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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

ORGANIZED CRIME AROUND THE WORLD

Europol report identifies the most threatening criminal networks in the EU
Europol: April 2024

Serious organized crime remains a major threat to the internal security of the European Union. To effectively prioritize resources and guide policy action, law enforcement and policymakers need to build a clear understanding of the most threatening criminal networks active in, and affecting, the EU.


Full report:
Decoding the EU’s most threatening criminal networks

For more on this theme:
Kidnappings in Chad could spark a regional security crisis

Interpol reveals the alarming expansion of organised crime rings in Southeast Asia

Sicily’s Mafia Is Expanding Its White Collar Crime

DRUG TRAFFICKING

Spain battles drug wave amid growing violence
Eva Vilà – Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime: 9 April 2024

The killing of two police officers by suspected drug traffickers in February has highlighted the growing vulnerability of the country as one of the main entry points for drugs into Europe.

https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/spain-drug-trafficking-violence-ocindex/

For more on this theme:
EU-Seychelles accord could slow Indian Ocean drug trade
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/eu-seychelles-accord-could-slow-indian-ocean-drug-trade

Vietnam on alert as drug smuggling surges via maritime routes

Decreased Cocaine Flows Lead to Increased Extortion in Northern Colombia
CYBERCRIME (FRAUD, EXPLOITATION, ETC.)

‘Digital arrest’ is the latest weapon in the arsenal of cybercriminals
M A Saleem – Deccan Herald: 31 March 2024

In the ever-expanding world of cybercrime, a new tactic known as “digital arrest” has emerged. In this scheme, fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials to manipulate victims.

For more on this theme:
Canva Faces Scrutiny by Indian Authorities on Rising Cyber Fraud Activities
https://thecyberexpress.com/canva-cyber-fraud/

FBI: More Than $12 Billion Lost to Online Fraud in 2023

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Zimbabwe Grappling With Human Trafficking Scourge
Blessing Zulu – Voice of America: 1 April 2024

The U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report has described Zimbabwe as “one of the Sub-Saharan African nations grappling with a serious undercurrent of human trafficking. (It) has also turned into a source, destination, and transit for this scourge.”

For more on this theme:
Public-Private Partnerships and Mitigating Human Trafficking

Cambodia’s Cyber-Slavery Trafficking Denials Reflect Official Complicity, Experts Say

The rocky road to justice for victims of human trafficking and abused migrants

Special Report: The hidden links between human trafficking and the insurance sector

Interpol operation reveals further insights into ‘globalization’ of cyber scam centres
MIGRANT SMUGGLING

Tunisia’s Transformation Into a Transit Hub: Illegal Migration and Policy Dilemmas
Hamza Meddeb and Fakhreddine Louati – Carnegie: 27 March 2024

Several developments have contributed to the country becoming a transit point for African migrants, including its porous borders, inconsistent migration policies, the proliferation of xenophobic attitudes and deteriorating economic conditions.


For more on this theme:

Organised Immigration Crime in the UK: A Resilient Business Model

Migrant smuggling in Southeast Asia due to conflict, climate change, corruption: UN
https://bdnews24.com/world/asia-pacific/pxi5wy7uu5

TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Celebrating the amazing and inspiring women transforming wildlife criminal justice in Nigeria
Justin Gosling – Environmental Investigation Agency: 10 April 2024

The region has emerged as the global hub for the trafficking of illegal wildlife products, primarily bound for Asian markets.


For more on this theme:

When the War on Terror Met Conservation
https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/war-on-terror-conservation

The Simple Fraud Undermining Europe’s Most Sophisticated Timber Tracing System

How Congo’s timber is smuggled through Uganda

Illegal mining in the Pan Amazon: an ecological disaster for floodplains and local communities

West Africa’s falling fish stocks: illegal Chinese trawlers, climate change and artisanal fishing fleets to blame
WASTE TRAFFICKING

UN Cites Southeast Asia as Destination for the World’s Illegal Waste
Henry Pope – Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: 3 April 2024

The new report has revealed how countries across the region are exploited by the illegal trade of waste via black-market dumping and the exploitation of legal loopholes that allow criminals to circumvent regulations.


