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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

UN urges Iraq to deliver on reforms and combat corruption – and backs its fight against terrorism

*Edith M. Lederer – The Associated Press: 30 May 2023*

The U.N. Security Council is encouraging Iraq’s recently formed government to deliver on reforms and combat corruption – and it’s backing the country’s ongoing fight against the Islamic State group, al-Qaida and other terrorist groups.

https://apnews.com/article/iraq-reform-corruption-terrorists-government-21df466ec94e0c-cc15fe3591ec8c7955

Tarnished hope: Crime and corruption in South Sudan’s gold sector


Artisanal and small-scale gold mining offers positive development outcomes when practiced responsibly. However, kleptocratic networks and foreign nationals seeking to maximize profits control a gold sector in South Sudan that is characterized by corruption and criminality.

https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/south-sudan-gold-sector-crime-corruption/

For more on this theme:

**European Parliament corruption scandal: Kaili to resume MEP duties next week**

https://www.brusselstimes.com/523655/european-parliament-corruption-scandal-kaili-to-resume-mep-du-
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With Porous Borders and Endemic Corruption, Can Syria Mitigate the Captagon Threat?

Mahmut Cengiz – Homeland Security Today: 30 May 2023

The Islamic State group allows its militants to use the amphetamine captagon, and the increasing number of captagon laboratories in the region is a strong indicator of Hezbollah’s dominance in the drug trade.


Drug trade in Afghanistan flourishes under Taliban regime: Report

ANI: 31 May 2023

Afghan drug cartels have a symbiotic relationship with the Taliban, which gives farmers advances to plant ephedra and opium while the cartels’ financial assistance keeps the “jihadist proto-state alive,” Khaama Press reported.


For more on this theme:

Gun and drug trafficking ring busted in raids across Europe


Paraguayan Prosecutors Indict Senator Linked to Transatlantic Cocaine Trade


Video: Cocaine Nation: Australia’s booming drug trade revealed


The Syrian Regime’s Captagon Endgame

https://newlinesinstitute.org/syria/the-syrian-regimes-captagon-endgame/

The China-Mexico fentanyl pipeline: increasingly sophisticated and deadly

https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/18/china-mexico-opioid-traficking-us-sanctions

Crystal Meth Addiction ‘Rapidly Spreading’ In Pakistan

https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-drugs-meth-addiction-epidemic/32419310.html

Out of our minds: opium’s part in imperial history


Cancun is Banning ‘Narco’ Concerts as Violence Soars


West Africa is an important route for drug trafficking – Criminologist

TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Brazil’s PCC Complicates Fight Against Illegal Mining in Amazon
Sean Doherty and Chris Dalby – InSight Crime: 26 May 2023

Brazil is sending military police into the Amazon following violent conflict between the Indigenous Yanomami community and illegal wildcat gold miners who are receiving support from Brazil’s foremost criminal group, the PCC.


For more on this theme:

Of illegal logging and reign of terror

IUU fishing: there’s no one-size-fits-all solution

Study: Fishing Subsidies Support Unregulated Distant-Water Fishing
https://maritime-executive.com/article/study-fishing-subsidies-support-unregulated-distant-water-fishing

Illegal Wildlife Trade: Baseline for Monitoring and Law Enforcement in the Sulu-Celebes Seas

Ivory ban extended to hippos and four other species

Work underway to fight wildlife crime – Creecy

Illegal logging data from Romania contradictory, says EU Parliament delegation

Shifting consumer behaviour key to protecting forests in the Lower Mekong

How illegal gold mining threatens biodiversity in the Amazon
https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/59869/illegal-mining-amazon-threat-biodiversity/

3 million hectares of Colombian Amazon deforested for illegal pasture: Study
https://news.mongabay.com/2023/05/3-million-hectares-of-colombian-amazon-deforested-for-illegal-pasture-study/

Colombia’s Fight Against Illegal Mining Thwarts Organized Armed Groups
https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/colombias-fight-against-illegal-mining-thwarts-organized-armed-groups/

Despite Writ of Kalikasan, illegal mining continues to destroy Iponan River
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

How can we regulate AI? Let’s just ask it
Lydia Khalil – The Interpreter: 30 May 2023

The rapid development and far-reaching impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) are raising increasing fears and have caused even leading developers to call for a pause while guidelines are developed. AI offers some insights on its own regulation.

https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/how-can-we-regulate-ai-let-s-just-ask-it

For more on this theme:

(EU, Global) Does Meta’s $1.3B EU Fine Mean A Splintered Internet In The Future?

