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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

‘Joe Ferrari’ case lifts lid on Thai police corruption
Agence France-Presse: 22 September 2021

Thailand’s “Joe Ferrari case” shows how little has been achieved in stamping out police malpractice, and observers hold out little hope of serious change. Reform has been a “spectacular failure” because those connected to the top are shielded by “protection and favouritism,” and whistleblowers are punished or silenced, said analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak of Chulalongkorn University.


Corruption in Chinese infrastructure projects in Sudan: Report
ANI: 19 September 2021

A Chinese construction firm working in Sudan reportedly earned millions of dollars by inflating the cost and paying kickbacks as a quid pro quo, a media report said.


For more on this theme:

Philippine Analysts: Pandemic Corruption Scandal Won't Derail Duterte's Electoral Plans

Amazon starts probe after news report claims corruption in India operations

Ex-South African president absent at corruption trial
https://apnews.com/article/africa-business-trials-south-africa-jacob-zuma-43507e736ad8a48cc0490db6989ad6a

Albania’s former top prosecutor jailed on corruption charges Access to the comments
https://www.euronews.com/2021/09/22/albania-s-former-top-prosecutor-jailed-on-corruption-charges

U.S. adds top Guatemalan, Salvadoran officials to corruption list
https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/us-adds-top-guatemalan-salvadoran-justice-officials-corruption-list-2021-09-20/

Ramaphosa says there’s been progress in fighting corruption, as survey shows it worsening under his watch

Women urged to help eliminate corruption
https://www.dawn.com/news/1647857

Can AI Be Used As An Anti-Corruption Tool?
DRUG TRAFFICKING

British gangs and international rivals join forces to increase cocaine sales
Mark Townsend – The Guardian: 19 September 2021

British organized-crime groups are collaborating closely with former international rivals, such as the Italian Mafia, to import increasingly bigger cocaine shipments into Europe. An analysis by the National Crime Agency finds more than 1,700 United Kingdom criminal groups involved in drug trafficking.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/19/british-gangs-and-international-rivals-join-forces-to-increase-cocaine-sales

For more on this theme:

Could Afghanistan become a narco-state?
https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/could-afghanistan-become-narco-state

Men Are More Likely To Take Illegal Drugs Than Women, Survey Finds
https://www.menshealth.com/uk/health/a37674314/men-are-more-likely-to-take-illegal-drugs-than-women-survey-finds/

Organized crime expert explains how drugs move through the Port of Montreal
https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1947345475693

Alleged Mexican cartel operative charged with drug trafficking

Treasury sanctions Colombian drug trafficking queen ‘La Patrona’

India seized $2.7bn in Afghan heroin amid Taliban takeover chaos

Enduring Italians, Ambitious Albanians – How Cocaine is Changing Europe’s Criminal Landscape

El Chapo: Is Mexico’s Most Famous Cartel Capo Still Relevant?

‘Golden Triangle’ reviving reputation as drugs haven
https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/golden-triangle-reviving-reputation-drugs-haven

Sicily: Mafia members who use children for drug deals arrested

Aircraft Theft Across Latin America Continues to Fuel Drug Trade

Georgia Faces Afghan Drug Threat
https://iwpr.net/global-voices/georgia-faces-afghan-drug-threat
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

EXCLUSIVE Wildlife traffickers creeping back as pandemic restrictions ease — U.N. report
Kanupriya Kapoor – Reuters: 21 September 2021
After a drastic reduction in wildlife trafficking during the pandemic, authorities in Southeast Asia must act swiftly to stop smugglers from getting back in business once border controls are relaxed, according to a United Nations report.

Romanian forest attack highlights illegal logging 'scourge'
Two journalists and an environmental activist were beaten by suspected illegal loggers in a forest in northeastern Romania while making a documentary about illicit deforestation, authorities said.
https://apnews.com/article/europe-environment-and-nature-forests-environment-bucharest-0bb405f73cef0f21ce8c8b03fa50d9279

For more on this theme:
As illegal logging route in Peru nears Brazil, Indigenous groups warn of calamity

Kenya intensifies adoption of digital technology to combat illegal logging

‘Everyone’s fleeing’: Brazil cracks down on illegal mining in Amazon – for now
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/15/brazil-bolsonaro-illegal-mining-amazon

Record High Number Of Environmental Activists Murdered In 2020
https://news.trust.org/item/20210910181455-j3wia/

Global conservation forum votes to protect Amazon forest from ‘apocalyptic scenario’
https://news.trust.org/item/20210910181455-j3wia/

How much is gold worth to these young miners in Ghana?