For more on this theme:
Explainer: What is Waste Trafficking?

‘Waste colonialism’ in Malaysia due to massive imports of plastic waste from Japan

 Trafficking of illicit waste towards Tunisia, huge seizure at the port of Carrara

SPORTS CORRUPTION

FIFA and UEFA seek answers amid corruption probe into Spanish federation
Rohith Nair – Reuters: 28 March 2024

World soccer governing body FIFA and its European counterpart UEFA have written to the Spanish Football Federation requesting a detailed update after arrests were made in a corruption probe.


For more on this theme:
“Big Influence From Shoe Companies”: World Athletics President Sebastian Coe Spills the Beans on Widespread Corruption in the Sport

Tennis News: Match-Fixing Scandal Rocks the Sport Once Again as Spanish Player Slapped With Huge Ban

Japanese Public Divided Over Hosting Future Olympic Games As Corruption, Bid-Rigging Scandals Blunt Enthusiasm
https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/sports/olympics-paralympics/20240410-179578/
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

**Governing AI in the global disorder**
*Mercedes Page – The Strategist: 2 April 2024*

It’s a truth universally acknowledged that finding consensus on anything in the international system is difficult at the best of times, let alone in this age of geopolitical fracture, ideological contest and “permacrisis.”


*For more on this theme:*

(Global) Making emerging technologies safe for democracy

(Southeast Asia) In embracing AI, Southeast Asia must consider sobering climate costs
https://www.scmp.com/comment/asia-opinion/article/3256966/embracing-ai-southeast-asia-must-consider-sobering-climate-costs

(China) China Bets Big on Military AI
https://cepa.org/article/china-bets-big-on-military-ai/

(U.S.) AI makes the fight for net neutrality even more important
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ai-makes-the-fight-for-net-neutrality-even-more-important/

INTERNET FREEDOM

**Experts fear Cambodian cybercrime law could aid crackdown**
*Fiona Kelliher and Sun Narin – Voice of America: 8 April 2024*

The government is pushing ahead with a law that experts say could be wielded to further curtail freedom of speech.


*For more on this theme:*

(China) In China, drones, social media monitor foreign journalists: report

(Iran) EU Drops Sanctions On Iranian Tech Firm Accused Of Internet Censorship

(Caribbean) Digital Rights in the Caribbean: Not to be Lost in the Eternal Darkness

(Global) Tehran cooked up a conspiracy theory blaming Israel for US TikTok ban
CYBER STRATEGY

Cybersecurity in Malaysia: A reality check on readiness and resilience
Muhammad Zulhusni – Techwire Asia: 2 April 2024

The country has been involved in, and targeted by, a significant number of cyberattacks and data leaks. These incidents raise questions about its readiness to face threats within the evolving cybersecurity environment.


For more on this theme:

(Belarus) Belarus Cyber Partisans Prepare For Uprising
https://cepa.org/article/belarus-cyber-partisans-prepare-for-uprising/

(India) Cyberespionage Campaign Targets Government, Energy Entities in India

(U.S.) DOD Releases Strategy to Bolster Cybersecurity Across Industrial Base

CYBER WARFARE

Check Point: Iran has doubled its cyber attacks on Israel in the past week
Viki Auslender – C Tech: 10 April 2024

The cybersecurity company estimates that the Revolutionary Guard and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence carried out more than 2,000 attacks each in a recent week. Among the targets: academic colleges and local authorities. “Israel is attacked 30% more than anywhere else in the world,” the company said.

https://www.calcalistech.com/ctechnews/article/iy8czoud7

For more on this theme:

(Russia, Ukraine) What security pros can learn about AI from the Russia-Ukraine war

(Russia, Ukraine) Ukraine’s Blackjack credited for taking down data center used by Russian military

(Global) Is a cyber arms control treaty out of reach?