(Global) AI, Democracy, and the Global Order

(Global) AI vs democracy: the battle is already here
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/ai-vs-democracy-battle-already-here

(EU) The AI Act – A step closer to the first law on Artificial Intelligence

INTERNET FREEDOM

The cyber gulag: How Russia tracks, censors and controls its citizens
Dasha Litvinova – The Associated Press: 23 May 2023

Rights advocates have accused Vladimir Putin’s Russia of harnessing digital technology to track, censor and control the population and of creating a “cyber gulag.”


For more on this theme:

(China, Global) Chinese Party has ‘supreme access’ to all TikTok data, claims former employee
https://www.techradar.com/features/chinese-party-has-supreme-access-to-all-tiktok-data-claims-former-employee

(Turkey) Turkish court blocks access to internet censorship report
https://medyanews.net/turkish-court-blocks-access-to-internet-censorship-report/

(China) The AI Moment of Truth for Chinese Censorship
We Can Get Modern Internet to Yemen, Let's Not Waste Time
Nadia Al-Sakkaf – Wilson Center: 23 May 2023

Yemen has the worst internet access in the world. Despite a 2023 preliminary agreement with Starlink to provide satellite internet in Aden that had impressive initial results, there are significant cost barriers to widespread deployment of the technology.


For more on this theme:

(India) How govt initiatives, affordable devices are helping fuel India’s digital inclusion

(Central African Republic) Securing Digital Finance in Post-Conflict
Central African Republic

(U.S.) Astranis says its first internet satellite is working ‘perfectly’ as company prepares to bring coverage to Alaska
https://www.cnbc.com/2023/05/24/astranis-first-internet-satellite-over-alaska-working-perfectly.html

(Balkans) Slovenian activities with ITU – building cyber capacity in the Western Balkans

Indonesia’s digital success deserves more attention
Hilman Palaon – The Interpreter: 1 June 2023

When it comes to progress in developing world digitalization, India and China get most of the attention. However, Indonesia has made great progress despite lacking the traditional tech sector that boosted India’s and China’s development.

https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/indonesia-s-digital-success-deserves-more-attention

For more on this theme:

(EU) Cyber defence: Council conclusions stress the importance of further strengthening the EU’s resilience to cyber threats

(U.S.) Inside The DOD’s New DIB Cybersecurity Strategy & Updates on Zero Trust, CMMC

(U.K.) Accessibility as a cyber security priority
CYBERCRIME

Cybercriminals are winning: How companies can turn the tide
Jess Parnell – Security: 29 May 2023

The current cybersecurity paradigm is broken and based on ineffective tactics. Given current trends, the annual cost of cyberattacks is projected to skyrocket to $10.5 trillion by 2025 — a 300% increase from 2015.

https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/99412-cybercriminals-are-winning-how-companies-can-turn-the-tide

For more on this theme:

(Global) This Cybercrime Syndicate Pre-Infected Over 8.9 Million Android Phones Worldwide
https://thehackernews.com/2023/05/this-cybercrime-syndicate-pre-infected.html

(U.K.) Why are UK police forces being overwhelmed by cybercrime?

(Brazil) ‘Operation Magalenha’ Attacks Give a Window Into Brazil’s Cybercrime Ecosystem
https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/-operation-magalenha-attacks-window-brazil-cybercrime-ecosystem

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

AI is a Key Component in Effectively Managing the Energy Grid
Teralyn Whipple – Broadband and Breakfast: 30 May 2023

Managing future energy grids — balancing supply and demand in real time — will become too complicated for humans to do efficiently. Artificial intelligence will be able to streamline operations, which will reduce waste and prevent blackouts.

https://broadbandbreakfast.com/2023/05/ai-is-a-key-component-in-effectively-managing-the-energy-grid/

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) Report: America’s Critical Infrastructure is Highly Vulnerable

(U.S., China) U.S. warns China could hack infrastructure, including pipelines, rail systems

(India) India conducts national cyber defence exercise to safeguard critical infrastructure amid escalating threats
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

US, EU raise concerns over ISIS in Syria, vow to strengthen global efforts
Medya News: 27 May 2023
Representatives of the United States and the European Union met to discuss mutual concerns over the persistent threat posed by the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, and their collaborative efforts within the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.
https://medyanews.net/us-eu-raise-concerns-over-isis-in-syria-vow-to-strengthen-global-efforts/

Teenagers from Islamic State families undergo rehabilitation in Syria, but future still uncertain
Hogir Al Abdo and Bassem Mroue – The Associated Press: 30 May 2023
Kurdish officials are experimenting with a rehabilitation program for children of Islamic State group militants that is meant to distance them from extremist ideas. However, it requires removing the children from their mothers and families and raises human rights concerns.
https://apnews.com/article/syria-is-islamic-state-children-iraq-75b7999e4a4920b308ddde0181258d7e

