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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Anger grows in Guatemala over COVID vaccine rollout, corruption
Sandra Cuffe – Al-Jazeera: 13 May 2021

There have been sporadic corruption scandals throughout the pandemic, from early revelations of a fraud ring inside the Health Ministry to more recent cases of fraudulent test purchases. And unless Guatemala picks up its pace, experts say coronavirus vaccine doses yet to be administered will expire in June.


Bangladesh arrests journalist known for unearthing graft

A journalist in Bangladesh known for her reporting on government corruption was arrested on charges of violating an official secrets act, officials said. The charges carry a possible death penalty.

https://apnews.com/article/bangladesh-journalists-arrests-health-coronavirus-pandemic-4e4bced270f3f-748b455e7648c86003

For more on this theme:

How to fight corruption in Africa: Lessons for Sierra Leone’s Julius Maada Bio

South Africa’s president suspends party secretary-general
https://apnews.com/article/africa-south-africa-386abdbb0dfb7397f9c67f56d1c2ff8e

Fighting corruption key to U.S. migrant strategy
https://www.reuters.com/video/watch/idRCV009PS6

Pandemic Spending Immunity Deepens El Salvador Corruption Concerns

The forgotten psychological cost of corruption in developing countries

Full steam ahead on Vietnam’s anti-corruption campaign
https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/05/20/full-steam-ahead-on-vietnams-anti-corruption-campaign/

North Macedonia Criticized for ‘Endemic Corruption’ in Prisons

Uproar Forces Malawi Parliament to Confirm Anti-Corruption Chief

South Africa: A first shot at corruption
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Uganda deploys drones to fight poaching, wildlife trafficking
Jonathan Kamoga – The East African: 17 May 2021

The country has secured funding from the United Nations Development Programme to procure surveillance drones for use in protected areas that are not routinely patrolled by rangers, and to purchase camera traps to help identify poachers and intruders at porous entrances to game parks, according to the Uganda Wildlife Authority.


For more on this theme:

INTERVIEW: Nigeria must conserve wildlife to tackle insecurity, prevent another pandemic – Conservationist

Illegal Wildlife Trade is Just a Click Away
https://whistleblowersblog.org/2021/05/articles/environmental-whistleblowers/illegal-wildlife-trade-is-just-a-click-away/

How to roll back the global trade in wildlife? Pay poor countries, scientists say

To Prevent Future Pandemics, Start by Protecting Nature
https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29637/under-threat-biodiversity-preservation-nature-protection-are-key-to-preventing-pandemics

Fourteen young dogs join the race to become India’s wildlife sniffer dogs

Alternative means of livelihood to Poachers can serve our fight against Wildlife Trafficking

Scientists Develop New App to Predict Future Pandemic by Stopping Illegal Wildlife Trade

The world’s donkeys are threatened by demand for Chinese traditional medicine

A nonprofit promised to preserve wildlife. Then it made millions claiming it could cut down trees
https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/05/10/1024751/carbon-credits-massachusetts-audubon-california-logging-co2-emissions-increase/
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Harnessing the power of artificial intelligence to combat human trafficking
Tim Sandle – Digital Journal: 17 May 2021

Lincoln Laboratory has developed algorithms to extract signatures in images, such as specific tattoo designs linked to human trafficking networks, as part of a growing portfolio of technologies to help investigators analyze digital evidence in trafficking cases.


For more on this theme:

Action plan to combat human trafficking unveiled by Finland
https://www.icenews.is/2021/05/14/action-plan-to-combat-human-trafficking-unveiled-by-finland/

Smugglers Head to the Pacific, Ferrying People From Mexico to the US

Thousands of migrants swim from Morocco to Spanish enclave of Ceuta

ORGANIZED CRIME

China’s New Silk Road: Navigating the organized crime risk
Virginia Comolli and Natasha Rose – Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime: May 2021

Jobs and economic growth associated with China’s Belt and Road projects across Asia and Africa are likely to have unintended consequences — including corruption, criminal exploitation and infiltration, according to a recently published report.


For more on this theme:

Life of Crime: Yakuza Membership Hits New Record Low
MONEY LAUNDERING

How Chinese Criminals Secretly Move Millions for Mexico Cartels
Chris Dalby – InSight Crime: 12 May 2021

While the involvement of Chinese money-laundering rings in handling drug proceeds from Mexico is nothing new, a number of recent court cases in the United States have revealed crucial information about how these schemes work.


For more on this theme:
Earthly Delights: Religious Groups and Money Laundering in Dominican Republic

Why do we allow money laundering in the auto industry?

