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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Perceived Corruption Reduces Trust in Tax Systems, Survey Shows

Tim Shaw – Reuters: 18 September 2023

The latest biennial survey conducted by three financial professional organizations shows that across the globe, concerns over how tax revenue is spent diminishes overall trust in tax authorities and governments.


For more on this theme:

Corruption accusations continue to plague top Zelenskiy aides
https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/graft-accusations-dog-top-zelenskiy-aides-2023-09-19/

Security Force Corruption Scandal Rocks Brazil’s Biggest Amazon State

Gabon’s new strongman threatens business leaders over corruption
https://www.africanews.com/2023/09/01/gabons-new-strongman-threatens-business-leaders-over-corruption/

Corruption, budget cuts and politicization break down Russia’s space muscle

Vietnam Stock Market Performance Shows Success of Anti-corruption Reforms

Activists: Anwar has broken promises to repeal Malaysia’s restrictive laws, end corruption

Fraud and corruption against government: Large gaps remain in Government’s understanding of risks

Corruption Is an Existential Threat to Ukraine, and Ukrainians Know It

Malaysian Youth Party Defects From Ruling Coalition Over Corruption Cases

UN agency urges corruption focus in the food sector

Russian spaceport visited by North Korea’s Kim has a history of corruption and construction delays
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Inside a drug lab: Trafficking rings import chemists to teach ‘cooks’ how to disguise cocaine
Patricia Peiró – El País: 18 September 2023

International cartels are increasingly using specialists who are capable of impregnating narcotics into anything from canned oil to clothing.

https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-09-18/inside-a-drug-lab-trafficking-rings-import-chemists-to-teach-cooks-how-to-disguise-cocaine.html

The wild, green shrub in Afghanistan that is dividing drug experts
Lucy Cormack – The Sydney Morning Herald: 16 September 2023

A disputed United Nations report suggests growth of the country’s methamphetamine trade has not been fueled by precursor chemicals, but by the ephedra plant.


For more on this theme:
Son of drug kingpin El Chapo pleads not guilty to US trafficking charges

The Global threat of Narco-Terrorism

In Combating Drug Trafficking, Knowing the Enemy Is the First Step

Von der Leyen vows EU strategy to combat drug trafficking

China Shies Away from Coalition Against Synthetic Drugs
https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/china-shies-away-from-coalition-against-synthetic-drugs/

Demystifying the synthetic drug menace: India's struggles and strategies

Fake drugs, real impact: Western Asia’s counterfeit medicine epidemic
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/western-asia-counterfeit-medicine/

The new U.S. plan to target xylazine-laced fentanyl

Four drug traffickers in Marseille tried for torturing a child “freelance” dealer

Signal: Mexico enlists UN help to tackle drug trafficking in Port of Manzanillo
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Animal CSI: Forensics comes for the wildlife trade
Amber Dance – Knowable Magazine: 19 September 2023

Scientists are using the latest in DNA fingerprinting to combat the multibillion-dollar business of trafficking plants and animals.

Illegal gold mining and livestock trafficking fuel terrorism in Côte d’Ivoire
Ecofin Agency: 19 September 2023

The Institute for Security Studies’ report outlines the links between those illegal activities and terrorism.

Full article:
Côte d’Ivoire must cut ties between terrorists and illicit markets

For more on this theme:
Exposing Australia’s online trade in pest plants: Researchers find thousands of illegal advertisements

Romanian NGOs urge EU Commission to enforce moratorium to protect local forests

If the EU wants to protect the climate, it has to protect the human rights defenders

Troops dislodge 11,500 illegal miners from Venezuelan reserve

How illegal mining gangs in South Africa feeding China’s demand for stainless steel scar the land

Chinese company releases 50 Lao villagers accused of illegal gold mining

Taiwan taking steps to curb illegal fishing

Norway rolls out global monitoring to combat illegal fishing
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Governments race to regulate AI tools
Reuters: 19 September 2023

Rapid advances in artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT are complicating governments’ efforts to agree on laws governing the use of the technology.

For more on this theme:
(China, Global) China Wants to Run Your Internet

(Global) The Bumpy Road Toward Global AI Governance

INTERNET FREEDOM

How new tech is helping people circumvent digital authoritarianism
Tate Ryan-Mosley – MIT Technology Review: 18 September 2023

From Iran to China to Russia, there’s an escalating cat-and-mouse game between the censors and those trying to evade them.