For more on this theme:
British man receives life sentence for trying to join ISIS in Syria

Beheaded Journalist’s Family Can Sue Qatar Bank Over ISIS Funds
https://news.bloomberglaw.com/banking-law/beheaded-journalists-family-can-sue-qatar-bank-over-isis-funds

Soldier who became ISIS bride walks free from prison early after 15-month sentence
https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/soldier-who-became-isis-bride-30090513

German police swoop on ‘Islamic State’ finance network

Morocco dismantles Daesh/ISIS cell in Tangier

Iraqi, Kurdish forces conduct joint anti-ISIS operations
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/270520231

Iraq, US discuss repatriation of Iraqis from ISIS-linked Syria camp
https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/300520232

Four Daughters review – fact and fiction mix in mother’s heartbreak over Islamic State

How a Low-Budget Hindi Film Ignited Deadly Religious Tension
https://time.com/6280955/kerala-story-movie-india/
Afghanistan dispatch: international terror groups have found a home in Taliban territory
Jurist: 31 May 2023

Since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, several international terrorist groups have begun operating in the country, raising concerns from the United States and its allies that the country may again spawn deadly attacks and threats to global security.

https://www.jurist.org/news/2023/05/afghanistan-dispatch-international-terror-groups-have-found-a-home-in-taliban-territory/

For more on this theme:

Lebanese Hezbollah Making Preparations to Target US Troops in Syria

Iran, Taliban exchange heavy gunfire in conflict over water rights on Afghan border

The Sahel Now Accounts for 43% of Global Terrorism Deaths
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/sahel-now-accounts-43-global-terrorism-deaths

For Better or Worse, the Supreme Court Rewrote JASTA
https://www.lawfareblog.com/better-or-worse-supreme-court-rewrote-jasta

US accuses Wagner Group of supplying missiles to Sudan’s RSF

The Role of MHPSS Efforts in the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Africa

50 Percent Of Gamers Are Exposed To “Extremism” When Playing Online, According To Research

Online Incitement and Small-Scale Terrorism: Violent Rhetoric from the Freedom Movement on Facebook

The Terrorist Threat in the Gulf of Guinea

The Online Gaming Ecosystem: Assessing Digital Socialisation, Extremism Risks and Harms Mitigation Efforts
https://gnet-research.org/2023/05/26/the-online-gaming-ecosystem/
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

For more on this theme:

Sahel ‘at crossroads’: conflict-ridden region needs support to fight armed groups, warns UN  

Terrorist Designation of al-Shabaab Leaders  
https://www.state.gov/terrorist-designation-of-al-shabaab-leaders-2/

The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan After the Taliban’s Afghanistan Takeover  
https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-tehrik-i-taliban-pakistan-after-the-talibans-afghanistan-takeover/  

French minister warns of resumption of ‘Islamist terrorist’ threat in Europe  

Countering Terrorism in Egypt: A 2023 Forecast  
https://greydynamics.com/countering-terrorism-in-egypt-a-2023-forecast/

Gender-based Terrorism in Pakistan  
https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/05/21/gender-based-terrorism-in-pakistan/

It's the safe haven surrounded by jihadist radicals, Russian mercenaries and madcap dictators. Can it cling on?  
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/niger-wagner-group-russian-mercenaries-b2341942.html

Misogyny is often the connection between overlapping far-right ideologies  
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/misogyny-often-connection-between-overlapping-far-right-ideologies

JNIM Pursuing Localized Agenda in Mali  
https://jamestown.org/program/brief-jnim-pursuing-localized-agenda-in-mali/

Abu Sayyaf Surrenders Indicate Growing Dysfunction  
https://jamestown.org/program/brief-abu-sayyaf-surrenders-indicate-growing-dysfunction/

Counterterrorism and Rising State Fragility in the Post-Coup Sahel Region  

Hizb ut-Tahrir: A Consistent Islamist Group That Has Stood the Test of Time  
https://eeradicalization.com/hizb-ut-tahrir-a-consistent-islamist-group-that-has-stood-the-test-of-time/

How Al-Qaeda’s Recent Growth in Africa Poses a Threat to Global Security  
CRIME AND CONFLICT

Taliban crackdown on women should be probed as crime against humanity, rights groups say
Rob Picheta and Ehsan Popalzai – CNN: 26 May 2023

Since returning to power in Afghanistan, the Taliban have waged a “brutal crackdown on the rights and freedoms of women,” causing two leading human rights organizations to call for an investigation for crimes against humanity.


