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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

European Union Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment
Europol: 12 April 2021

Europol released its quadrennial report on organized crime in the European Union. “EU SOCTA 2021” looks at changes in serious organized crime in Europe and expected developments, provides an overview of criminal networks and their operations, and maps out measures to fight organized crime. A link to download the full report is included.


Fishing with Dynamite: The Secret Scheme That Helped Namibia’s President Stay in Power
Khadija Sharife, Mark Anderson and The Namibian – Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: 2 April 2021

Namibian President Hage Geingob has been implicated in corruption allegations involving the country’s lucrative fishing industry. An investigation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and The Namibian newspaper details how Geingob allegedly instructed associates to embezzle millions of dollars.


For more on this theme:

COVID-19, lies and statistics: corruption and the pandemic
https://www.preventionweb.net/news/view/77037

Anti-corruption regulation 2021

Criminal Groups Zero in on Mexico Resort Construction

Chechen Leader Ramzan Kadyrov Has a Second Wife — And Her Properties Are Worth Millions

Judge accused of corruption was kidnapped and taken back to Ukraine, Moldova says
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-moldova-judge-idUSKBN2BS0XR

A bit of sunlight on Ukraine corruption

Terminus: How corruption risks derailed Riga’s tramline development – and what we learn from it

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DRUG TRAFFICKING

Feds Allege Tech CEO Designed ‘Parasitic Narco Sub’ for Drug Cartels
Matthew Gault – Vice: 7 April 2021

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has discovered that American tech millionaire Marty Tibbets, who died in a plane crash in 2018, led a double life, financing a drug trafficking organization and designing drone submarines to smuggle narcotics into Europe.


Colombia's cartels target Europe with cocaine, corruption and torture
Daniel Boffey – The Guardian: 11 April 2021

Operation Sky, a new Belgian police operation targeting Western Europe’s narco-gangs, kicked off in March 2021. The operation has revealed the alarming extent to which Colombian drug cartels are now targeting Europe.


For more on this theme:

European cops collected data from encrypted chat service for weeks prior to cocaine bust

COVID-19 has changed drug trafficking: UN official

Covid, cocaine take Europe to ‘breaking point’: Europol
https://guardian.ng/news/covid-cocaine-take-europe-to-breaking-point-europol/

Ecuador’s Self-Defeating Anti-Trafficking Law

Afghanistan’s crystal meth boom is rooted in this plant

Nigeria Seeks Global Action against Drug Trafficking, Terrorism

EUROPOL: Albania remains a major source of herbal cannabis trafficked into the EU
https://tiranatimes.com/?p=150199

Counter Narcotics Drug Smuggling In Commercial Shipping

Taking Lessons from LTTE New Narco-Terrorism Network Takes Shape in South Asia
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade: How China’s overseas Special Economic Zones risk helping traffickers
William Yang – The Independent: 6 April 2021
As China expands its economic reach around the globe, its special economic zones (SEC) increase the risk of environmental degradation, as investors tend to flout local and international laws in favor of the Chinese way of doing business in areas that host the SECs.
https://www.independent.co.uk/stop-the-illegal-wildlife-trade/china-sezs-illegal-wildlife-trade-b1827128.html

WWF Highlights Illegal Fishing, Trade In Sturgeon In Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: 12 April 2021
Poaching and trade of sturgeon meat and caviar are threatening populations of the fish worldwide. A recent study by the World Wildlife Fund shows that the practice is rampant on the lower Danube River where as much as one-third of traded fish were caught illegally.
https://www.rferl.org/a/wwf-sturgeon-bulgaria-romania-serbia-ukraine-poaching/31199742.html

For more on this theme:
A Spectre of Corruption: The ‘Shetani’ Ivory Case
https://intpolicydigest.org/a-spectre-of-corruption-the-shetani-ivory-case/

Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil Consider Regional Fix for IUU Fishing

Snared: catching poachers to save Italy’s songbirds
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/apr/08/snared-catch-poachers-to-save-italys-songbirds-aoe