International Partners Collaborate to End Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

African training camp aims to stop cheetah trafficking to the Gulf
MONEY LAUNDERING AND ORGANIZED CRIME

**Basel AML Index 2021: 4 things holding back the global fight against money laundering**
*Basel Institute on Governance: 13 September 2021*

The 10th annual edition of the “Basel AML Index” raises grave questions about whether jurisdictions are serious about tackling their money-laundering and terrorist-financing risks, and what is holding them back.

https://baselgovernance.org/news/basel-aml-index-2021-4-things-holding-back-global-fight-against-money-laundering

**How the Mafia Is Pivoting to Cybercrime**
*Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai – VICE: 22 September 2021*

Investigators from Spanish and Italian police explain how organized crime is going online and expanding into cybercrime.


For more on this theme:

**UAE central bank sees COVID-19 increasing money-laundering risks**

**Automation and analytics: Unraveling trade-based money laundering**

**A single EU anti-money laundering rulebook – Charles Cronin**

**Are Crypto Firms Stepping Up to Anti-Money Laundering Compliance?**
https://www.tradersmagazine.com/am/are-crypto-firms-stepping-up-to-anti-money-laundering-compliance/

**U.S. Sanctions Russian-Based Cryptocurrency Exchange For Laundering Ransomware Money**

**Major Anti-Money Laundering, Terrorism Financing Reforms Law Before Legislature**

**Mozambique: Hidden Debts - Money Laundering At the Foreign Exchange Bureau**
https://allafrica.com/stories/202109211019.html

**Cryptocurrency: Rise of decentralized finance sparks ‘dirty money’ fears**
OPINION: Vladimir Putin is finally getting the Internet he wants
Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan – The Washington Post: 22 September 2021

The Kremlin doesn’t want a Russian version of China’s “Great Firewall” or to seal off the Runet from the outside world. Instead, President Vladimir Putin wants his subjects to rely on Russian-made services and applications, to communicate via Russian social media, to watch videos on Russian platforms and to search for information using Russian services. That way, he hopes, they will be dependent on the version of reality that Russian authorities are keen to promote.


For more on this theme:

(Africa, Global) The solvable Afrinic crisis that could derail internet development in Africa

(Asia Pacific) Virtually Connecting and Building Pacific Communities in COVID-19 Pandemic Times

INTERNET FREEDOM

How Russia made Apple and Google complicit in its internet crackdown
Dylan Myles-Primakoff and Justin Sherman – The Atlantic Council: 17 September 2021

In Russia, as polls opened for three days of voting to elect a new parliament, Apple and Google submitted to an escalating pressure campaign by the Russian government and deleted opposition leader Alexei Navalny’s app from their respective app stores.


For more on this theme:

(Iran) Rights Group Launches Encryption App to Help Iranians Survive Internet Crackdowns

(Global) Democracy advocate finds internet freedom has declined globally for 11th consecutive year
PRIVACY

The battle for digital privacy is reshaping the Internet
The New York Times: 17 September 2021

Google recently outlined plans to disable a tracking technology in its Chrome web browser. And Facebook said last month that hundreds of its engineers were working on a new method of showing ads without relying on people’s personal data.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Solving the transnational data governance problem

(Global) Facebook Smart Glasses – haute fashion statement or privacy infringement device?
https://techwireasia.com/2021/09/facebook-smart-glasses-a-fashion-statement-or-privacy-infringement/

(Global) Google: This major privacy change is coming to billions of Android devices soon
https://www.zdnet.com/article/google-this-major-app-change-is-coming-to-billions-of-android-devices-soon/

CYBER STATECRAFT

What's with Xi Jinping's relentless efforts to rein in China's internet?
Dashveenjit Kaur – Techwire Asia: 10 September 2021

China is home to the largest online community in the world — one that comes with a hefty price tag: being under the world’s most sophisticated, and arguably most authoritarian, censorship system.


For more on this theme:

(Germany) How is the Internet in Germany? New findings of national Internet Universality assessment

(Russia) Russian Authorities Seek Total Control Over Internet
https://jamestown.org/program/russian-authorities-seek-total-control-over-internet/

(North Korea) Dealing With North Korea's Dangerous Cyberthreat
https://www.heritage.org/cybersecurity/commentary/dealing-north-koreas-dangerous-cyberthreat
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Bridging digital divide by 2030
Mirage: 21 September 2021

The International Telecommunication Union announced the launch of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation in the world’s hardest-to-connect countries.


For more on this theme:

(Jamaica) Improving broadband services is connected to growth
https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/business-observer/improving-broadband-services-is-connected-to-growth_231748

(Global) SDIS21: Tech for Good - What are the challenges in making technology more sustainable?

