

THE MARSHALL CENTER

transnational weekly



A CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICE FROM THE MARSHALL CENTER

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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

DRUG TRAFFICKING

Captagon, trafficking, and the long comedown of the Syrian narco-state

Adam Doyle – The New Arab: 5 August 2021

Captagon is by no means a new phenomenon in the Middle East, but the Syrian civil war and a collapsing economy have pushed the market into high gear.

<https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/captagon-trafficking-and-syrias-narco-state>

Balkan Gangs Supervise Cocaine Trade from Colombia and Across Europe

Alessandro Ford – InSight Crime: 17 August 2021

A cell within a notorious Montenegrin cocaine trafficking group has been dismantled on Spain's Canary Islands, demonstrating how Balkan drug smugglers may be using Latin American connections to reposition themselves within European markets.

<https://insightcrime.org/news/balkan-gangs-supervise-cocaine-trade-from-colombia-and-across-europe/>

For more on this theme:

I infiltrated the UK's most dangerous drug gangs — here's what I learned about drug crime

<https://www.insider.com/i-infiltrated-the-uks-most-dangerous-drug-gangs-during-14-years-undercover-2021-7>

Border officials discover drug-trafficking tunnel running from Mexico into California

<https://news.yahoo.com/border-officials-discover-drug-trafficking-133630780.html>

Indian state launches assault on drugs as UN warns of Bangladesh-like crisis

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indian-state-launches-assault-drugs-un-warns-bangladesh-like-crisis-2021-08-12/>

State to Supply Costa Rican Police With Drones to Crack Down on Drug Trade

<https://www.nextgov.com/emerging-tech/2021/08/state-supply-costa-rican-police-drones-crack-down-drug-trade/184343/>

Taliban Earned \$1.6 Billion In 2020: Here's How The Terrorist Group Makes Money

<https://www.ibtimes.com/taliban-earned-16-billion-2020-heres-how-terrorist-group-makes-money-3271924>

'Armed and Dangerous': Inside the 'Ndrangheta's Intercontinental Cocaine Pipeline

<https://www.occrp.org/en/ndrangheta/armed-and-dangerous-inside-the-ndranghetas-intercontinental-cocaine-pipeline>

Drug Deaths Soar, Prompting New Crackdowns and Funding

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/08/12/drug-deaths-soar-prompting-new-crackdowns-and-funding>

Russia Hands Two Rights Activists Stiff Prison Terms On Drug-Trafficking Charges

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-activists-prison-khodorkovsky/31407780.html>

Mexican drug cartels take aim at journalists

<https://english.elpais.com/usa/2021-08-17/mexican-drug-cartels-take-aim-at-journalists.html>

TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Hong Kong adds wildlife trafficking to organised crime law

Agence France-Presse: 18 August 2021

Hong Kong passed a new law that classifies wildlife trafficking as an organized crime issue, a move welcomed by conservationists because it will give law enforcement wider powers to combat the trade.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210818-hong-kong-adds-wildlife-trafficking-to-organised-crime-law>

The Kichwa woman fighting drug traffickers and loggers in the Peruvian Amazon

Gloria Almitres – Mongabay: 13 August 2021

Indigenous leaders and legal experts say a key obstacle to driving out the criminal groups is the government's failure to issue land titles to the Indigenous communities, which leaves them with no legal standing to complain about the invasions.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/the-kichwa-woman-fighting-drug-traffickers-and-loggers-in-the-peruvian-amazon/>

For more on this theme:

USAID redirects funding in Cambodia as future of Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary hangs in the balance

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/usaid-redirects-funding-in-cambodia-as-future-of-prey-lang-wildlife-sanctuary-hangs-in-the-balance/>

Can this smartphone system save the Philippine's Palawan rainforest from destruction?

<https://techwireasia.com/2021/08/can-this-smartphone-system-save-the-philippines-palawan-rainforest-from-destruction/>

Worries Grow as Brazil's Forest Fire Season Starts

<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/worries-grow-as-brazil-s-forest-fire-season-starts/5996077.html>

Siberia's wildfires are bigger than all the world's other blazes combined

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/11/siberia-fires-russia-climate/>

A Vast South American Wilderness Is Under Siege From Illegal Mining

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/a-vast-south-american-wilderness-is-under-siege-from-illegal-mining>

Illegal mining drives elephants to destroy villages

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/video/illegal-mining-drives-elephants-destroy-122352335.html>

Illegal gold represents 17% of Brazil's exports — study

<https://www.mining.com/illegal-gold-represents-17-of-brazils-exports-study/>

How SAR satellites are helping in containing illegal mining activities

<https://www.geospatialworld.net/top-stories/how-sar-satellite-are-helping-in-containing-illegal-mining-activities-eos/>

Gold diggers and rent seekers strip Tanzania's wealth

<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/gold-diggers-and-rent-seekers-strip-tanzanias-wealth>

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

El Salvador Mayors Cash in on Migrant Smuggling

Alex Papadovassilakis – InSight Crime: 5 August 2021

In two separate cases in El Salvador, mayors are accused of heading migrant smuggling rings, a crime that, like drug trafficking, local officials in border regions are well positioned to facilitate.

