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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

GRECO urges states to prevent corruption risks in measures aimed at tackling the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
Council of Europe: 15 April 2021

European governments must do more to tackle corruption risks that have emerged from nations’ financial needs due to COVID-19, according to a new report by the organization’s anti-corruption body.

https://search.coe.int/directorate_of_communications/Pages/result_details.aspx?Objec-tId=0900001680a2260f

A bellwether on corruption in Latin America?
The Christian Science Monitor: 19 April 2021

The pandemic may have stalled anti-graft campaigns in the region, but an election in Ecuador shows voters still want integrity in leaders.


For more on this theme:

UK coronavirus contracts raise corruption alarm, report warns

Zuma’s defence lawyers quit less than a month before his corruption trial starts

Anti-corruption agencies to gain surveillance powers
https://www.irishlegal.com/article/anti-corruption-agencies-to-gain-surveillance-powers

Caretaker PM Says Corruption In Lebanon Is ‘Stronger Than The State’
https://www.the961.com/hassan-diab-corruption-lebanon-stronger-state/

Ukraine's anti-corruption effort struggles, but soldiers on
https://eurasianet.org/ukraines-anti-corruption-effort-struggles-but-soldiers-on

US envoy targets corruption to stem Central America migration

Turkey's ruling Islamists dogged by mounting corruption claims

Russian Prosecutors Ask Court To Designate Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Network As ‘Extremist’
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Cross-border drug trafficking cases nearly doubled in four years — EU agency

Reuters: 19 April 2021

Amid a rise in the production of synthetic drugs, there have been nearly twice as many cross-border drug trafficking cases in the European Union in the last few years, Eurojust said in a new report.

https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/cross-border-drug-trafficking-cases-nearly-doubled-four-years-eu-agency-2021-04-19/

Full report:
Eurojust Report on Drug trafficking

For more on this theme:
ICS publishes guidelines on combatting drug trafficking

The Last Ride of an Ally of Pablo Escobar

Nigeria now a transit country for drug trafficking – Marwa
https://dailypost.ng/2021/04/16/nigeria-now-a-transit-country-for-drug-trafficking-marwa/

Narco violence surge in Peru’s Amazon sends Indigenous leader into hiding

Cocaine Spike Puts Spotlight on Honduras Atlantic

Report: Iran is a Major Transit Point for the Global Meth Trade

Honduras among the five countries with the greatest impact in the fight against drug trafficking in 2020

Cartels use COVID-19 as excuse to raise drug prices, distribute food to poor in Mexico, report says

The Mexican women who kicked out the cartels – video
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Who is selling and trafficking Africa’s wild meat?
Wildlife Conservation Society – Science Daily: 19 April 2021

A new study classifies different types of wildlife traffickers and sellers in two of Central Africa’s growing urban centers, providing new insight into the poorly understood urban illegal wildlife trade.

https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/04/210419110956.htm

Wuhan officials identified Huanan market as a pandemic risk at least five years before Covid emerged
Sarah Newey – The Telegraph: 18 April 2021

Experts say a market in Wuhan, China, was either the site of an initial “spillover” of COVID-19, or “amplified” early circulation through a super-spread ing event.


For more on this theme:

Chinese banks must crack down on illegal wildlife trade

Skin in the game? Reptile leather trade embroils conservation authority

Exotic animal trade carries risks of disease outbreak and introduction of invasive species

Melbourne’s drinking water and catchment areas put at risk by ‘systemic’ illegal logging on steep slopes, experts say

Armed with phones and seeds, jobless Kenyans tackle illegal logging

Protecting Rainforests With Big Data And AI: Four Key Lessons For The Enterprise

Panama boosts action to protect forests, drought-hit canal

Illegal mining affecting water production in Daboase
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Reimagining Migration Responses: Learning from children and young people who move in the Horn of Africa
UNICEF: 12 April 2021

A new study by UNICEF looks at the economic, demographic, security and environmental factors that are driving the migration of children and young people from the Horn of Africa toward Europe. It also examines their protective environments and access to services and resources while migrating.

Full report here:

Covid-19 is worsening human trafficking – states should take action, warn Council of Europe experts
Council of Europe: 9 April 2021

The new report from the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings finds that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened human trafficking, making it more difficult to identify victims and slowing their access to medical care and other support.

https://search.coe.int/directorate_of_communications/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a21655

For more on this theme:

Key facts about the changing U.S. unauthorized immigrant population

The Real Migration Crisis Is in Central America

Harnessing the Development Potential of Labor Migration

Human Trafficking & Violence Against Naga Tribal Girls and Women in South India

Pandemic has underlined need for more legal migration for low-paid work, say MEPs

Explained: On ‘refugees’ and ‘illegal immigrants’, how India’s stance changes with circumstances
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET FREEDOM

The battle for Myanmar plays out on Twitter, TikTok and Telegram
Ole Tangen Jr – Deutsche Welle: 20 April 2021

Young activists are risking arrest and using technology to ensure that their campaign for democracy continues in the face of a military clampdown on the internet.


