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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

US sanctions several Bulgarian officials over corruption
Tal Axelrod – The Hill: 2 June 2021
The U.S. Department of Treasury announced it is sanctioning several current and former public officials over their involvement in significant corruption.
https://thehill.com/policy/international/556499-us-sanctions-several-bulgarians-over-corruption?rl=1

For more on this theme:
Belarus: end flow of corrupt money via UK, says Estonia president

The IMF on corruption and COVID-19

Washington designates corrupt former Albanian officials
https://www.neweurope.eu/article/washington-designates-corrupt-former-albanian-officials/

Mexico’s Unreachable Elites Targeted by Rare Corruption Investigation

Africa’s Covid-19 corruption that outweighs pandemic

Report: Sanctions and Asset Recovery Can Reduce Graft

We won’t allow corruption to continue unchecked: UN Assembly president

Guatemala Congress approves judge linked to graft case for top court

How An Anti-Corruption Crusader Invented An Algorithm To Predict Organizational Risk

Ukraine Wants to Be Cryptocurrency Central
https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/02/ukraine-wants-to-be-cryptocurrency-central/

Kyrgyz Ex-PM Sent To Pretrial Detention In Corruption Case
https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyz-babanov-jail/31287385.html

Calls grow for South African health minister’s resignation amid corruption allegations
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Myanmar coup provides drug traffickers with ideal conditions
Rupert Stone – Nikkei Asia: 28 May 2021

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is warning that drug production in Myanmar, also known as Burma, may rise again if the economic crunch brought on by COVID-19 and a February 1 coup persists, with fallout for much of the region.


For more on this theme:

Mafia Boss Claims Venezuela-Turkey Cocaine Connection

Emma Coronel Aispuro: The rise and fall of a drug kingpin’s wife

US and Dominican Republic Conduct Bilateral Interdiction Exercise in Caribbean

ORGANIZED CRIME

Online is the New “Frontline” in Fight Against Organized Crime, NCA Says
Isobel van Hagen – Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: 27 May 2021

COVID-19 has changed the landscape: The “2021 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organized Crime” report by Britain’s National Crime Agency highlights that “organized criminals have adapted their methods to survive. In particular, offenders have turned to online spaces, increasingly using emerging technologies to commit crimes at scale and avoid detection.”


For more on this theme:

Killings of Journalists Show Hand of Organized Crime

The Gen-Z Mafia Boss Who Leads His Crew from Beyond the Grave

Mexican Interior Minister: Violence of organized crime is the greatest risk of elections

Mexico Arrests Leader of Gang that Stole a Billion by Manipulating ATMs
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Thailand aims at pandemic risks by fighting wildlife trade

Thailand is ramping up efforts to curb trade in wildlife to help reduce the risk of future pandemics, officials said, though it was unclear whether that would mean an end to all such sales in the wildlife trafficking hub.

Wildlife trafficking, like everything else, has gone online during COVID-19
Imelda Abano and Leilani Chavez – Mongabay: 1 June 2021

While reports show at least a 50% decline in illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia in 2020, experts say traders have shifted from face-to-face interactions to increasing their presence online.

For more on this theme:
Donkey Skin Trafficking on Colombia’s Northern Coast
https://insightcrime.org/investigations/donkey-skin-trafficking-on-colombias-northern-coast/

Peru’s Turtle Traffickers Operate Under Veneer of Legality

Research on Cambodia Wildlife Trade Examines Risk of Animal-Human Virus Transmission

Brazil police probe environment minister over timber exports

Indonesia’s palm oil sector a driver of illegal logging: US study
https://www.asiaone.com/asia/indonesias-palm-oil-sector-driver-illegal-logging-us-study

Colombia’s illegal miners chip into Chinese investor’s profits

Information Sharing Is Key to Ending Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing
https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2021/05/information-sharing-is-key-to-ending-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing

West Africa stopping poachers but not flow of money from illegal wildlife trade, study finds

No Sloth Selfies - The Rush to Protect Latin America’s Slowest Mammal
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

How Libya’s human smuggling industry evolved to cash in on captivity
Sarah Carabott – Times of Malta: 23 May 2021

War and the pandemic did not trigger a mass exodus of people. Here’s why,

Full report:
Conflict, Coping and Covid: Changing human smuggling and trafficking dynamics in North Africa and the Sahel in 2019 and 2020

U.S. bans imports from Chinese fishing fleet over forced labor allegations
David Lawder – Reuters: 31 May 2021

U.S. Customs and Border Protection has imposed a new import ban on seafood from a Chinese fishing fleet. The agency says the fleet is using forced labor on its 32 vessels, abusing many Indonesian workers.