UK sends $5.97 mln of jailed politician’s stolen assets to Nigeria

Bahrain public prosecution refers Central Bank of Iran, 12 other banks to court for laundering $1bn

Parliament: EIB must step up money laundering fight
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

The UN Struggles to Make Progress on Securing Cyberspace
Arindrajit Basu, Irene Poetranto and Justin Lau – Carnegie: 19 May 2021

United Nations member states have attempted to devise rules for state behavior in cyberspace. Yet disagreements have hampered those efforts, and the root causes of cyber instability remain.
https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/05/19/un-struggles-to-make-progress-on-securing-cyberspace-pub-84491

For more on this theme:
(Global) A People-Centric Approach to Securing Cyberspace

INTERNET FREEDOM

Africa is paying heavily for Internet shutdowns
Faustine Ngila – Daily Monitor: 14 May 2021

Uganda’s internet shutdown in January disabled the entire banking sector and proved costly for the country, according to a Comparitech survey.
https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/business/technology/africa-is-paying-heavily-for-internet-shutdowns--3400242

For more on this theme:
(China) Student Flees China After Questioning Over Sharing of VPN Login

(China) Censorship, Surveillance and Profits: A Hard Bargain for Apple in China

(Myanmar) Myanmar internet a ‘virtual battlefield’ as government continues crackdown
PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Facebook Faces Suspension of Data Transfers in Europe
Pierre Briançon – Barron’s: 14 May 2021

Ireland’s High Court earlier this month allowed the country’s Data Protection Commission to continue with a procedure that could lead to a ban of Facebook’s data transfers from the European Union to the U.S.


For more on this theme:
(Uzbekistan) Personal Data Of Uzbek Citizens Now Must Be Stored In Uzbekistan

(U.S.) The Establishment of a Cyber Safety Review Board
https://securityboulevard.com/2021/05/the-establishment-of-a-cyber-safety-review-board/

(Global) 10 Emerging Cybersecurity Trends To Watch In 2021

(Global) Cybersecurity spending to hit $150 billion this year
https://www.techrepublic.com/article/cybersecurity-spending-to-hit-150-billion-this-year/

CYBER STATECRAFT

In Cyber, Differentiating Between State Actors, Criminals Is a Blur

Who’s hacking U.S. networks? It’s not an easy question to answer. Defense leaders told lawmakers that it’s never clear whether a malicious cyber attacker is a foreign government, a cybercriminal or a cybercriminal supported by a foreign government.


For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Ransomware is a national security threat and a big business — and it’s wreaking havoc
https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/05/15/ransomware-colonial-darkside-cyber-security/

(U.S.) Biden Proposes Billions for Cybersecurity After Wave of Attacks

(Myanmar/Burma) How Myanmar’s military moved in on the telecoms sector to spy on citizens
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Want to understand the extent of the world’s digital divide? Look at these 3 charts
Vivien Foster, Niccolò Comini and Sharada Srinivasan – World Economic Forum: 14 May 2021

Data infrastructure policy, one of the building blocks of a data governance framework, helps to level the playing field in the modern data economy, making things more equitable. Without modern data infrastructure at the national level, countries are unable to provide affordable and reliable connectivity to their population.
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/05/these-3-charts-show-the-importance-of-closing-the-digital-divide

For more on this theme:
(Asia) Asia’s big digital transformation
(U.K., Ghana) UK funds cyber capacity building in Ghana
(Organization of American States) Early Warning Cybersecurity System Implemented
https://jis.gov.jm/early-warning-cybersecurity-system-implemented/

CYBERCRIME

Rights group launches tool to stem cybercrime in Africa

Victims of cyber bullying and related crimes can now get redress, thanks to a new online platform that seeks to empower internet users across Africa to report digital rights violations.

For more on this theme:
(U.K.) UK’s NCSC Takes Down 700,595 Scams Last 2020, 15 Times More Before Pandemic
(Interpol, Africa) INTERPOL Launches Initiative To Fight Cybercrime In Africa
CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Ireland Confirms Second Cyber Attack on Health System
Swetha Gopinath and Peter Flanagan – Bloomberg: 16 May 2021

Ireland’s health service grappled with more disruption after hackers prompted the shutdown of its computer systems.


For more on this theme:

(Ireland) Irish internet service providers hit by cyber attacks

(New Zealand) New Zealand health service hit by cyber attack

(Global) AXA ransomware attack comes just days after insurer pulled coverage for cyber-attack class in France
https://portswigger.net/daily-swig/axa-ransomware-attack-comes-just-days-after-insurer-pulled-coverage-for-cyber-attack-class-in-france
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

The Islamic State Is in Congo. What Now?
Haroro J. Ingram and Lorenzo Vidino – Lawfare: 16 May 2021
ISIS has suffered numerous body blows since it declared its caliphate in 2014. The group has lost its territory in Iraq and Syria, and many of its leaders have been killed or captured. ISIS, however, has spawned numerous affiliates around the globe, which are bloody and dangerous in their own rights.
https://www.lawfareblog.com/islamic-state-congo-what-now

US Targets Islamic State Moneymen in Turkey, Syria
Jeff Seldin – Voice of America: 17 May 2021
The United States government is working to make it more difficult for ISIS to move money internationally via new sanctions imposed by the Treasury Department.
https://www.voanews.com/usa/us-targets-islamic-state-moneymen-turkey-syria

For more on this theme:
The Venture Capitalists of Terrorism
Parliament will vote on establishing ISIS court after Eid: MP
https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/070520212
What Islamic State police files can tell us about everyday life under the caliphate
Islamic State Increases Attacks on Iraqi and Kurdish Forces
The Islamic State’s golden opportunity in Mozambique
https://thehill.com/opinion/international/551998-the-islamic-states-golden-opportunity-in-mozambique
Abu Walaa’s Islamic State Network and Germany’s Counter-Terrorism Prosecutions
The Curse of Natural Gas
https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/terror-in-mozambique-the curse-of-natural-gas-a-837db8bd-d37d-4c90-b5cb-025a8444e965
ISIS Claims Deadly Afghan Mosque Blast
Nigeria's Boko Haram militants: Six reasons they have not been defeated
Ishaq Khalid – BBC: 17 May 2021

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari’s claim in 2015 that the militant group Boko Haram had been “technically defeated” is ringing increasingly hollow. The group and its offshoots have never gone away.


