COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

World Whistleblowers Day 2021: Speaking Up Against Corruption is Crucial for a Just World, and We're Here to Help

Transparency International: 22 June 2021

June 23 was World Whistleblower Day 2021, and Transparency International celebrated people courageous enough to come forward and report corruption, including several individual cases, and encouraged more people to reach out to its Advocacy and Legal Advice Centers around the world to report corruption in their countries.


For more on this theme:

Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelenskyy speeds up corruption crackdown, one oligarch at a time
https://www.euronews.com/2021/06/22/ukraine-s-volodymyr-zelenskyy-speeds-up-corruption-crackdown-one-oligarch-at-a-time

High-Profile Corruption Probe Tests Costa Rica’s Justice System

HRW: IMF Loan to Cameroon Should Be Contingent on Anti-Corruption

Fear of Powerful Politicians Causes ‘Corruption That Slows the Economy,’ Iraq’s Oil Minister Says

Paraguay fights corruption in vaccination with transparency

Bulgarians look to Romania’s Kövesi to fight high-level corruption

Former top police officer to be charged with corruption

Potentially corrupt NSW government land purchase prompts inquiry into 20 similar deals

Iran’s medicine shortages at its peak in 15 years due to corruption
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Greek Captagon Bust Leads to a Criminal Gang and the Port at the Heart of Syria’s Booming New Drug Trade
Ahmed Eid Ashour, Sameh Ellaboudy and Maher Shaeri – Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project; and Cecilia Anesi – Investigative Reporting Project Italy (IrpiMedia): 16 June 2021

In December 2018, the Greek Coast Guard intercepted a Syrian ship loaded with cannabis and the drug Captagon off the coast of Crete. The investigation has led to a network of criminals with links to Syria’s Assad family and evidence that the Syrian government is helping to fund its civil war through the drug trade.


European Drug Report 2021: Trends and Developments
European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA): 9 June 2021

The EMCDDA released its newest data-packed report on drugs and drug trafficking in Europe, including how the COVID-10 pandemic has affected supply and use, which drugs are doing the most damage, and current trends in trafficking and production.

https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2021

For more on this theme:

Cartel War or General Chaos: Behind the Killing Spree in Reynosa, Mexico

Report: Amidst Pandemic, Drug Dealers Moved Online

Mozambique Becoming Southern Africa’s Cocaine Platform

Banana growers from Magdalena, La Guajira and Cesar strengthen alliance with authorities to mitigate drug trafficking

Patrick Gower’s full interview with Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel on how they send meth to New Zealand

Methamphetamine use on the rise in Vietnam: UNODC

Lebanon intercepts 250,000 Captagon pills hidden in water pumps bound for Saudi Arabia
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Illegal Fishing Is a Global Threat. Here’s How to Combat It.
John C. Vann – Council on Foreign Relations: 4 June 2021

Illegal and unregulated fishing is a global problem that devastates ecosystems, degrades food stocks and undermines fragile fishing economies. A coordinated effort among nations and international institutions is needed to combat the problem.

https://www.cfr.org/article/illegal-fishing-global-threat-heres-how-combat-it

What's the cost of illegal mining in Brazil's Amazon? A new tool calculates it
Shanna Hanbury – Mongabay: 11 June 2021

The new calculator, introduced by the Federal Public Ministry and the Conservation Strategy Fund Brazil, uses data that includes environmental mitigation and health care costs to determine the damages caused by any particular case of illegal mining. This will save the government untold man-hours and allow the more effective prosecution of violators.