For more on this theme:
Singapore pushes on with efforts to curb human trafficking

MEPs Urge for Better Protection of Migrants From Human Rights Violations

Applying gender-sensitive approaches in combating trafficking in human beings

Arriving channel migrants double as smuggling gangs use bigger boats to target smaller ports
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2021/05/25/arriving-channel-migrants-double-smuggling-gangs-use-bigger/

EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration: Crafting a Road Map to Better Cooperation with Migrants’ Countries of Origin
https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/eu-strategy-voluntary-return-origin-countries

COVID-19 Behind Unprecedented Changes in Number of Migrants Moving Across East and Horn of Africa: IOM Report
INTERNET FREEDOM

Mauritius Is Considering an Unprecedented Attack on Online Freedom
Jessica Fjeld, Milan Meetarbhan, Adam Nagy and Shreya Tewari – Slate: 20 May 2021
Mauritius is debating a law that would tighten the government’s grip on the internet by allowing authorities to intercept and decrypt all internet traffic on the island nation.
https://slate.com/technology/2021/05/mauritius-online-speech-government-proxy-servers.html

For more on this theme:
(Colombia) Colombians ‘save the evidence’ as they denounce social media censorship of protests

(India) India Wants More Control Over Social Media. Twitter Is Pushing Back.

(Global) Autocrats must not get to take over the internet in covid times

PRIVACY

European online activists target ‘cookie banner terror’
Richard Connor – Deutsche Welle: 31 May 2021
Online privacy activists are challenging websites that don’t offer a simple “yes or no” choice on allowing “cookies” and in doing so encourage users to agree to their activity being tracked.

For more on this theme:
(China) Apple Faces Criticism Over Its Cooperation With China
https://www.lawfareblog.com/apple-faces-criticism-over-its-cooperation-china

(E.U.) EU bodies’ use of Amazon, Microsoft cloud services faces privacy probes

(Canada) Canadians want action on privacy, harmful internet content: CIRA poll

(U.S., Global) Amazon devices will soon automatically share your Internet with neighbors
https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2021/05/amazon-devices-will-soon-automatically-share-your-internet-with-neighbors/
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Cyber attacks can shut down critical infrastructure. It’s time to make cyber security compulsory
Richard Oloruntoba and Nik Thompson – The Conversation: 27 May 2021

The risk of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure is not new. In Australia, the time has come to make it compulsory for critical infrastructure companies to implement serious cybersecurity measures.


For more on this theme:

(Ireland, Estonia) Ireland must learn lessons from Estonia on cybersecurity

(U.K.) MSPs Welcome Proposals for New Cybersecurity Framework

(Australia) How Australian SMEs can prepare for stricter critical infrastructure regulations

(Nepal) Covid crisis can spur digitisation
https://www.nepalitimes.com/latest/covid-crisis-can-spur-digitisation/

CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Various Japanese government entities had data stolen in cyber attack: Report
Campbell Kwan – ZDNet: 27 May 2021

Japanese government data stored in Fujitsu software has reportedly been accessed and stolen by hackers.


For more on this theme:

(Belgium) Belgium’s Interior Ministry Faces Cyber Attack
https://securityboulevard.com/2021/05/belguims-interior-ministry-faces-cyber-attack/

(U.S.) MTA Says Hackers Breached Its Systems In April But No Threat Was Posed To Public
https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2021/06/02/mta-hacked/

(UAE) Many new cyber threats in UAE remain undetected by organizations, says cyber security firm
PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Learning the lesson to build Europe’s cyber resilience
Chris Gow – Euractiv: 2 June 2021
Europe needs to secure its critical infrastructures from repeated and sophisticated attacks. With its expanded scope, the NIS2 Directive is an important step toward a united and harmonized European response, according to the author.

