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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Ukraine sacks army recruitment chiefs in anti-graft shakeup
Dan Peleschuk – Reuters: 11 August 2023
President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a review revealed signs of professional abuse ranging from illegal enrichment to transporting draft-eligible men across the border.

https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-fire-all-regional-military-recruitment-chiefs-zelenskyy-2023-08-11/

Can Guatemala and Ecuador’s upcoming elections cast light on corruption hidden in the darkness?
Jessica Ludwig – George W. Bush Institute: 16 August 2023
In both Ecuador and Guatemala, where corrupt actors with entrenched financial interests cling to power, shadows hover over this year’s elections.


For more on this theme:

West Indies’ Samuels found guilty of anti-corruption code breach
https://www.reuters.com/sports/cricket/west-indies-samuels-found-guilty-anti-corruption-code-breach-2023-08-16/

Iran Arrests 9 Bahais Over Corruption Charges: Ministry

Corrupt Officials Key to Trafficking Networks in Venezuela

US, UK, Canada sanction Lebanon’s central bank ex-governor over alleged corruption

Corruption, China’s Weapon of Choice to Snatch Lithium in Latin America

Chile: Boric enacts bill protecting whistleblowers in corruption cases

How much corruption is too much?

Corruption, social norms, and behaviour change in Nigeria
DRUG TRAFFICKING

How corruption and gang warfare transformed Ecuador
Tara John – CNN: 11 August 2023
Ecuadorians are in the middle of a bloody turf war as rival criminal groups mete out often public shows of violence, battling to control drug-trafficking routes that cross the nation.

This Drone Full of Meth Shows Syria’s Narco Traffickers Are Diversifying
Mohammed Rasool – VICE: 15 August 2023
After Jordanian border police shot down a drone carrying crystal meth, experts say it shows smugglers are no longer just focused on captagon.

For more on this theme:
Drug-related killings add to instability in Syria’s south

The Balkan Drug Route: A Snapshot from the Courtroom

‘This isn’t some random dude with a duffel bag’: To catch fentanyl traffickers, feds dig into crypto markets

Has Narco-Money Once Again Infiltrated Political Campaigns in Colombia?
https://insightcrime.org/news/has-narco-money-once-again-infiltrated-political-campaigns-colombia/

Cocaine cartels encroach on Unification Church’s Paraguayan paradise

Rotterdam’s Largest Cocaine Seizure as Efforts Expand to Stop Smuggling

White House asks Congress for more money to fight fentanyl overdoses
https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/white-house-fentanyl-overdoses-rcna99283

‘You have to sacrifice your life’: the drug runners of Colombia’s rainforests
https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/15/indigenous-drug-runners-colombia-brazil-sacrifice-your-life-

Uruguay’s Homegrown Crime Groups Likely to Stay Local, Study Says
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

How can we use AI to combat wildlife crime?
Lionel Hachemin – IFAW: 14 August 2023

Wildlife trafficking is the world’s fourth-most common criminal activity after drug, human and weapons trafficking. Artificial intelligence presents a potential solution.
https://www.ifaw.org/international/journal/ai-combat-wildlife-crime

Romania to pay farmers to leave trees standing
Louise Guillot – Politico: 10 August 2023

The European Commission approved a state aid plan allowing Romania to pay foresters to not cut down trees.

For more on this theme:
This dog is helping Maine biologists protect turtles from illegal pet market
https://thecounty.me/2023/08/05/news/this-dog-is-helping-maine-biologists-protect-turtles-from-illegal-pet-market/

Illegal wildlife trade ‘thriving’ in virtual world; NParks monitoring marketplaces

New farmers foundation supports deforestation-free products in Indonesia

Insight: Amazon rainforest gold mining is poisoning scores of threatened species
https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/amazon-rainforest-gold-mining-is-poisoning-scores-threatened-species-2023-08-05/

Illegal mining of rare earth metals surges in northern Myanmar

Brazil Keeps Up Fight Against Illegal Mining in Yanomami Indigenous Land

The illegal trade of shark fin is thriving in South America
https://theworld.org/stories/2023-08-09/illegal-trade-shark-fin-thriving-south-america

Illegal Timber Traffickers Are Exploiting Once-Uncut Forest Around the Peru-Colombia-Brazil Border
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

The Lawfare Podcast: Can We Build a Trustworthy Future Web?
Benjamin Wittes, Rose Jackson and Camille François – Lawfare: 10 August 2023
What are the challenges to scaling trust and safety to new information ecosystems?
https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-lawfare-podcast-can-we-build-a-trustworthy-future-web

For more on this theme:
(Africa) Cyber governance in Africa is weak. Taking the Malabo Convention seriously would be a good start