Vodafone powers the first smart forest in Romania to prevent illegal logging

Pakistan puts an end to illegal logging in north with armed forces

Kenya Reaping the Benefits of Its Aggressive Anti-Poaching Drive, Bolstered by Ellipse Projects Radios and Cybertracker App

Indigenous women’s group raided by illegal miners, says federal prosecutor

Scientists help wildlife parks mobilize against poaching
ORGANIZED CRIME AND MONEY LAUNDERING

How banks can identify money laundering involving crypto, explained
Connor Sephton – Cointelegraph: 7 April 2021

This brief tutorial explains how financial institutions can mitigate risk inherent in cryptocurrencies and fight cryptocurrency money laundering by knowing their customers, following established reporting requirements and using blockchain analytics software.

https://cointelegraph.com/explained/how-banks-can-identify-money-laundering-involving-crypto-explained

Mapping the mob: GIS technology reveals shape of America’s mafia networks
Matt Swayne – Tech Xplore: 13 April 2021

Researchers have used geographic information systems to track the growth and spread of U.S. Mafia families in the 1960s. The results can help criminal analysts understand the workings of criminal networks today.


For more on this theme:

Portugal ex-PM to stand trial for money laundering, forgery
https://apnews.com/article/trials-europe-money-laundering-lisbon-890eee07e4c2f-3564a30338a10ae64e

Are Cartels Connected to Booming Truck Theft in Mexico?

Five years since the Panama Papers, what is EU doing to tackle tax abuse?
https://www.euronews.com/2021/04/02/five-years-since-the-panama-papers-what-is-eu-doing-to-tackle-tax-abuse

US, Mexico Sanctions Offer Insights Into CJNG Hierarchy

Top Russian FSB Official Has Multiple Underworld Ties

The United States Continues to Support Ecuador in the Fight Against Transnational Organized Crime

How analytics can help to catch and convict criminals

Exposing organized crime in the Amazon: Q&A with Robert Muggah of the Igarapé Institute
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

UK Seeks To Discourage Facebook Rollout of End-to-End Encryption, Citing Risks to the Safety of Children
Scott Ikeda – CPO Magazine: 13 April 2021

The United Kingdom’s government opposes Facebook’s plan to incorporate full, end-to-end encryption in its messaging applications, citing the need to protect children from online predators. In addition, the U.K. is proposing legislation that would require tech companies to include “backdoors” for law enforcement to access applications.


For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Why Celebrations of Google’s Privacy Announcement Are Misplaced
https://www.cfr.org/blog/why-celebrations-googles-privacy-announcement-are-misplaced
(U.S.) Did Clarence Thomas just open the door to holding tech platforms accountable for disinformation?
https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/did-clarence-thomas-just-open-the-door-to-holding-tech-platforms-accountable-for-disinformation
(Uganda) Uganda’s social media tax failed so now it wants to tax internet access

CYBER STATECRAFT

The UK Should Beware of Future Restrictions against UK-EU Data Flows
Ryan Nabil – Competitive Enterprise Institute: 9 April 2021

Since leaving the European Union, the United Kingdom has liberalized its approach toward governing data, emphasizing the free flow of data across borders as it moves to expand its global trading role in Asia and North America. This could conflict with strict EU data privacy measures.

https://cei.org/blog/the-uk-should-beware-of-future-restrictions-against-uk-eu-data-flows/

For more on this theme:
(India) India’s digital IDs for land could exclude poor, indigenous communities
https://www.reuters.com/article/india-landrights-digital-idUSL8N2LT0E6
(Australia) Grey Zone Attacks And The Art Of Statecraft
(U.S.) Will Regulating Social Media Misinformation Fix the Internet?
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

What is blocking the decentralized internet?
Connor Sephton – Cointelegraph: 13 April 2021

Proliferating blockchain technology has resulted in myriad networks that cannot communicate with each other. Since one of blockchain’s main advantages is supposed to be its decentralization, fixing the interconnectivity problem is critical for the technology’s continued evolution.


