las Anod By Somaliland’s Forces — Analysis

UN rights office details latest abuses in Russia’s attack on Ukraine
https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/un-rights-office-details-latest-abuses-russias-attack-

Russian leaders could be tried in absentia for aggression in Ukraine — Kyiv official
https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-leaders-should-be-tried-absentia-aggression-ukraine-kyiv-offi

Ukraine: Prosecuting the Crime of Genocide
https://iwpr.net/global-voices/ukraine-prosecuting-crime-genocide
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Russia’s War in Ukraine Has ‘Severely Dislocated the Russian Military’s Training System’

Voice of America: 24 March 2023

Russia’s military training instructors have largely been deployed in Ukraine, according to Britain’s Defense Ministry.


For more on this theme:

Estonia Expels Russian Diplomat For ‘Spreading Propaganda’ In Favor Of Moscow’s Military Actions

https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-estonia-diplomat-expulsion/32332850.html

Ukraine’s Zelensky: Any Russian victory could be perilous

https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-zelensky-russia-putin-bakhmut-2334ec3a5b74d3cc3c4e012d-b71920e5

Agile Ukraine, Lumbering Russia

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/russia-ukraine-war-lumbering-agile

New Russian campaign tries to entice men to fight in Ukraine

https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-mobilization-recruits-military-draft-9339329bb5a5d-c6956fe588bab98961

Foreign volunteers race to train new Ukrainian troops to be sent to the front

https://www.npr.org/2023/03/27/1164935413/russia-ukraine-war-foreign-veterans-train-ukrainian-soldiers

China-linked Russian body armor is landing on the battlefield in Ukraine


Russia Is Waging War on Ukraine’s Hospitals


Flashpoint Ukraine: Russia Uses Water as a Weapon of War


West Regains ‘Unity, Purpose’ in Light of Russian Ukraine War, Poll Indicates


Preparations for ‘de-occupation’: Annexed Crimea not forgotten by Ukraine


Russia pardons 5,000 former criminals after fighting in Ukraine, Prigozhin says


Not Stopping Russia in Ukraine Would Force ‘Doubling’ of US Defense Budget, Milley Says

RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

What to do about the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant

Russia says oil sales to India surged amid war in Ukraine

Former Ukraine General Predicts Russia Will Launch Major Summer Offensive

Interview: What Ukraine Wants From Russia May Be ‘Moral,’ But Is It ‘Practical’?

Ukraine is changing the math for countries caught between the U.S. and China

In Preparation for Spring Offensive, Ukraine Organizes Additional Assault Brigades
https://jamestown.org/program/in-preparation-for-spring-offensive-ukraine-organizes-additional-assault-brigades/

Amid Russia's Problems, China Assumes a Larger Role in the Arctic

China Finally Enters Russia’s Technological Treasure House
https://cepa.org/article/china-finally-enters-russias-technological-treasure-house/

Russia’s War Has Prompted Tens of Thousands of Ukrainian Women to Enlist

Why Russian Space Satellites Are Failing in the Ukraine War

Putin’s plan for a new Russian Empire includes both Ukraine and Belarus

Russia’s Ukraine invasion is eroding Kremlin influence in Kazakhstan

The real definition of victory for Ukraine
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/the-real-definition-of-victory-for-ukraine/

More Of Putin’s Blackmail: Russia Basing Tactical Nuclear Weapons In Belarus
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

The Case For International Humanitarian Intervention In Ukraine

Seven Lessons From Latvia A Year After Russia's Invasion Of Ukraine

Why Crimea Must Be Returned To Ukraine

Russia's Unconventional Operations During the Russo-Ukrainian War
https://www.realcleardefense.com/2023/03/30/russias_unconventional_operations_during_the_russo-ukrainian_war_890319.html

Russia's diplomatic clash with Europe flares in Estonia

Nord Stream Deep Dive Finds Putin's Fingerprints
https://cepa.org/article/nord-stream-deep-dive-finds-putins-fingerprints/

Iran uses Russian war on Ukraine to modernize, develop own UAV program
https://lansinginstitute.org/2023/03/29/iran-uses-russian-war-on-ukraine-to-modernize-develop-own-uav-program/

Xi and Putin Flaunt Deepening Ties, Flout the U.S.-led Order

War in Ukraine: the new geography of cyber warfare