For more on this theme:

Teaming up to Track Illegal Amazon Gold Mines in Peru

Rhino anti-poaching research goes nuclear
https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-06/uotw-rar060721.php

US Southern Command Signs Partnership agreement with Global Fishing Watch

Study shows nearly 50,000 live animals on sale in China’s Wuhan before COVID-19 began

‘Conservation litigation’ tries to put a true price on wildlife crime

The Illegal Sea Cucumber Trade in Kaukira, Honduras

Illegal logging in Philippines’ Palawan stokes fears of a mining resurgence

Cuba Quietly Admits to Wildlife Trafficking Problem

Are zoos inadvertently complicit in wildlife trade? The case of a rare Borneo lizard
https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-06/pp-azi061621.php
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Central America's Turbulent Northern Triangle
Amelia Cheatham – Council on Foreign Relations: 7 June 2021

An analysis looks at the interrelated factors that create instability and help push migrants from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America toward the United States. Factors include environmental devastation from hurricanes, chronic violence and lack of economic opportunity.

https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/central-americas-turbulent-northern-triangle

People Smugglers in Syria Take to TikTok
Laura Dihmis – Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP); and Mohammad Bassiki – Syrian Investigative Reporting for Accountability Journalism (SIRAJ): 23 June 2021

Human smugglers in Syria are advertising their services on the social media app Tik Tok, promising trouble-free luxury travel from Damascus to Lebanon or even as far as Greece. The ads say that there will be no checkpoints or COVID-19 tests.


For more on this theme:
EU eyes billions in extra funds for Turkey migration deal

Greece: Pushbacks and violence against refugees and migrants are de facto border policy

Frontex Failing to Protect People at EU Borders

Vatican Diplomat on Human Trafficking: We Must Ensure that the Internet Promotes Human Dignity

Illegal Border Crossings Increase in Europe
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/illegal-border-crossings-increase-in-europe/

United States: Business And Human Rights – Analysing Modern Slavery Risks In Portfolio Companies: Practical Considerations For Investors

Most online recruitment in sex trafficking cases occurs on Facebook: analysis
https://thehill.com/policy/technology/technology/557757-most-online-recruitment-in-sex-trafficking-cases-occurred-on

Europol: 630 Identified as Victims of Labor Exploitation
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

**Taming the New Wild West**
*Richard Haass – Project Syndicate: 23 June 2021*

The increase in dangerous cyberattacks against key critical infrastructure and large corporations has started to move opinion in the United States toward a more regulated internet. Discussions begun by U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin at their recent summit on setting boundaries could lead to an international pact.

https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/biden-putin-meeting-cyber-security-will-depend-on-deterrence-by-richard-haass-2021-06

For more on this theme:

*(Global) Online Freedoms: Safeguards Must Be Balanced With Free Expression*
https://www.circleid.com/posts/20210616-online-freedoms-safeguards-must-be-balanced-with-free-expression/

*(El Salvador) ANALYSIS: Crypto Critics Should Examine El Salvador Bitcoin Use*

*(Nigeria) ‘Internet Connectivity Will Enable Digital Transformation, Education’*

INTERNET FREEDOM

**UK government bid to censor the internet faces growing resistance**
*Scott Bicheno – telecoms.com: 23 June 2021*

The United Kingdom’s Online Safety Bill will place safety excessively ahead of freedom and encourage internet platforms to censor users even more than they already do, according to internet freedom advocates. They call the idea that Silicon Valley companies should police Britons’ online speech “Orwellian.”


For more on this theme:

*(France) Cyberbullying trial tests French tools to fight online abuse*

*(Syria, Sudan) Syria and Sudan turn off the internet to suppress … cheating by kids sitting exams*
https://www.theregister.com/2021/06/23/syria_and_sudan_turn_off_internet/
PRIVACY

How digital fingerprints affect our lives
Eminetra: 24 June 2021

Our digital fingerprints leave behind huge amounts of personal information that can make us vulnerable. Regulation will help minimize the problem, but everyone who uses the internet should learn how to preserve a measure of anonymity and internet freedom.


For more on this theme:

(India) India's digital database for farmers stirs fears about privacy, exclusion

(Philippines) Privacy commission boosts digital forensic capabilities

(Global) 6 Online Privacy Concerns in 2021 (and How to Defend Against Them)
https://techbullion.com/6-online-privacy-concerns-in-2021-and-how-to-defend-against-them/

SECURITY

Battling Chinese Big Tech encroachment in India
Gaurav Tyagi – Observer Research Foundation: 12 June 2021

Chinese tech companies have a seemingly symbiotic relationship with the Chinese Communist Party and the state. They have helped developing nations acquire the latest technology and connect with the world, but at a cost. India has been a victim of Chinese espionage and data theft, and Chinese investment has become a threat to Indian security.