For more on this theme:
(Russia) How Russia Is Stepping Up Its Campaign to Control the Internet
https://time.com/5951834/russia-control-internet/

(India) India's Strict Rules For Online Intermediaries Undermine Freedom of Expression
https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2021/04/indias-strict-rules-online-intermediaries-undermine-freedom-expression

(Africa) How African leaders use the power of social media

(China) China feminists face clampdown, closure of online accounts
https://www.dw.com/en/china-feminism-free-speech/a-57277438

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

TikTok faces claim for billions in London child privacy lawsuit
Kirstin Ridley – Reuters: 21 April 2021

TikTok has been hit with a child privacy lawsuit alleging that the app illegally took the data of millions of children.


For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) MIT launches new data privacy-focused initiative

(Brazil) Brazilian authorities urged to act on WhatsApp privacy update

(Russia) Russia’s Privacy Rules Stifle Dissent
CYBER STATECRAFT

New Australian cyber package includes AU$37.5m Indo-Pacific investment
Asha Barbaschow – ZDNet: 21 April 2021

The Australian government has updated its 2017 International Cyber Engagement Strategy, focusing this time on “values, security, and prosperity” to guide Australia’s international cyber and critical technology engagement.


For more on this theme:

(Africa) Can Africa salvage its digital sovereignty?

(India) India wants to cut Big Tech down to size. Critics say the new rules may give the state too much power

(Middle East) Joint efforts needed to tackle global cyber threats

CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Uni of Hertfordshire Suffers Cyber-Attack That Takes Down its Entire IT Network
James Coker – InfoSecurity Magazine: 15 April 2021

A cyberattack hit the University of Hertfordshire, taking down its entire information technology network and blocking access to cloud-based services.


For more on this theme:

(EU) European Institutions Were Targeted in a Cyber-Attack Last Week
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-06/european-institutions-were-targeted-in-a-cyber-attack-last-week

(U.S.) U.S. directs agencies to apply patches to Microsoft servers

(U.S., Global) Vital Pandemic Industries Foster Unprecedented DDoS Attack Activity, NETSCOUT Threat Intelligence Report Finds
CYBERCRIME

UK’s IoT ‘security by design’ law will cover smartphones too
Natasha Lomas – TechCrunch: 20 April 2021

Makers of smart devices including phones, speakers, and doorbells will need to tell customers upfront how long a product will be guaranteed to receive vital security updates, according to groundbreaking plans to protect people from cyberattacks in the United Kingdom, the government said in a statement.

https://techcrunch.com/2021/04/20/uks-iot-security-by-design-law-will-cover-smartphones-too/

For more on this theme:

(China) China’s Cybercriminals Profit From Underground Data Monetization

(Global) Here’s how the aviation sector is stopping cyberattacks from getting off the ground
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/04/aviation-sector-cybersecurity-resilience/

(U.S., Global) Make Your Organization More Resilient to Cyber Attacks
https://hbr.org/sponsored/2021/04/make-your-organization-more-resilient-to-cyber-attacks

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

US takes steps to protect electric system from cyberattacks

A top U.S. administration official says the government is undertaking a new effort to help electric utilities, water districts and other critical industries protect against potentially damaging cyberattacks.

https://apnews.com/article/politics-technology-business-government-and-politics-669f8ae9bb78ff5f5c93cfc58ae0d9a

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) InfraGard Marks 25 Years: Protecting the Country’s Critical Infrastructure Through Partnerships

(U.S.) States can play greater role in shaping grid cybersecurity, NGA says
https://statescoop.com/nga-states-cybersecurity-grid-infrastructure/

(Global) Can the Aviation Community Stop a Cyber Attack from Taking Off?

(U.S.) Florida Water System Hack Offers Lessons for Other States
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

**ISIS Cyber Group Warns of Tracking Through Bitcoin Use**  
Bridget Johnson – Homeland Security Today: 20 April 2021

An ISIS-supporting cybersecurity group warned followers to avoid using Bitcoin because they can be tracked through use of the cryptocurrency.

https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/isis-cyber-group-warns-of-tracking-through-bitcoin-use/

**Secret report reveals ISIS special unit screened foreign fighters to send abroad for terror attacks**  
Abdullah Bozkurt – Nordic Monitor: 19 April 2021

A special team authorized by top leadership of ISIS screened foreign fighters arriving in Syria and selected them for assignments abroad after the completion of training in explosives and arms as well as religious courses.