<https://insightcrime.org/news/el-salvador-mayors-cash-in-on-migrant-smuggling/>

For more on this theme:

To get to Europe, Tunisian migrants turn to 'self-smuggling'

<https://www.dw.com/en/tunisian-migrants-turn-to-self-smuggling-to-get-to-europe/a-58828200>

Human Smugglers Are Luring Pregnant Women to the Border With Lies on Facebook

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkbwm8/human-smugglers-are-luring-pregnant-women-to-the-border-with-lies-on-facebook>

Illegal Travel Into Europe Rises As Travel Bans Wane

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexledsom/2021/08/08/illegal-travel-into-europe-rises-as-travel-bans-wane/?sh=14ab45b43b5d>

MONEY LAUNDERING AND ORGANIZED CRIME

European Commission Report: Albania Must Step Up Fight Against Irregular Migration, Corruption and Money Laundering

Alice Taylor – Exit News: 7 August 2021

According to a new European Commission report, Western Balkan countries, including Albania, must step up their efforts in managing migration and asylum and fighting corruption and organized crime.

<https://exit.al/en/2021/08/07/european-commission-report-albania-must-step-up-fight-against-irregular-migration-corruption-and-money-laundering/>

For more on this theme:

Anti-Money Laundering Prototype Utilising AI and Machine Learning in Singapore

<https://opengovasia.com/anti-money-laundering-prototype-utilising-ai-and-machine-learning-in-singapore/>

INTERPOL Operation Secures Borders Against Transnational Crime

<https://www.hstoday.us/uncategorized/interpol-operation-secures-borders-against-transnational-crime/>

Russia's New Form of Organized Crime Is Menacing the World

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/31/opinion/sunday/russia-ransomware-hacking.html>

PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET FREEDOM

China's internet crackdown continues with focus on 'undesirable fan culture'

Mike Kilpatrick – Reuters: 17 August 2021

Irrational and undesirable online fan behavior in China interferes with socioeconomic and cultural order and should be corrected, a commentary in the Communist Party's official People's Daily newspaper said.

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/technology/2021/08/china-s-internet-crackdown-continues-with-focus-on-undesirable-fan-culture.html>

For more on this theme:

(Indonesia) Southeast Asia's wave of internet regulation comes to Indonesia

<https://globalriskinsights.com/2021/08/southeast-asias-wave-of-internet-regulation-comes-to-indonesia/>

(Russia) Russia fines Google for not deleting banned content

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1912611/media>

(Cuba) Cuba introduces new cybersecurity law following historic protests

<https://www.dw.com/en/cuba-introduces-new-cybersecurity-law-following-historic-protests/a-58892232>

(Turkey) Turkish Govt Increasing Internet, Social Media Censorship: Report

<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/08/17/turkish-govt-increasing-internet-social-media-censorship-report/>

SECURITY

Ransomware and Returning to the Basics of Cybersecurity

Tim Erlin – CPO Magazine: 18 August 2021

In the span of a year, ransomware has shifted from being a concern primarily discussed among security professionals to a much broader problem, capturing the attention of both policymakers and the public.

<https://www.cpomagazine.com/cyber-security/ransomware-and-returning-to-the-basics-of-cybersecurity/>

For more on this theme:

(Singapore) Singapore Government Strengthens Parental Controls for Children's Internet Safety

<https://opengovasia.com/singapore-government-strengthens-parental-controls-for-childrens-internet-safety/>

(U.S.) National Cyber Security Alliance launches new cyber initiative

<https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/95876-national-cyber-security-alliance-launches-new-cyber-initiative>

CYBER STATECRAFT

The Korean Way With Data: How the World's Most Wired Country Is Forging a Third Way

Evan A. Feigenbaum and Michael Nelson – Carnegie: 17 August 2021

This article explores South Korea's distinctive experiences, successes, failures and recalibrations. It aims to address the question of what can and should be learned from innovative Korean policies and practices.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/08/17/korean-way-with-data-how-world-s-most-wired-country-is-forging-third-way-pub-85161>

For more on this theme:

(China) China's Digital Nationalism and Activism

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/chinas-digital-nationalism-and-activism/>

(Pakistan) Pakistan's National Cyber Security Policy 2021: What Is Achieved And What Is Yet To Achieved – OpEd