(Israel, Iran) What will Iran’s Oct. 7-level cyberattack on Israel look like? Cybersecurity official weighs in
MILITARY’S ROLE IN CYBER

Germany announces military overhaul with eye on cyber threats

Reuters: 4 April 2024

The country’s defense minister announced a new central command and a dedicated branch for cyberspace, furthering a restructuring launched in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.


For more on this theme:

(U.S.) What will the elevation of Air Forces Cyber look like?
https://defensescoop.com/2024/04/05/elevation-air-forces-cyber-afcyber-will-look-like/

(U.S.) Leadership, Culture, and the Military Cyber Workforce

(U.S.) Army divesting cyber situational awareness program
https://defensescoop.com/2024/04/08/army-divesting-cyber-situational-understanding/

(U.S.) With new authorities and assistant secretary, DOD prepares for next generation of cyber

CYBER RESILIENCE

Why Intelligence Sharing Is Vital to Building a Robust Collective Cyber Defense Program

Marc Solomon – Security Week: 11 April 2024

With automated, detailed, contextualized threat intelligence, organizations can better anticipate malicious activity and speed detection around proven attacks.


For more on this theme:

(GLOBAL) Cyber Resilience Is Your Business: How To Improve It
https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2024/04/03/cyber-resilience-is-your-business-how-to-improve-it/?sh=77128aa07da4

(EU) Open source foundations unite on common standards for EU’s Cyber Resilience Act

(THAILAND) Limited readiness in Thailand against current threats
https://www.nationthailand.com/blogs/thailand/general/40036829
PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Facing cyber attacks, critical infrastructure gets new reporting requirements
Eric White – Federal News Network: 9 April 2024

A newly proposed rule by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency tasks those operating in critical infrastructure sectors to report cyber incidents within 72 hours and to report ransom payments within 24 hours of making a payment. The requirements would significantly lengthen the to-do list of these entities.


For more on this theme:
(Global) An Overview of the Impact of GenAI and Deepfakes on Global Electoral Processes

(U.S.) EPA Warns US Water Systems Vulnerable to a Disruptive Cyber Attack, State Governors Must Do More

(U.S.) US dam cybersecurity severely lacking
https://www.scmagazine.com/brief/us-dam-cybersecurity-severely-lacking

(Global) The Water Sector Is Being Threatened. That Should Worry Everyone
https://www.oodaloop.com/archive/2024/04/08/the-water-sector-is-being-threatened-that-should-worry-everyone/

CYBERCRIME

Zambia uncovers ‘sophisticated’ Chinese cybercrime syndicate
Wycliffe Muia – BBC: 10 April 2024

An “internet fraud syndicate” has been uncovered in the country, leading to the arrest of 77 people, including 22 Chinese nationals.


For more on this theme:
(Yemen) Cyberbullying on the Rise in Yemen
https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/92176

(Global) World’s first ‘cybercrime index’ reveals where cyber criminals most active

(Global) Rise of non-tech hackers: new era of cyber threats
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Lake Chad Basin states can sever terrorism's lifeline — its financing
Malik Samuel – Institute for Security Studies: 9 April 2024
Disrupting the local economies of violence is crucial to defeating terrorist groups.
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/lake-chad-basin-states-can-sever-terrorism-s-lifeline-its-financing

For more on this theme:

Brief: Surrender of Another Abu Sayyaf Militant Signals Philippines' Continued Counter-Terrorism Success

Focus on High-Value Military Targets Emphasizes the TJP’s Link to the TTP
https://jamestown.org/program/focus-on-high-value-military-targets-emphasizes-the-tjps-link-to-the-ttp/

Kyrgyzstan’s Repatriation of Foreign Fighters’ Wives and Children from Syrian Camps Marks the End of an Era

Putin Is No Ally in the War on Terror in 2024
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/putin-no-ally-war-terror-2024

The Continuing Threat of ISIS in Iraq after the Withdrawal of the International Coalition

Russia, Germany and UK urge restraint as Iranian threat puts Middle East on edge

Unveiling ISIS-K: origins, goals and possible impact
https://iari.site/2024/04/06/unveiling-isis-k-origins-goals-and-possible-impact/