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) DHS Cyber Order Signals Shift To ‘Mandatory Measures’
https://breakingdefense.com/2021/05/dhs-cyber-order-signals-shift-to-mandatory-reporting/
(Nigeria) Colonial pipeline attack: Nigeria is not ready
https://www.thecable.ng/colonial-pipeline-attack-nigeria-is-not-ready
(Russia, U.S.) Assessing Russia’s role and responsibility in the Colonial Pipeline attack
(U.K.) Long-term thinking is vital to secure UK’s critical infrastructure
https://www.computerweekly.com/opinion/Long-term-thinking-is-vital-to-secure-UKs-critical-infrastructure

CYBER TRAINING AND EXERCISES
Combating cyber warfare is all down to preparation
Chris Tredger – ITWeb Africa: 2 June 2021
During a cybersecurity incident, people are acting under stressful conditions and “not at their prime,” so it is not an ideal time to test out capabilities, strengths or weak points — which does not bode well in crisis or incident management.
https://www.itweb.co.za/content/5yONP7Eg66eqXWrb

For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Investing in the Cybersecurity Workforce of Tomorrow
(U.S., UAE) UAE, US companies partner to provide cyber ranges in Gulf
https://www.c4isrnet.com/industry/2021/05/28/uae-us-companies-partner-to-provide-cyber-ranges-in-gulf/
MASS SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

Possible Chinese hackers pose as UN, human rights group to eavesdrop on beleaguered Uyghur population
Tim Starks – CyberScoop: 27 May 2021

Researchers say that suspected Chinese hackers are posing as the United Nations and a fake human rights organization in an ongoing campaign to target Uyghurs, an ethnic group that’s repeatedly been on the receiving end of surveillance and cyberattacks this year.

For more on this theme:
(China) How China matured into a full-fledged Surveillance State during the Covid-19 pandemic

(Asia) New cyber laws spark surveillance fears in Asia

(India) WhatsApp sues Indian govt over new ‘mass surveillance’ internet laws
ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Europe's Dilemma: Take In ISIS Families, or Leave Them in Syria?

Many European countries have balked at allowing the return of people linked to ISIS, yet some, like Belgium and Finland, are now heeding the advice of security experts and rights groups who say that repatriations are the safest option.


In Syria camp, forgotten children are molded by IS ideology
Hogir Al Abdo and Bassem Mroue – The Associated Press: 3 June 2021

It has been more than two years since ISIS’ self-declared “caliphate” was brought down. And it has been more than two years that 27,000 children have been left to languish in al-Hol camp, which houses families of ISIS members. Only one institution is left to mold them: remnants of the Islamic State group.

https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-united-nations-syria-middle-east-ef4113e4ec925d-b452ea82d3688e4f4

For more on this theme:

Why are more Indonesian women getting involved in bomb attacks?

ISIS Families Enter Iraq Among Transferees from Hol Camp

Kazakh Women Returning From Syria Given Special Rehabilitation For PTSD and Survivor's Guilt
https://astanatimes.com/2021/05/kazakh-women-returning-from-syria-given-special-rehabilitation-for-ptsd-and-survivors-guilt/

Islamic State in West Africa Now Dominates in Northeast Nigeria
https://www.cfr.org/blog/islamic-state-west-africa-now-dominates-northeast-nigeria

Crisis Group Warns of Boost to Islamic State in African Redoubt

Islamic State-linked Suspects Arrested in Indonesia’s Papua Region Allegedly Targeted Bishop

Philippine Military, Police Capture 9 Suspected IS Militants
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

As Covid risk dwindles in Europe, police warn of renewed terrorist threats
Patrick Smith – NBC News: 30 May 2021
“We have seen an increased body of online extremism and hatred,” London’s Metropolitan Police said.