For more on this theme:
(Africa) Internet access restricted in 20 African nations during elections since 2015

(Russia) Russia inches closer to Chinese-style great firewall

(Russia) Google Bard AI won’t answer questions about Putin asked in Russian

(EU) Who in the EU gets to decide what can or cannot be said online?
CYBER STRATEGY AND RISKS

Digital Public Infrastructure: The story of India’s digital revolution
R. S. Sharma – Indian Express: 19 September 2023

India’s approach is a testament to the country’s commitment to leveraging technology for a greater, more digitally inclusive, good.

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) A Review of NIST’s Draft Cybersecurity Framework 2.0
https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/a-review-of-nist-s-draft-cybersecurity-framework-2.0

(U.S.) Defense Dept. Releases 2023 Cyber Strategy Summary

(Global) What Will Mechanisms for Cybersecurity Aid Look Like?
https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/what-will-mechanisms-for-cybersecurity-aid-look-like

CYBER ATTACKS

Press Freedom Group Battles Ongoing Cyberattack
Liam Scott – Voice of America: 14 September 2023

The International Press Institute thinks the attack is in retaliation for its recent report on similar ones against independent media in Hungary.

For more on this theme:
(Canada) Canada blames border checkpoint outages on cyberattack
https://therecord.media/canada-border-checkpoint-outages-ddos-attack-russia

(Colombia) More than 50 Colombian state, private entities hit by cyberattack – Petro

(Kuwait) Kuwait’s finance ministry says cyber attack hits one of its systems

(U.S.) Casino giant Caesars Entertainment hit by cyberattack, joining rival MGM Resorts as victim of data breach

(U.S.) Clorox says last month’s cyberattack is still disrupting production

(UK) UK police officers’ data stolen in cyberattack on ID supplier
CYBERCRIME

Report: Increase in Chinese-Language Malware Could ‘Challenge’ Russian Dominance of Cybercrime
Masood Farivar – Voice of America: 20 September 2023

For decades, Russian and eastern European hackers have dominated the cybercrime underworld. These days they may face a challenge from a new contender – China.


For more on this theme:

(South Africa) Digital evidence – a step forward for South Africa

(Global) The International Criminal Court Will Now Prosecute Cyberwar Crimes
[https://www.wired.com/story/icc-cyberwar-crimes/](https://www.wired.com/story/icc-cyberwar-crimes/)

(Global) Cybercrime Ecosystem Industrializes Ransom Attacks, So Why Not Ban Payments?

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

DoD: China’s ICS Cyber Onslaught Aimed at Gaining Kinetic Warfare Advantage
Tara Seals – Dark Reading: 15 September 2023

Escalating incursions into military base infrastructure, telecom networks, utilities and more signal that Beijing is laying groundwork for mass disruption.


For more on this theme:

(Israel) ‘Israel’s’ railroad network targeted by cyberattack: Israeli media

(U.S.) DHS Issues Recommendations to Harmonize Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Entities

(U.S.) US is making headway on securing cyber infrastructure, commission says
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Islamic State Khorasan Within Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan: Dynamics and Synergies with Allies and Enemies
Noellynn Slaughter – Homeland Security Today: 17 September 2023
Although the Islamic State group’s “caliphate” has been crippled, the ideology continues to perpetuate itself beyond its original territory.

Iraq steps up repatriations from Islamic State camp in Syria, hoping to reduce militant threats
Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Bassem Mroue – The Associated Press: 15 September 2023
The camp in northeastern Syria houses tens of thousands of people, mostly wives and children of Islamic State group fighters but also supporters of the militant group.
https://apnews.com/article/syria-iraq-repatriation-islamic-state-c0b80ba80e2af09b109c38bbd2f54b24

For more on this theme:
Iraq Sentences IS Member to Death Over Pilgrim Bombing
https://www.voanews.com/a/iraq-sentences-is-member-to-death-over-pilgrim-bombing-/7269445.html
ISWAP Terrorists Slaughter Member For Allegedly Diverting Funds For Personal Use
Tough Task For Afghan Taliban To Tackle ISKP – OpEd
Brief: Indonesia Reins in Islamic State Remnants
https://jamestown.org/program/brief-indonesia-reins-in-islamic-state-remnants/
A Brief Biography of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi: The Islamic State’s Second Caliph
https://www.meforum.org/64807/a-brief-biography-of-abu-ibrahim-al-hashimi-al
Kyrgyzstan Faces Challenges In Repatriating Islamic State Women, Children From Syrian Camps
https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan-islamic-state-repatriation/32583046.html
Islamic State in Northern Iraq Weakened but Still Dangerous, Say Militia Commanders
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

**Taliban Sell Afghanistan’s Mines Despite Sanctions**
*Akmal Dawi – Voice of America: 7 September 2023*

The Taliban, facing international sanctions and a dire economic outlook at home, have intensified efforts to leverage Afghanistan’s vast natural resources.