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/17082021-pakistans-national-cyber-security-policy-2021-what-is-achieved-and-what-is-yet-to-achieved-oped/>

(India) Enforcement of cybersecurity principles in India

<https://www.cnbctv18.com/information-technology/enforcement-of-cybersecurity-principles-in-india-10412971.htm>

CYBERCRIME

The fiendish new trick cyber-criminals are using to evade capture

Joe Tidy – BBC: 13 August 2021

Despite the anonymous nature of cryptocurrencies, dozens of cybercriminals have been caught in the last two years. That's thanks to new techniques for tracking their funds around the cryptocurrency blockchain – a public list of all transactions between wallets. A new service on the darknet offers criminals a way to check how “clean” their digital coins are.

<https://news.yahoo.com/fiendish-trick-cyber-criminals-using-231526192.html>

For more on this theme:

(U.S., Global) Interview: Partnering to Bring Cyber-criminals to Justice

<https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/interviews/interview-partnering-cyber/>

(Global) Cybercrime is Dangerous, But a New UN Treaty Could Be Worse for Rights

<https://www.justsecurity.org/77756/cybercrime-is-dangerous-but-a-new-un-treaty-could-be-worse-for-rights/>

(U.S.) What the DOJ's involvement in cyberattacks means for the future of ransomware

<https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/95864-what-the-doj-s-involvement-in-cyberattacks-means-for-the-future-of-ransomware>

CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Chinese Cybercrime Allegations Mark New Turning Point in Global Ransomware Crisis

eWeek: 13 August 2021

Looking at the landscape of 2021 ransomware attacks, it's clear that whatever they've lost in quantity, they've more than made up in quality.

<https://www.eweek.com/security/chinese-cybercrime-allegations-mark-new-turning-point-in-global-ransomware-crisis/>

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) Newest Target of Cyber Attacks: America's Hospitals

<https://thecrimereport.org/2021/08/18/hospitals-cyberattacks/>

(U.S.) More than a third of organizations have experienced a ransomware attack or breach

<https://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/95885-more-than-a-third-of-organizations-have-experienced-a-ransomware-attack-or-breach>

(U.S.) Schools could be ripe for cyberattacks amid ransomware open season

<https://www.techrepublic.com/article/schools-could-be-ripe-for-cyberattacks-amid-ransomware-open-season/>

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

New US Infrastructure Bill Includes \$1.9 Billion for Cybersecurity Funding, More Than Half Goes To State and Local Governments

Scott Ikeda – CPO Magazine: 17 August 2021

The Biden administration's ongoing infrastructure bill, which looks to commit trillions of dollars to address longtime issues with the country's vital utilities, includes \$1.9 billion for cybersecurity. More than half that amount is for state, local and tribal governments.

<https://www.cpomagazine.com/cyber-security/new-us-infrastructure-bill-includes-1-9-billion-for-cyber-security-funding-more-than-half-goes-to-state-and-local-governments/>

For more on this theme:

(U.S., Global) Collaboration is the key to protecting critical national infrastructure

<https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2021/08/18/protecting-critical-national-infrastructure/>

(Iran, Global) Indra Group Attack On Iran Highlights The Threats To Global Critical Infrastructure

<https://informationsecuritybuzz.com/news/indra-group-attack-on-iran-highlights-the-threats-to-global-critical-infrastructure/>

(U.S., Global) Oil and Gas Companies Must Act Now on Cybersecurity

<https://hbr.org/sponsored/2021/08/oil-and-gas-companies-must-act-now-on-cybersecurity>

PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Iraq: ISIS Attack Leaves Baghdad Without Water

Al Bawaba News: 16 August 2021

Baghdad is out of water. The western part of the city has been cut off from the water network due to an ISIS terror attack on an electricity pylon that powered a pumping station. The western part of Baghdad houses several million people who are now without water during scorching summer heat.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/16082021-iraq-isis-attack-leaves-baghdad-without-water/>

Europol: Islamic State Propaganda Networks Are Thriving

Phil Muncaster – Infosecurity Magazine: 16 August 2021

Official propaganda from the Islamic State dwindled during 2020 after disruption from Western coalition forces, but informal supporter networks continue to spread its message far and wide, Europol has warned.