A decade on, tragedy of Nigeria’s Chibok Girls endures outside the spotlight

Eyes in the Sky: The Innovation Dilemma of Drone Proliferation among Violent Non-State Actors in the Sahel

The potential terrorist use of large language models for chemical and biological terrorism
GRAY ZONE DYNAMICS AND INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

IntelBrief: Iran Extends its Influence in Africa
The Soufan Center: 1 April 2024

Tehran is capitalizing on the widening rift between several postcoup leaders in the Sahel and Western countries, including France and the United States. Iran thinks that expanded relations with African leaders can help it circumvent U.S.-led sanctions and enhance the Iranian role as a supplier of sophisticated weaponry — particularly armed drones.

https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-april-1/

For more on this theme:

**Putin is weaponizing corruption to weaken Europe from within**
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putin-is-weaponizing-corruption-to-weaken-europe-from-within/

**A Mixed Picture: How Mali Views the Wagner Group**
https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/mixed-picture-how-mali-views-wagner-group

**Putin-Xi: A ‘Brave New World’ for Eurasia?**
https://cepa.org/article/putin-xi-a-brave-new-world-for-eurasia/

**Confronting the China Challenge in Africa: The Lobito Corridor**

**Putin and Kim’s Nuclear Axis**

**More Than MOFA: China’s Comprehensive Diplomacy**
https://thediplomat.com/2024/03/more-than-mofa-chinas-comprehensive-diplomacy/

**Conflict Between Russia and the West Heating Up in Frozen North**

**NATO’s New Energy Makes Russia Anxious and Angry**

**China’s Governance Workshops Seek to Promote China’s Brand in the Middle East**
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/chinas-governance-workshops-seek-promote-chinas-brand-middle-east

An espionage scandal rocks Austria, laying bare alleged Russian spying operations across Europe

**New Chinese Gray Zone Warfare Against India**
https://menafn.com/1108067040/New-Chinese-Gray-Zone-Warfare-Against-India

Chinese hackers are using AI to inflame social tensions in US, Microsoft says
https://therecord.media/china-ai-influence-operations

Information warfare becoming a critical submarine capability: Aeschbach
ISRAEL/HAMAS

Six months into the war in Gaza, everyone seems to be losing
Alexander Smith – NBC News: 7 April 2024

When armed terrorists burst across the border from the Gaza Strip into Israel and unleashed a devastating massacre, 1,200 people were killed and more than 250 were taken hostage by Hamas. What followed has been a war that on some level everybody appears to be losing.


For more on this theme:

6 months on: What is the impact of the war in Gaza?
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/six-months-on-what-is-the-impact-of-the-war-in-gaza/

The war in Gaza risks pulling in Hezbollah and Lebanon

Four ways Iran could retaliate against Israel’s latest strike

Half a year into the war in Gaza, here’s a look at the conflict by the numbers
https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-gaza-war-statistics-95a6407fac94e9d589be234708cd5005

How 6 months of Israel’s war in Gaza have upended the Middle East
https://www.npr.org/2024/04/06/1243049448/israel-hamas-war-gaza-6-months-middle-east

With little fanfare, Gaza war enters a new stage, from high to low intensity

Potential Outcomes from the Israel-Hamas War
https://today.duke.edu/2024/04/potential-outcomes-israel-hamas-war

Israeli military says it has increased its readiness for war in north

Israel’s military says it is constructing new northern crossing for aid to reach Gaza

Cease-fire talks remain stalled as Israel and Hamas ‘appear to be far apart’

Gaza: Benjamin Netanyahu sets date for Rafah offensive as pressure grows

Counterterrorism expert explains how an Israel-Hamas hostage deal could alter the war
ISRAEL/HAMAS

For more on this theme:

How powerful is Hamas after 6 months of war with Israel?