For more on this theme:

(Australia) Australia Considers Mandating Ransom Payment Reporting

(EU) EU privacy watchdogs call for ban on facial recognition in public spaces

(Global) How Internet of Things Security Is Impacting Retailers

(Global) How to solve the cybersecurity workforce shortage
https://www.siliconrepublic.com/careers/how-to-solve-the-cybersecurity-workforce-shortage
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Experts Doubt Ethical AI Design Will Be Broadly Adopted as the Norm Within the Next Decade
Lee Rainie, Janna Anderson and Emily A. Vogels – Pew Research Center: 16 June 2021

An international survey of tech experts and advocates by the Pew Research Center and Elon University found considerable concern over the lack of defined ethical standards in artificial intelligence (AI) development and worry that advances will be focused on profit and social control, but there is also optimism for advances in medicine and elsewhere that will make people’s lives better.


For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Can We Conceive of a New Internet?


(Indonesia, Asia Pacific) Filling the gaps: Asia Pacific’s cyber capacity building

CYBERCRIME

How Does One Get Hired by a Top Cybercrime Gang?
Brian Krebs – Krebs on Security: 15 June 2021

This article analyzes how a 55-year-old web designer and mother of two came to work for the cybercrime group Trickbot, where she was deeply engaged in many aspects of ransomware attacks, and how her carelessness helped lead to her arrest.


For more on this theme:
(Global) Ransomware gangs shift efforts to most lucrative targets, report
https://www.computing.co.uk/news/4033381/ransomware-gangs-shift-efforts-most-lucrative-targets-report

(Global) Clop ransomware is back in business after recent arrests

(U.S.) US Treasury Nominee: Preventing Crypto Money Laundering a Priority
ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Understanding the Meteoric Rise of the Islamic State in Mozambique
Michael Shurkin – Newlines Institute: 22 June 2021

A recent attack on the northern Mozambican town of Palma by Ahl al-sunnah wa al Jamma’ah, a group affiliated with the Islamic State, has raised questions about its origins and rapid success in a part of the world few would associate with Islamist violence.

Islamic State revives religious police in northeast Syria
Mohammed Hardan - Al-Monitor: 21 June 2021

Hesba, the Islamic State’s religious police, is back at work in the areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeast Syria. The Hesba recently called on residents of Deir ez-Zor to shun engaging with the SDF and the U.S.-led international coalition and to resign from the local councils of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, threatening to kill anyone who violates their instructions.

For more on this theme:

UK’s newest carrier with Marine Corps F-35s onboard joins Islamic State fight, stirs Russian interest

UK stands firm in refusing to allow ‘ISIS bride’ to retain citizenship
https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2021/06/18/UK-stands-firm-in-refusing-to-allow-ISIS-bride-to-retain-citizenship

LNA Targets Terrorists in South Libya
https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/3037101/lna-targets-terrorists-south-libya

Iraqi ISIS leader sentenced to death

Operation Shader: What Hardware Has The UK Used Against IS?
https://www.forces.net/news/operation-shader-four-years-fighting-islamic-state-group

Former Australian citizen and ISIS bride Zehra Duman free in Turkey despite 7-year prison sentence

Iraqi ISIS-linked families returned from al-Hol want to go home
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/140620212
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Terrorists Attempted to Take Advantage of the Pandemic, Says Europol’s New EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2021

Europol: 22 June 2021


Uzbek jihadis destroy antiquities in Idlib Museum

Khaled al-Khateb – Al-Monitor: 21 June 2021

Uzbek jihadis affiliated with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which controls the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib, destroyed some antiquities such as statues in the Idlib Museum, claiming they were “false idols” that should not be displayed. A video showing the debris appears to have been filmed by one of the jihadis, who was speaking the language of Uzbekistan.