For more on this theme:

(South Asia, Middle East and North Africa) Pandemic highlights the need to bridge the digital divide, experts say

(Israel, U.S.) DOE, Israel’s Ministry of Energy, and Israel Innovation Authority Announce the U.S.-Israel Energy Center Winner for the Energy Cyber Sector

(Europe, Global) No more snack attacks? Mondelez hopes new security training program can help prevent the next ‘NotPetya’

CYBERCRIME

Why some jobseekers have turned to cyber crime during the pandemic
Nicholas Fearn – Computer Weekly: 12 April 2021

A recent study of forums on the darknet has found that many people who became unemployed during the COVID-19 pandemic are trying cybercrime to make fast and easy money.


For more on this theme:

(Europe, Global) Europol: “Virtually All” Crime Now Has a Digital Element

(U.S.) Infographic: The Most Common Types Of Cyber Crime
https://www.ibtimes.com/infographic-most-common-types-cyber-crime-3179122

(China) Former head of China’s internet police who promoted proactive policing faces corruption probe
PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Six Key Guidelines To Protect Critical Infrastructure From Cyber Threats
Oren Eytan – Forbes: 14 April 2021

A former commander of the Israeli military’s cyber defense force shares his insights on six key measures to protect critical infrastructure from cyber threats.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/04/14/six-key-guidelines-to-protectcriticalinfrastructure-fromcyber-threats/?sh=357acfd7504

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) FBI operation removes backdoors from hacked Exchange servers in the US

(Global) ICAO stresses importance of government and industry partnership to global cyber resilience
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Foreign Fighters and the Trajectory of Violence in Northern Mozambique
Emilia Columbo and Austin C. Doctor – War on the Rocks: 13 April 2021

The widespread news coverage of an attack in Palma, Mozambique, by terrorists associated with Ansar al-Sunna Wa Jamma – which calls itself ISIS-Mozambique – has likely elevated the profile of this conflict, including within the jihadist community, potentially increasing its appeal to regional and veteran foreign fighters.


A Caliph Without a Caliphate: The Biography of ISIS’s New Leader
Feras Kilani – Newlines Magazine: 15 April 2021

BBC correspondent Feras Kilani draws on Iraqi intelligence documents and prison files to profile new ISIS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.


For more on this theme:

ISIS prisoners could sow seeds of new violent extremism, deputy coalition commander in Iraq warns

In Syria, there is a new kind of war against ISIS
https://english.elpais.com/international/2021-04-01/in-syria-there-is-a-new-kind-of-war-against-isis.html

ISIS leader Amir Al Mawla’s betrayal led to death of commander he replaced

ISIS Cyber Group Launches Cloud, Chat Platforms to ‘Close Ranks’ Online
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/isis-cyber-group-launches-cloud-chat-platforms-to-close-ranks-online/

Analysis of the activity of ISIS’s branches in Congo and Mozambique following the imposition of US sanctions

Kidnapped by ISIS, brainwashed and turned into a child soldier: A Yazidi’s story

Why ISIS love to kill
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Swiss government defends anti-terrorism law against criticism over child rights
Silke Koltrowitz – Reuters: 13 April 2021

A proposed law in Switzerland contains some controversial points, such as preventive house detention for potential terrorist offenders from the age of 15 as well as electronic surveillance and restraining orders for people from the age of 12 who are considered a threat. It could also stop people from leaving the country.


Christchurch mosque shootings: Government to widen counter-terrorism law gaps
Derek Cheng – New Zealand Herald: 12 April 2021

New Zealand wants to strengthen its powers to prevent a terrorist act and widen the definition to include inducing fear – which might capture incidents such as sending a pig’s head to a mosque. Justice Minister Kris Faafoi unveiled a new bill that would strengthen how the government can respond to threats of terrorism.