(GLOBAL) Human Rights and the Digital Domain Primer – Part 4

(EU, China) The tech standards that shape the future: How Europeans should respond to China’s rising influence
https://ecfr.eu/article/the-tech-standards-that-shape-the-future-how-europeans-should-respond-to-chinas-rising-influence/

INTERNET FREEDOM

Jeopardizing Digital Rights in Jordan
Abdullah Jbour – Carnegie: 15 August 2023
Jordan’s controversial new cybercrime law, now ratified by the king, may have serious consequences for freedom of expression, political participation and the digital economy.
https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/90374

For more on this theme:
(China) LinkedIn Shuts Down InCareer, Its App for China

(Iran) The Implications of Internet Censorship on Iran’s Digital Economy

(Russia) Russia Slams Reddit with First-Ever Fine for Illegal Content

(Russia) Apple caves to the Kremlin, for a minute
https://www.codastory.com/newsletters/russia-censorship-apple/
CYBER STRATEGY AND RISKS

Getting regulation right to improve Australia’s cybersecurity
Rajiv Shah – The Strategist: 15 August 2023

Poor cybersecurity is a risk to our interconnected digital systems, while improved security is an opportunity to build trust by enabling further digital transformation.

For more on this theme:
(Nepal) Govt approves National Cyber Security Policy 2023

(Global) Amit Shah Says Global Cooperation Is Now Essential for Cybersecurity
https://www.fairoserver.com/world-news/amit-shah-says-global-cooperation-is-now-essential-for-cybersecurity/

(India) India’s digital transformation: A deep dive into Data Protection Act

CYBERATTACKS

LifeLabs could pay at least $4.9M in proposed class-action settlement over cyberattack
CBC News: 11 August 2023

LifeLabs could pay up to $9.8 million to settle the lawsuit arising from a 2019 incident that compromised patient data.

For more on this theme:
(Global) EvilProxy Cyberattack Flood Targets Execs via Microsoft 365

(Bangladesh, India) Some web services restored in Bangladesh amid fears of cyberattack

(South Africa) Southern African power generator targeted with DroxiDat malware
https://therecord.media/southern-africa-utility-targeted-cyberattack

(Germany, Iran) Charming Kitten Targets Iranian Dissidents with Advanced Cyber Attacks
CYBERCRIME

AI-Driven Security: A Proactive Approach to Combatting Cybercrime in the Digital Era
Satya Machiraju – Express Computer: 16 August 2023

As organizations rely more and more on technology, they become more vulnerable to attacks.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Hacktivists fund their operations using common cybercrime tactics

(Global) “If cybercrime was a country, it would be the world’s third-largest economy after the U.S. and China”
https://www.businessleader.co.uk/interview-raluca-saceanu-ceo-smarttech247/

(Global) Unveiling the secrets of Dark Web marketplaces: Efforts in combating cybercrime

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

“The Taiwan Scenario” and Cyberattacks on Civilian Critical Infrastructures
Daniel Pereira – OODALoop: 15 August 2023

“The broad calculus for China’s decision-making will likely involve weighing the relative military advantage gained from cyberattacks on critical infrastructure against the probability that such attacks would provoke a harsh U.S. response or expand the conflict,” says James A. Lewis, director of the Strategic Technologies Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.


For more on this theme:

(Global) How do chemical manufacturers avoid the nightmare cyberattack scenario?
https://technative.io/chemical-manufacturers-avoid-nightmare-cyberattack/

(U.S., China) Laying Down the Law Under the Sea: Analyzing the US and Chinese Submarine Cable Governance Regimes

(U.S.) The Emerging Opportunities And Threats Of AI For Critical Infrastructure — Interview With Martin Stanley, CISA
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

ISIS still poses serious threat with thousands of fighters in Middle East, UN says
The National: 15 August 2023
Members of the terrorist group include more than 3,500 Iraqis and about 2,000 citizens of 70 other countries, according to United Nations reports.

ISIS deploys cryptocurrency, NATO-grade weapons to revive its reign of terror
Mukul Sharma – WION: 13 August 2023
The Islamic State group is reported to be using regional versions of cryptocurrency, including so-called stablecoins, and is increasingly relying on virtual assets for international funds transfers, according to a United Nations report.