**Risk of laundering and terrorism in Kenya surges with the region’s cryptocurrency boom**
*Chinedu Okafor – Business Insider Africa: 10 September 2023*

The increasing usage of cryptocurrencies has alarmed Kenyan officials, who warn that trading in cryptocurrency may increase the danger of money laundering and the funding of terrorism.


*For more on this theme:*

**Rivalry among Boko Haram factions compounds violence in northern Nigeria**

**Brief: Russian Wagner Group Faces Increasing Attacks From Sahelian Jihadists Amid Coup Fallout**

**As Violent Extremism Evolves, Local Partners are Key in Finding Solutions**

**The Threat of Nuclear Terrorism Still Hangs Over Us**

**Al-Qaeda Issues Call for Revenge Against Nordic Countries Following Quran Burnings**

**The Evolution of an al-Qaeda Affiliate: Unmasking Notorious Uzbek Leader Abdul Aziz Domla of Katibat al-Tawhid wal Jihad**
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Ukraine’s drone strikes are a window into the future of warfare
Mark Jacobsen – Atlantic Council: 14 September 2023

The Ukrainians are now innovating at a breathtaking pace. Three trends will make these attacks more frequent and successful.


For more on this theme:

With Russia distracted in Ukraine, Azerbaijan launches attack on Armenian enclave

In Ukraine, the focus is the fighting, but are negotiations possible?
https://www.npr.org/2023/09/14/1199304673/in-ukraine-the-focus-is-the-fighting-but-are-negotiations-possible

Exclusive: EU to ask China at UN to push Russia towards ‘just peace’ in Ukraine
https://www.reuters.com/world/eu-ask-china-un-push-russia-towards-just-peace-ukraine-2023-09-20/

Revealed: how Russia deliberately targeted Kherson's hospitals
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/20/revealed-how-russia-deliberately-targeted-kherson-hospitals

War in Ukraine: Is the counter-offensive making progress?

Ukraine calls for return of ‘abducted’ children as more arrive in Belarus

Zelenskyy: Russia is weaponizing food, energy and children in its war against Ukraine

Russian Influence Fades in the Multi-Aligned South Caucasus

Ukraine’s New Defense Minister Has Difficult Road Ahead
https://jamestown.org/program/ukraines-new-defense-minister-has-difficult-road-ahead/

Moscow Tries to Bolster Military Forces While Avoiding Overt Mobilization
https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-tries-to-bolster-military-forces-while-avoiding-overt-mobilization/

Russia is making a ‘very costly’ tactical mistake that means its second line of defense will be easier to penetrate, analysts say
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

**Ukraine war: reports suggest that Russia has been deliberately targeting journalists — which is a war crime**
https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-reports-suggest-that-russia-has-been-deliberately-targeting-journalists-which-is-a-war-crime-213663

**The mastermind of Russia’s treacherous defenses in Ukraine appears to be in a kind of faraway ‘exile’ as the line is being breached**

**Russia, China, and the Ukraine War: Tensions in the ‘No Limits’ Relationship**

**Ukraine War Will Derail the 2024 Election in Ukraine, But Not in Russia**

**Like Ukraine, Georgia Is Caught Between Russia and the EU**

**Can Russia’s Frozen Assets Be Used to Rebuild Ukraine?**

**Poland stops sending weapons to Ukraine amid grain fight, Warsaw says**

**The West fears a closer Russia and North Korea. China may not**

**Putin’s Next Run for President Will Be Different**
https://cepa.org/article/putins-next-run-for-president-will-be-different/

**There Can Be No Peace With Russia**
https://cepa.org/article/there-can-be-no-peace-with-russia/

**Ukraine Has No Time to Waste in the Race to Reform**
https://cepa.org/article/ukraine-has-no-time-to-waste-in-the-race-to-reform/

**Russia’s Elections Become Ever-More Futile**
https://cepa.org/article/russias-elections-become-ever-more-futile/

**Russia — Darkness Before a Brighter Dawn?**
https://cepa.org/article/russia-darkness-before-a-brighter-dawn/

**Zelenskyy tells United Nations: Russia is committing genocide in Ukraine**
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Putin Is Betting On a New Class of Asset Owners to Shore Up His Regime
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90543

The Wagner Rebellion and the Stability of the Russian State

Russian Schools in a Time of War: A Lesson in Indoctrination
https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/russian-schools-time-war-lesson-indoctrination