For more on this theme:

How Common Experiences Help Mexican Gangs Find New Recruits

Climate Change and Conflict Are Wreaking Havoc in Somalia
https://theintercept.com/2023/05/31/somalia-drought-conflict-civilian-displacement/

Ukraine war: The mothers going to get their children back from Russia

Russia’s War in Ukraine Shows Cyberattacks Can Be War Crimes
https://www.darkreading.com/edge-articles/russia-war-ukraine-shows-cyberattacks-are-war-crimes

Behind the Lines: Deposited in Russia’s Hostage Bank

Will the Russian Federation’s accountability for crimes against Ukraine drive the evolution of international law?
https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=2d547e1c-3862-4fee-93d2-0729c721d8ee

Trafficking in the Sahel: Killer cough syrup and fake medicine

Sudan conflict: Hospital attacks potential war crimes, BBC told

Gender Persecution: Why Labels Matter

Colombia: UN expert calls for effective protection of victims of trafficking

UN judges expand war crime conviction of ex-Milosevic aides

Atrocity Alert No. 349: Ukraine, Cameroon and Afghanistan
https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/atrocity-alert-no-349/

AI: War crimes evidence erased by social media platforms
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Did Ukraine just win the war?
Adam Simpson – The Strategist: 30 May 2023

Ukraine seems to be moving the global political environment in its favor ahead of its much-anticipated counteroffensive, as shown by developments before and during the G7 summit in Japan.

For more on this theme:

Diagnosing Iran's emerging pivot toward Russia and China

Thinking About Post-War Ukraine
https://tnsr.org/2023/06/thinking-about-post-war-ukraine/

Putin may lose it all by going all-in for Ukraine

A look at the man running mercenary Wagner Group in Russia's war against Ukraine

Russia's Alleged Arms Shipment in South Africa

Where Ukraine-Russia War Stands After 15 Months
https://www.dailysignal.com/2023/05/25/where-war-ukraine-stands/

Wagner Group boss, “Putin's butcher,” says Russia at risk of losing Ukraine war and facing a “revolution”

Ukraine’s commander in chief hints counteroffensive could be imminent in slick video

Facing Off With the West on Ukraine, Russia Reshapes World Order in Africa

China says it wants peace in Ukraine, but is it only on Russia's terms?

Russia says it discussed peace prospects for Ukraine with Chinese special envoy

She had a dream job. Now, she’s part of a massive brain drain hammering Russia
https://www.npr.org/2023/05/31/1176769042/russia-economy-brain-drain-oil-prices-flee-ukraine-invasion
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Anti-Kremlin Russian Volunteers Launch Border Incursion Into Russia’s Belgorod Region

Ukrainian Politician Promises to Help Pro-Western Political Forces in Georgia
https://jamestown.org/program/ukrainian-politician-promises-to-help-pro-western-political-forces-in-georgia/

Russia’s Weaponization of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant
https://jamestown.org/program/russia-weaponizes-the-zaporizhzhia-nuclear-power-plant/

Three Russian Discourses and Significant Silence on the War in Ukraine
https://jamestown.org/program/three-russian-discourses-and-significant-silence-on-the-war-in-ukraine/

Russian Sphere of Influence Crumbling After Ukraine Invasion, Polls Show

Dislodging Putin’s Foothold in the Balkans
https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/06/dislodging-putins-foothold-balkans

NATO intel chief: Russia’s war on Ukraine and a hybrid war aimed at us
https://www.c4isrnet.com/cyber/2023/05/30/nato-intel-chief-russias-war-on-ukraine-and-a-hybrid-war-aimed-at-us/

Why Is the Russian Regime Ignoring the Moscow Drone Attacks?
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/89851

The Resilience and Trauma of Ukraine’s Civil Society
https://carnegieeurope.eu/2023/06/01/resilience-and-trauma-of-ukraine-s-civil-society-pub-89852

The Plot Against Russia
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/plot-against-russia

Time to End Russia’s Black Sea Piracy
https://cepa.org/article/time-to-end-russias-black-sea-piracy/

Africa’s Mission Chases the Chimera of Peace for Ukraine

Paranoia and Poison — the Kremlin Panics Over Exiles
https://cepa.org/article/paranoia-and-poison-the-kremlin-panics-over-exiles/

Ukraine’s Coming Counteroffensive? Lower Your Aim
https://cepa.org/article/ukraines-coming-counteroffensive-lower-your-aim/

Russia’s new reality: Less Peter the Great, more Putin the Pariah
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Exploring the secrets of Ukraine’s successful wartime diplomacy

Taiwan Says China Sees Invasion Of Ukraine As ‘Test Case’ For Its Own Designs

Are Claims By Russian Experts About Dividing Kazakhstan Between Russia And China At Emba River Going To Come True?

‘Z’ Marks The Trouble Spot: Russia’s Symbol Of War Appears In Northern Kosovo