For more on this theme:

‘Actors’ destabilising Pakistan through terrorism: Dr Moeed


Terrorism threat to Singapore remains high: report


Sri Lanka pardons suspected Tamil Tigers convicted of terrorism


Taliban Reject Foreign Military Role in Guarding Kabul Airport After Troop Exit


Pashtun Clan Demands Protection From Taliban In Pakistan

https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/jani-khel-protest-taliban-pakistan/31307298.html

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland Remarks: Domestic Terrorism Policy Address

https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-merrick-b-garland-remarks-domestic-terrorism-policy-address

Côte d’Ivoire inaugurates International Academy for Combating Terrorism

https://www.africanews.com/2021/06/10/cote-d-ivoire-inaugurates-international-academy-for-combatting-terrorism/

Rise in far-right extremists seen in Germany last year

RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

‘Not like most action films’: Facing the threat of prison radicalization
Interpol: 22 June 2021

Officials from countries housing radicalized prisoners are being encouraged to leverage Interpol’s blue and green notices in cases in which inmates might pose a threat when released. “Unlike most action films which end when the terrorist is caught, the threat posed by these individuals doesn’t disappear once they are placed behind bars,” said Greg Hinds, Interpol’s counterterrorism director.

For more on this theme:
Counter-radicalization effort challenged by technological development

Dutch anti-terrorism agency dropped plan for secret anti-radicalization video campaign: report
https://nltimes.nl/2021/06/14/dutch-anti-terrorism-agency-dropped-plan-secret-anti-radicalization-video-campaign

Ontario man who tried to join ISIS to be released on time served since arrest 18 months ago

IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

France slams Russian ‘seizure of power’ in CAfrica
DailyMail.com: 18 June 2021

France has accused Russia of proceeding with a “seizure of power” in the Central African Republic, acknowledging that the CAR’s cooperation with Russian mercenaries had prompted Paris to scale down its military support. France has suspended budgetary aid and military cooperation with the CAR, accusing its government of being complicit in an anti-French disinformation campaign backed by Russia.
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-9700583/France-slams-Russian-seizure-power-CAfrica.html

For more on this theme:
Ebrahim Raisi: Iran’s proxy president
https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/06/ebrahim-raisi-irans-proxy-president

New arrests in Iraq point to ongoing struggle with militias and corruption

China’s maritime militia breaks rules and charts course for global dominance
IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION WARFARE

Disinformation exports: How foreign anti-vaccine narratives reached West African communities online
Carlotta Dotto and Seb Cubbon – First Draft: 23 June 2021

The use of sophisticated disinformation tactics is becoming more widespread, and artificial amplification techniques are regularly being used to spread disinformation in West Africa. Left unaddressed, they have the potential to disrupt vaccination efforts in the region.

https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/foreign-anti-vaccine-disinformation-reaches-west-africa/

For more on this theme:
US takes down Iran-linked news sites, alleges disinformation
https://apnews.com/article/iran-middle-east-03e651ff86918c871d9e1baaa5e30e37

Malign forces are using disinformation to undermine democracy in Scotland – Angus Robertson MSP

Iran: ‘Sabotage attack’ on civilian nuclear center thwarted
https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-iran-sabotage-business-media-995879deee39e4511f-d756a6444d4f6c

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

EU pushes plans for Joint Cyber Unit in fight against increased cyber-attacks
John Leyden – The Daily Swig: 23 June 2021

The European Union plans to stand up a new cyber unit in response to the threat posed by the rising tide of cyberattacks. The Joint Cyber Unit will allow countries to request assistance from each other and the European Union, including the possibility of calling in help from rapid response teams, according to draft plans for proposals submitted by the European Commission.

https://portswigger.net/daily-swig/eu-pushes-plans-for-joint-cyber-unit-in-fight-against-increased-cyber-attacks

Analysis:
The EU joint cybercrime unit is a positive step but faces significant hurdles
https://techmonitor.ai/technology/cybersecurity/eu-joint-cybercrime-unit

For more on this theme:
Cyber Attacks Involving Huawei Devices in Canada Spiked after Meng Wanzhou Arrest

NATO Says Cyberattacks to Be Treated as Military Attacks
https://www.secureworldexpo.com/industry-news/nato-cyberattacks-military-attacks