For more on this theme:

Turkish jihadist, trained by Pakistan’s Tablighi Jamaat, joined al-Qaeda in Syria to raise Ottoman caliphate army

Jaysh al-Ummah emir offers solution to ‘Palestinian case’, derides ‘Resistance’ leaders

The International Far-Right Terrorist Threat Requires a Multilateral Response
https://www.lawfareblog.com/international-far-right-terrorist-threat-requires-multilateral-response

The Unique Intelligence Challenges of Countering Naval Asymmetric Warfare
https://cimsec.org/the-unique-intelligence-challenges-of-countering-naval-asymmetric-warfare/

Human Rights Watch Accuses Taliban of Targeting, Killing Journalists

Spike in Violence Follows Failed Negotiations Between the Pakistani Taliban and Islamabad

Germany opens trial of far-right ‘terrorist’ group
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

UK Prisons Are an Urgent Warning About the Threat of Islamic Radicalization
Patrick Dunleavy – The Algemeiner: 8 April 2021

The United Kingdom’s successful counterterrorism strategies thwarted a number of terrorist plots during the past decade and led to prosecutions that doubled the population of convicted terrorists in British prisons. That has led to Islamic gangs operating in the prison system, with a hierarchy consisting of leaders, recruiters and enforcers.


For more on this theme:
Counter-Extremism: Moroccan Islamic League To Train ‘Influencers’

FBI Example in Tennessee Shows Countering Terrorism Recruiting Still a Full Time Job

Future Trends: Far-Right Terrorism in the UK – A Major Threat?

IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

Russia’s triple strategy of proxy war used against Georgia in 1920 and now
Michael Garrood – Euromaiden Press: 9 April 2021

In 2014, Russian proxies occupied Ukrainian Donbas under the pretext of defending a Russian ethnic minority. Russia then gave Russian citizenship to inhabitants of occupied Donbas. And now, as the deputy head of Russia’s presidential administration, Dmitriy Kozak, said April 8, 2021, Russia might need to defend its citizens in eastern Ukraine by military action. The same arguments were used in 2014 during the occupation of Crimea, the 2008 occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the 1992 occupation of Transnistria.


For more on this theme:
In violation of Libya ceasefire, Russian Wagner Group aircraft fly over Sirte

British Defense MinisterCalls On His Country And Its Allies To Confront Wagner Mercenaries In Libya And Syria.
IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION, MISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

How Russia Spreads Disinformation About the Second Karabakh War
Taras Kuzio – The National Interest: 13 April 2021
With Ukraine the guinea pig for Russian information warfare, the Kremlin has spread dezinformatsiya to European countries and the United States with implications for modern warfare.
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-russia-spreads-disinformation-about-second-karabakh-war-182635

How the CCP Mobilized a Cross-Border Disinformation Campaign Against the Czech Senate Speaker
Martin Hála, Filip Jirouš, Petra Ševčíková – The Jamestown Foundation: 12 April 2021
Recent events in the Czech Republic offer an interesting case study in Chinese propaganda and disinformation.
https://jamestown.org/program/how-the-ccp-mobilized-a-cross-border-disinformation-campaign-against-the-czech-senate-speaker/

For more on this theme:
COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation Monitor: MENA

Less than half of Australian adults know how to identify misinformation online
https://theconversation.com/less-than-half-of-australian-adults-know-how-to-identify-misinformation-online-156124

Russian Influence in Montenegro Could Create a Threat for NATO's Information Security
https://jamestown.org/program/russian-influence-in-montenegro-could-create-a-threat-for-natos-information-security/

Ukraine Cracks Down on Its Own Pro-Russian QAnon

Beijing Is Getting Better at Disinformation on Global Social Media
https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/beijing-is-getting-better-at-disinformation-on-global-social-media/

How Putin made the international media his unwitting accomplices

Conference platform prepared against misinformation
IRREGULAR WARFARE: HYBRID AND COVERT ACTIVITIES

Natanz attack hit 50 meters underground, destroyed most of the facility
Tzvi Joffre, Yonah Jeremy Bob – The Jerusalem Post: 13 April 2021

Early reports characterized the attack on the Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz as a cyber operation. But The Jerusalem Post reports that it was carried out through an explosive device that was smuggled into the facility and detonated remotely. It did much more than some temporary damage to the power grid.

https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/natanz-attack-destroyed-facility-50-meters-underground-664979

For more on this theme:

Lt-Gen Ben Hodges on the Future of Hybrid Warfare
https://cepa.org/lt-gen-ben-hodges-on-the-future-of-hybrid-warfare/

Crossing the Line: When Cyberattacks Become Acts of War

Nato holds ‘Locked Shields’ cyber war games with hackers targeting fictional island nation