Pakistan: Taliban donations, recruitment on the rise
S. Khan – Deutsche Welle: 28 May 2021
As NATO forces begin their withdrawal from Afghanistan, some clerics and Islamist groups sympathetic to the Afghan Taliban are accused of intensifying efforts to solicit support for the militant group.

For more on this theme:
The Digital Transformations of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in the Battle Against Online Propaganda

Can violent extremist content online be eliminated?
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/can-violent-extremist-content-online-be-eliminated

Exploring the digital jihadist underground on the Onion Router (TOR)

US announces bounty on Al Qaeda chief in North Africa

Bin-Laden Neutralized & Al-Qaeda Restrained; US Has Achieved Its Afghan Objective – Blinken
https://eurasiantimes.com/bin-laden-neutralized-us-has-achieved-its-afghan-objective-blinken/

Shabaab mounts increased rate of attacks inside Kenya
https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/05/shabaab-mounts-increased-rate-of-attacks-inside-kenya.php

Pentagon official warns of Hezbollah threat to Lebanon’s stability amid financial crisis
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1868646/middle-east

Terrorists are hiding where they can’t be moderated
https://www.wired.co.uk/article/terrorists-dweb

Is the Leader of Boko Haram Really Dead This Time?
IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

Syrian mercenaries: New report reveals predatory recruitment tactics
Francesca Ebel – Middle East Eye: 28 May 2021
A new study has shed light on the predatory, exploitative practices involved in the recruitment of Syrian mercenaries by foreign powers, including Turkey, Russia and Azerbaijan.

For more on this theme:
Russian mercenaries get the big-screen treatment. The reality behind the film is as murky as the plot
Russia insists CAfrica ‘instructors’ are unarmed

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

Suspected Iranian Ransomware Gang N3tw0rm Starts Another Cyber Attack Wave Against Israel
Alicia Hope – CPO Magazine: 28 May 2021
Israeli media reports that the state is experiencing a new cyberattack wave related to ideological hacktivism motivated by geopolitics. Experts attribute the current cyber campaign to Iranian hackers, some masquerading as Russian ransomware gangs. The same threat actors were believed to be responsible for the last cyber campaign against Israel.
https://www.cpomagazine.com/cyber-security/suspected-iranian-ransomware-gang-n3tw0rm-starts-another-cyber-attack-wave-against-israel/

For more on this theme:
Ex-US ambassador, anti-corruption activists in Ukraine were targets of suspected Russian phishing
‘World’s leading bank robbers’: North Korea’s hacker army
Russia’s cyber security strategy - hack, disinform, deny
IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

Australia needs asymmetric options to counter coercive statecraft
Peter Hunter – The Strategist: 1 June 2021

Australia, like its friends and partners in the Pacific, needs options to challenge the threat posed by coercive statecraft. Adversarial actors including China and Russia are using agile and malign methods to secure strategically significant outcomes, often to our disadvantage.


For more on this theme:

Has China’s propaganda machinery taken over global media?

Mapping China by the Numbers: Ambitions and Threat Vectors

Exclusive: Meet The Murky Russian Network Behind An Anti-Pfizer Disinformation Drive In Europe
https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-pfizer-covid-disinformation-serebryanskaya-murky-vaccine-influencers/31277170.html

Advanced AI speech tech could be used to generate disinformation online, study finds
https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/advanced-ai-speech-tech-could-be-used-to-generate-disinformation-online/article34705841.ece

Taiwan Confronts COVID-19 Outbreak, Accuses China of Blocking Vaccines

EU, US, Indo-Pacific Should Join Efforts to Counter China’s Coercive Influence: Conference at Lithuanian Parliament

China’s Digital Expertise And Export Strategy Concerning, Say Experts

Amid A Disinformation Cacophony From Minsk, Analysts Say ‘Putin Benefits’
https://www.rferl.org/a/belarus-pratasevich-lukashenka-disinformation-putin-benefits/31277289.html

France creates agency to fight foreign disinformation
https://news.yahoo.com/france-creates-agency-fight-foreign-153104438.html

Somali Journalists Launch ‘Disinformation Lab’ to Combat Spread of Fake News

Artificial intelligence system could help counter the spread of disinformation