For more on this theme:
Islamic State claims responsibility for attack on bus that kills 23 Syrian troops
Suqur al-Sham’s Allegiances in Question After US Killing of Abd-al-Hadi Mahmud al-Haji Ali in Syria
Why it’s time to repatriate IS foreign fighters
https://mei.edu/publications/why-its-time-repatriate-foreign-fighters
The Australian government has a duty to repatriate children born in IS-held territory in Syria
Daesh shows signs of division over propaganda strategy
Al Qaeda and ISIS start resurfacing in Bangladesh
Where is ISIS today?
https://www.tpr.org/2023-08-04/where-is-isis-today
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Middle East groups learn lessons from the Ukraine War
Pierre Boussel – GIS: 15 August 2023

Islamist militias are analyzing the war in Ukraine for tactics, signaling a strategic shift for armed groups in the Middle East.
https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/islamist-militias-ukraine/

For more on this theme:
Lebanon’s Hezbollah leader urges Muslims to ‘punish’ Quran desecrators if governments fail to do so
https://apnews.com/article/iraq-ashoura-nasrallah-quran-lebanon-1ffdf478e8d0b5324a0cb3afcd-c0af3b

Why International Leverage Has Failed With the Taliban

Is Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Merging Into al-Qaida?

Why the Taliban’s opium ban will probably fail

Coup in Niger puts U.S. efforts to thwart terrorism in Africa’s Sahel region at risk

Terrorism: What’s behind surge in arrests of under-18s?

Terrorists are using fraud to fund their activities — the UK government needs to act urgently

The crisis in West Africa could bring terrorism back to Europe’s streets

Hezbollah in Latin America: An Update

The Problem with Designating the Wagner Group as a Terrorist Organization
https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-problem-with-designating-the-wagner-group-as-a-terrorist-organization/

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb launches propaganda campaign targeting Morocco

Niger coup: Wagner taking advantage of instability – Antony Blinken
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

**How Russia’s Military Bloggers Shape the Course of Putin’s War**
*Donald N. Jensen and Angela Howard – United States Institute of Peace: 10 August 2023*

Their “soft” immunity ensures a platform for powerful hardline voices to lobby for an even more aggressive approach to the war on Ukraine.


*For more on this theme:*

**Nothing Seems to Deter Russian Aggression Like NATO Membership**

**Prigozhin’s Mutiny Shatters Illusion of Powerful Media Empire**
[https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90372](https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90372)

**Russia faces ‘great dilemma’ as Ukraine puts Moscow on the defensive**

**Ukraine’s Slow-Moving Counteroffensive: The Russian Response (Part Two)**

**Belarus Remains a Persistent Vector of Russia’s Hybrid Campaign Against the West**

**Hard Georgian Lessons for Ending the War in Ukraine**

**Inside Russia’s attempts to hack Ukrainian military operations**

**Ukraine says Saudi talks were ‘breakthrough’, Kyiv has more to offer Africa than Russia**
[https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-says-saudi-talks-were-breakthrough-kyiv-has-more-offer-africa-than-2023-08-10/](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-says-saudi-talks-were-breakthrough-kyiv-has-more-offer-africa-than-2023-08-10/)

**Ukraine claims it has retaken key village from Russians as counteroffensive grinds on**

**Ukraine strikes back against Russia as world’s first drone war escalates**

**Ukraine’s vibrant tech ecosystem is a secret weapon in the war with Russia**
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme

Winter is coming: Is Ukraine’s power grid ready for new Russian attacks?
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/winter-is-coming-is-ukraines-power-grid-ready-for-new-russian-attacks/

Why Putin’s Russia cannot accept its borders

Why Ukraine can still win

Russia: New school history books seek to justify Ukraine war

The Ukrainians Forced to Flee to Russia
https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/08/21/the-ukrainians-forced-to-flee-to-russia

Ukraine War: Russia’s Weaponisation of Food

Russia is committing grave acts of ecocide in Ukraine — and the results will harm the whole world
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/aug/16/russia-ecocide-ukraine-world-war-crimes

Challenges after Russian Withdrawals in Ukraine

On The Front Line: Ukraine’s Counteroffensive Yields Small Gains

Russia’s ‘elections’ in occupied Ukraine are a charade
https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-elections-ukraine-vladimir-putin-are-a-charade/

Jonathan Littell: ‘Nothing Will Change In Russia Until It’s Defeated In Ukraine’

The Decline in Russian Economy: Emerging Challenges Amidst the Russia-Ukraine War

How Russia is Using Online Video Games to Promote the War in Ukraine
https://www.justsecurity.org/87566/how-russia-is-using-online-video-games-to-promote-the-war-in-ukraine/

The Baltic response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine

A Game Of Drones In The Russia-Ukraine War
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

- Wagner Group Licks Its Wounds In Belarus

- Were the Jeddah Peace Talks a Real Step Toward Peace?
  https://cepa.org/article/were-the-jeddah-peace-talks-a-real-step-toward-peace/

- BRICS Summit And ICC Warrant Against Putin

- Navigating Russia’s Strategic Moves In West Africa: Unraveling Geopolitical Dynamics

- Russian Factory Is Using Underage Workers To Assemble Iranian ‘Suicide' Drones Destined For Ukraine