Six months into the war in Gaza, Israel has no exit strategy and no real plan for the future

Palestinian Security Forces Caught Between A Rock And A Hard Place – Analysis

Why Russia Doesn’t Want War Between Israel and Iran

Analysis: Hezbollah’s expected Response to IRGC-QF Gen. Mohammad Zahedi’s killing

RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Behind the Lines: Ukraine Warns Russia’s Neighbors to Prepare for Resistance
Elina Beketova – CEPA: 11 April 2024
The Ukrainian people’s resistance was planned long before tanks crossed the border, and they warn other Europeans to be ready to repel Moscow’s aggression.
https://cepa.org/article/behind-the-lines-ukraine-warns-russias-neighbors-to-prepare-for-resistance/

For more on this theme:

Is the Kremlin Overconfident About Russia’s Economic Stability?
https://carnegieendowment.org/2024/04/10/is-kremlin-overconfident-about-russia-s-economic-stability-pub-92174

Western Sanctions on Russia Should Be More Pragmatic and Less Punitive
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/92158

How Serious Are Ukrainian Drone Attacks for Russia?
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/92132

“It’s Time To Slowly Bleed Russia’s Economy Dry”

Test Run: Russia and China
https://cepa.org/article/test-run-russia-and-china/

Resilience, Reconstruction, Recovery: The Path Ahead for Ukraine
https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/resilience-reconstruction-recovery-the-path-ahead-for-ukraine/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Russia Squeezed as Sanctions Bite
https://cepa.org/article/russia-squeezed-as-sanctions-bite/

The Elite Ukrainian Brigade Everyone Wants to Join
https://cepa.org/article/the-elite-ukrainian-brigade-everyone-wants-to-join/

Moscow Uses Russian Orthodox Church as Covert Foreign Policy Tool in Ukraine and the West

Ukrainian Mobilization Becomes Increasingly Urgent
https://jamestown.org/program/ukrainian-mobilization-becomes-increasingly-urgent/

Ethnically Non-Russian Formations in Russia’s War on Ukraine: The Volga Region
https://jamestown.org/program/ethnically-non-russian-formations-in-russias-war-on-ukraine-the-volga-region/

Ukraine war: China must go beyond rhetoric to emerge as a peacemaker
https://www.scmp.com/opinion/world-opinion/article/3258470/ukraine-war-china-must-go-beyond-rhetoric-emerge-peacemaker

Ukrainians Stirred, Not Shaken
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukrainians-stirred-not-shaken

Ukraine’s veterans can transform the country’s postwar political landscape

The Biden administration is sounding the alarm about Chinese support for Russia
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/inflection-points/the-biden-administration-is-sounding-the-alarm-about-chinese-support-for-russia/

Ukraine’s grain exports are crucial to Africa’s food security

U.S. Commander in Europe Says Russia Is a ‘Chronic Threat’ to World

Top US general warns Ukraine on brink of being overrun by Russia

As Russia tests for weak spots, Ukraine is banking on enemy mistakes

Ukraine war: battlefield tipping in Russia’s favour as Kyiv begs allies for more arms
‘Significant consequences’ if Chinese firms help Russia’s war in Ukraine, US’s Yellen warns

Russia ups blame-shifting for terror attack to Ukraine, brags it’s boosting recruitment

Who are Russia’s allies in Putin’s war against Ukraine?

The Clock Is Ticking: Russia Has A One-Year Reserve Of Weapons

Russia Uses Pay, Perks To Promote Labor Migration To Occupied Areas In Ukraine

Kyiv asks allies for help against alleged Russian abuse of Ukrainian POWs

China is providing satellite intelligence for military purposes to Russia, US warns, says report

How have China and Russia beefed up their relationship after Ukraine war wobble? Expert Q&A
https://theconversation.com/how-have-china-and-russia-beefed-up-their-relationship-after-ukraine-war-wobble-expert-qanda-227585

Help us build wind farms to beat Russian bombs, Ukraine tells EU

Where Did Vladimir Putin’s Dream Of A ‘Russian World’ Come From? – Analysis

Ukraine war: How to check Russia’s momentum
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/ukraine-war-how-check-russia-s-momentum