*For more on this theme:*

**Why are Indonesian women being targeted for recruitment by Isis-linked extremist groups?**


**ISIS Regroups in Central Africa’s Christian Countries**

https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/isis-africa-christian-countries-muslims/2021/04/15/id/1017768/

**Mozambican Journalist Says Marginalization Sparked ISIS Insurgency**

https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/mozambique-cabo-delgado-war-/5859991.html

**Islamic State claims responsibility for Saturday’s attack at Iraq’s oilfield**


**Islamic State claims responsibility for Iraq market bomb attack**

https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-iraq-market-bomb-attack-2021-04-16/

**US-Backed Syrian Forces Hand Over 34 Children of IS Fighters to Russia**


**Suspected ISWAP Jihadists Storm Army Base in Nigeria’s Borno State**

https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/04/20/jihadists-storm-nigeria-base-borno/
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Rakhine State – Southeast Asia’s Next Marawi?
Jasminder Singh – The Diplomat: 15 April 2021

The political crisis in Myanmar, also known as Burma, has created the conditions for a possible widening of the jihadi theater in Southeast Asia.

https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/rakhine-state-southeast-asias-next-marawi/

With food and fuel, Hezbollah braces for the worst in Lebanon collapse
Laila Bassam and Ellen Francis – Reuters: 16 April 2021

Hezbollah has launched a chain of supermarkets that are stocked with Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian products at reduced prices that are accessible with a party-issued card. It’s yet another bid by the powerful Shiite movement to win loyalty by providing services in a weak state and oversee a parallel economy.


For more on this theme:

IC Finds ‘Greater Immediate Domestic Threat’ from Wide Range of Lone Actors Than ISIS

Africa Sees ‘Dramatic Increase In Jihadist Groups,’ Says Global Religious Freedom Report

Terrorism In Europe – Analysis

The Political Economy of Mozambique’s ‘Faceless Insurgency’

Why Experts Ignore Terrorism in Africa

Fight against violent extremism and graft takes toll on East Africa

Cleric Close To Hezbollah Says Smuggling “Integral Part” For Them
https://www.the961.com/hezbollah-cleric-says-smuggling-integral-part/

Treating NZ’s far right groups as terrorist organisations could make monitoring extremists even harder
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

Research shows to disrupt online extremism freewill is key
University of Texas at San Antonio: 16 April 2021

According to new research, when people are explicitly told that they are free to accept or reject propagandistic claims, the likelihood of choosing a moderate view increases.

https://www.newswise.com/articles/research-shows-to-disrupt-online-extremism-freewill-is-key

For more on this theme:

Indonesia needs nationwide deradicalization centers
https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2021/04/15/indonesia-needs-nationwide-deradicalization-centers-.html

Breaking the chain of online radicalization

IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

The US military is turning to special operators to fend off Russian and Chinese influence in its neighborhood
Business Insider: 22 April 2021

U.S. military leaders say China and Russia are using information operations to shape local perspectives in their favor in Latin America. The top military commander in the region says U.S. forces, including those from U.S. Special Operations Command, are countering that challenge.


For more on this theme:

China Spreading ‘Virus of Media Censorship’: Report

How State’s Disinformation-Fighting Arm Uses Artificial Intelligence

From cover-up to propaganda blitz: China’s attempts to control the narrative on Xinjiang

European Values Center opens in Taiwan to monitor Chinese interference
IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

The New Drone Threat Facing Iraqi Kurdistan’s Erbil
Paul Iddon – Forbes: 17 April 2021

Iran has supplied its proxies across the Middle East with drones and the means to produce drones. Iran appears to have given its Iraqi militia proxies the ability to locally assemble drones.


For more on this theme:

Drone Attacks on U.S. in Iraq Highlight Iran’s Expanding Arsenal
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/drone-attacks-us-iraq-highlight-iran%E2%80%99s-expanding-arsenal-183271

Report: Tens of Thousands of Allied Fighters Serve as Iran’s Four-Pronged Network of Proxy Forces

UN, partners demand withdrawal of foreign forces from Libya

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

Britain calls out Russia for ‘malign’ cyber attacks
Nick Allen, Lucy Fisher and Nataliya Vasilyeva – The Telegraph: 15 April 2021

The United Kingdom’s Government Communications Headquarters confirms that several public sector organizations are being affected as U.S. President Joe Biden imposes new sanctions on the Kremlin.


For more on this theme:

Chinese Military Seen Behind Japan Cyber-Attacks, NHK Says

Intel Agencies Warn of ‘More Destructive and Disruptive’ Cyber Attacks on Infrastructure

Suspected Chinese hackers spied on US, European targets

DNI: Cyber Is The Common Weapon Among Top Adversaries