<https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/europol-islamic-state-propaganda/>

Full report:

Online Jihadist Propaganda - 2020 in Review

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/online-jihadist-propaganda-2020-in-review>

For more on this theme:

Mozambican, Rwandan forces retake port town from insurgents

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/rwanda-defence-force-says-retakes-strategic-mozambican-town-insurgents-2021-08-08/>

Violence down in Syria's al-Hol camp but conditions remain 'horrifying'

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/08/violence-down-syrias-al-hol-camp-conditions-remain-horrifying>

22 family members of dead ISIS fighters repatriated to Nigeria

<https://www.thecable.ng/22-family-members-of-killed-isis-fighters-repatriated-to-nigeria>

Boko Haram Surrender: ISWAP Heeds ISIS' Order, Reshuffles Leaders in Nigeria

<https://prnigeria.com/2021/08/18/boko-haram-iswap-isis/>

Exploiting U.S. Withdrawal From Afghanistan, Islamic State-Taliban Fight To Establish Islamic Caliphate To Intensify

<https://www.memri.org/reports/exploiting-us-withdrawal-afghanistan-islamic-state-taliban-fight-establish-islamic-caliphate>

New UN report on Islamic State gives Ankara another headache

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/08/new-un-report-islamic-state-gives-ankara-another-headache>

TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Where Are the Taliban Getting Their Money?

Jeff Seldin – Voice of America: 13 August 2021

The Taliban's sudden surge across Afghanistan, resulting in the capture of about half the country's provincial capitals, may have stunned some officials and international observers, but it was driven in part by extensive fundraising that has given the insurgent group access to millions, and perhaps billions, of dollars.

<https://www.voanews.com/us-afghanistan-troop-withdrawal/where-are-taliban-getting-their-money>

What is the relationship between the Taliban and Isis?

Joe Sommerlad – Independent: 18 August 2021

The Taliban and ISIS are both Sunni Islamist extremist groups seeking to form authoritarian states under strict Sharia and prepared to use violence to achieve their aim. The two groups are actually enemies, however, who have fought bitterly since 2015 when ISIS formed the Islamic State-Khorasan Province in Afghanistan at a time when it was first seeking to extend its geographical reach beyond Iraq and Syria.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/south-asia/taliban-isis-relationship-afghanistan-terrorism-b1903416.html>

For more on this theme:

Analysis: Somaliland's lingering jihadi threat

<https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/08/analysis-somalilands-lingering-jihadi-threat.php>

Cameroon Says Hundreds of Boko Haram Militants from Nigeria and Chad Surrender

<https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-says-hundreds-boko-haram-militants-nigeria-and-chad-surrender>

Three decades after its founding, where does Al Qaeda stand today?

<https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/three-decades-after-its-founding-where-does-al-qaeda-stand-today-49093>

What do many terrorists have in common? They abuse women

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/aug/05/many-terrorists-abuse-women-research-extremist-attackers-violent-misogyny>

Cameroon Creates, Trains Militias Against New Terrorism Ideology

<https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-creates-trains-militias-against-new-terrorism-ideology>

Security Experts Warn Al-Shabab May Try to Emulate Taliban in Somalia

<https://www.voanews.com/africa/security-experts-warn-al-shabab-may-try-emulate-taliban-somalia>

Al-Qaida Will Return to Afghanistan, British Official Says

<https://www.voanews.com/us-afghanistan-troop-withdrawal/al-qaida-will-return-afghanistan-british-official-says>

Return of Taliban in Afghanistan could accelerate rise of terror groups, top US general warns

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/15/afghanistan-taliban-terrorist-groups>

IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

Wagner: Gaddafi's son faces arrest over Russian mercenaries

Nader Ibrahim – BBC: 12 August 2021

Prosecutors in Libya have issued an arrest warrant for Saif al-Islam Gadhafi, the son of the late Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, over suspected ties to Russian mercenaries.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58191433>

For more on this theme:

Iran and the future of endless disputes in the region under Raisi

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1912211>

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

Chinese Hackers Used Cyber-disguising Technology Against Israel, Report Finds

Forest Cong – Voice of America: 18 August 2021

A major cybersecurity firm says it believes Beijing-backed hackers carried out cyberattacks on Israel while pretending to be operating from Israel's archrival, Iran.

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/chinese-hackers-used-cyber-disguising-technology-against-israel-report-finds>

For more on this theme:

Iran Creating 'Target Bank' For Future Cyber Assaults

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/27072021-iran-creating-target-bank-for-future-cyber-assaults/>

IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS

New intel reports indicate fresh efforts by Russia to interfere in 2022 election

Katie Bo Williams, Natasha Bertrand and Alex Marquardt – CNN: 13 August 2021

The Biden administration is receiving regular intelligence reports that indicate Russian efforts to interfere in U.S. elections are evolving and ongoing, current and former officials say. In fact, they've never stopped, despite President Joe Biden's warnings to Russian President Vladimir Putin over the summer and a new round of sanctions imposed in the spring.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/13/politics/intel-report-russia-election-interference-2022/index.html>

For more on this theme:

China Aims Its Propaganda Firehose at the BBC

<https://www.wired.com/story/china-aims-its-propaganda-firehose-at-the-bbc/>