For more on this theme:
Improvised Explosive Devices are becoming a growing threat in Africa

From Bin Laden to al-Zawahiri: The story of al-Qaeda's rise

75 percent mining sites in Afghanistan under Taliban, strongmen's control: Report
https://in.news.yahoo.com/75-percent-mining-sites-afghanistan-093312675.html

U.S. warns domestic extremists could exploit easing COVID-19 restrictions
https://news.trust.org/item/20210514165502-f4e11

COVID-19 pandemic ‘feeding’ drivers of conflict and instability in Africa: Guterres

Experts Don’t Foresee Larger Hezbollah Involvement Amid Israel-Lebanon Border Tensions

Latest US Sanctions Target Hezbollah’s Financial Infrastructure in Lebanon

How Covid and the Taliban could upend the polio fight

In Taliban-controlled areas, girls are fleeing for one thing: an education
https://bdnews24.com/world/south-asia/2021/05/18/in-taliban-controlled-areas-girls-are-fleeing-for-one-thing-an-education

Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Data on Domestic Terrorism

Cyber Security as Counter-Terrorism: Seeking a Better Debate
https://warontherocks.com/2021/05/cyber-security-as-counter-terrorism-seeking-a-better-debate/

First New Steps to Combating Domestic Terrorism
https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column_article/first-new-steps-to-combating-domestic-terrorism
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

What White Supremacists Tell Us About Recruitment and Deradicalization
Anne Speckhard and Molly Ellenberg – Homeland Security Today: May 2021

We need a better understanding of domestic terrorist groups and movements, how they operate, what their ideologies are, and how they find resonance to recruit.


For more on this theme:
Grandmother Raises An Orphan Of Islamic State, As Kazakhs Confront Reintegration Question
https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-islamic-state-children-repatriation/31259600.html

11th Circuit Hears Appeal Over YouTube's Hosting of Terrorist Propaganda

IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

Factbox: Iranian presence in Syria’s Deir ez-Zor province
Navvar Saban – Atlantic Council: May 2021

At the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the Iranian government announced it would provide strategic support to the Bashar al-Assad regime without direct military intervention. However, as the conflict wore on and opposition forces began to wrest control of areas from the regime, Iran directly intervened on various Syrian fronts to prevent the fall of Assad, particularly between 2013 and 2018.


For more on this theme:
US Report: Militias Have Taken Over ISIS’ Legacy in Iraq
https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2961611/us-report-militias-have-taken-over-isis%E2%80%99-legacy-iraq

Iran-backed PMFs are destabilising Iraq’s disputed regions

Putin’s Shadow Warriors Stake Claim to Syria’s Oil
https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/17/putin-shadow-warriors-stake-claim-syria-oil-energy-wagner-prigozhin-libya-middle-east/

Russian Mercenaries Are Raping and Murdering Civilians They’ve Been Hired to Protect
IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

How China is using social media to polish its image globally

China is known for guiding public opinion at home, but how does the country shape public discourse globally? A seven-month investigation reveals how thousands of inauthentic accounts on Twitter and other social media sites amplify Chinese propaganda.


For more on this theme:

How China used media to peddle disinformation about Covid-19

We need to formalize counter-disinformation education for children and teens

How To Combat The Growing ‘Synthetic Content’ In Disinformation Campaigns

The case for a ‘disinformation CERN’
https://www.aspiestrategist.org.au/the-case-for-a-disinformation-cern/

Psy-ops in high places
https://meduza.io/en/feature/2021/05/17/psy-ops-in-high-places

How China used the media to spread its Covid narrative — and win friends around the world

China’s Information Warfare and Media Influence Spawn Confusion in Thailand

Army of fake fans boosts China’s messaging on Twitter
https://www.denverpost.com/2021/05/15/fake-twitter-accounts-china/
IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

Japan lashes out against alleged Chinese military cyberattacks
Yuichi Sakaguchi – Nikkei Asia: 16 May 2021

After Japanese police chief Mitsuhiro Matsumoto officially identified China as responsible for a cyberattack on the country, its National Police Agency has been overwhelmed with inquiries from foreign governments and media organizations regarding the claim, causing a stir among the global cybersecurity community.


For more on this theme:

Protecting the enterprise against state-sponsored attacks
https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/94817-protecting-the-enterprise-against-state-sponsored-attacks

Why Russia needs to pay for the Colonial Pipeline hack

Russia Gives Safe Harbor to Pirates of the Cyber Seas