(Africa) Digital identity evaluation tools to be turned on Africa

CYBERCRIME

South Korea Commits to Combatting Increased Ransomware Attacks
Jason Bartlett – The Diplomat: 22 September 2021

Ransomware functions as an inexpensive tool to disrupt major and minor network systems with potentially high financial gain.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Some cybercriminals take refuge in Telegram for its great security and privacy

(Global) Siemens Energy launches AI solution to fight industrial cybercrime

(Global) HackerOne expands Internet Bug Bounty project to tackle open source bugs
CYPERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Four months on from a sophisticated cyberattack, Alaska’s health department is still recovering

Danny Palmer – ZDNet: 21 September 2021

Alaska is still dealing with the fallout of a hack – and its health department warns members of the public that their personal data might have been stolen.

https://www.zdnet.com/article/four-months-on-from-sophisticated-cyber-attack-alaskas-health-services-is-still-recovering/

For more on this theme:

(Global) DDoS attacks are becoming more prolific and more powerful, warn cybersecurity researchers

https://www.zdnet.com/article/ddos-attacks-are-becoming-more-prolific-and-more-powerful-warn-cybersecurity-researchers/

(Ireland) Ireland’s HSE still uses 30,000 outdated computers, months after devastating cyberattack

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

ISIS-K Could Be First Afghan Terror Group to Put US in Its Sights
Jeff Seldin – Voice of America: 22 September 2021

The biggest danger to the United States and the West following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could well come from the Islamic State terror group’s Afghan affiliate, ISIS-K, and not from al-Qaeda — despite the latter’s longstanding relationship with the Taliban.

For more on this theme:

‘Civilian counterterrorism capacity building needed to beat ISIS’

Down but not defeated, thousands of ISIS insurgents wage Syrian fight anew
https://www.stripes.com/theaters/middle_east/2021-09-14/islamic-state-fighters-syria-2891006.html

Analysis: The Islamic State's expansion into Congo's Ituri Province

Islamic State-Khorasan’s Reach Extends Far Beyond Afghanistan

Consultancy for a formative evaluation of the Islamic State (IS) Survivor Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme
https://reliefweb.int/job/3772452/consultancy-formative-evaluation-islamic-state-survivor-rehabilitation-and-reintegration

ISIS-tied Indonesian militant leader killed in Jakarta

IS bomb attacks on Taliban raise specter of wider conflict
https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-afghanistan-dubai-united-arab-emirates-taliban-6df3070c89439104f4d1aad0a400bc6

ISIS Supporters Told to Start Vehicle Fires in Remote Areas
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/isis-supporters-told-to-start-vehicle-fires-in-remote-areas/

Islamic State leader in Sinai surrenders to Egyptian authorities

Alleged Islamic State Recruiter Arrested in Southern Philippines
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Taliban uses social media as a key tool in their new form of governance. Here is all you need to know.

Akanksha Arora – WION: 10 September 2021

After the Taliban announced the final members of their government to rule Afghanistan, the changes are being noticed. One of the most prominent is the use of social media. The Taliban launched a comprehensive social media campaign immediately after they stepped up their military offensive against Afghan national security forces.


For more on this theme:

Agencies examining al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent ‘statement’ extending support to terrorists in J&K


Is granting amnesty to Boko Haram members fair to the Nigerian system?


Hezbollah Tightens Its Grip on Sinking Lebanon


UN chief warns Afghan economic collapse would benefit terrorists


So Far, Taliban Coming Up Empty on Counterterrorism Commitments

https://www.voanews.com/a/so-far-taliban-coming-up-empty-on-counterterrorism-commitments-/6240314.html

Surrendered Boko Haram terrorists urge colleagues to come out


U.S. imposes sanctions on five al Qaeda operatives -Treasury website

https://news.trust.org/item/20210916171433-3g6mn/

How big is the Islamist threat in Mozambique? And why are Rwandan troops there?


US counter-terrorism chief: domestic extremists ‘most lethal threat’ to homeland

RADICALIZATION

Study of convicted extremists shows open social media platforms play an increasing role in radicalization

Nottingham Trent University: 17 September 2021

The internet is playing an increasingly prominent role in radicalization, with a particular rise in the use of social media platforms, according to a comprehensive analysis of the online activity of convicted extremists in England and Wales.


Full report:

Exploring the role of the Internet in radicalisation and offending of convicted extremists


For more on this theme:

Twenty years after 9/11, community vigilance against extremism is even more important now, Teo Chee Hean says.

https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/politics/20-years-after-911-community-vigilance-against-extremism-even-more-important-now

Extremists using video-game chats to spread hate


Ahead of German election, Telegram plays radicalizing role

https://www.politico.eu/article/german-telegram-election-misinformation/

IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

Berlin and Paris concerned over Russian mercenaries in Mali

Martina Schwikowski, Mikhail Bushuev, Carole Assignon, Sandrine Blanchard – Deustche Welle: 16 September 2021

The Russian mercenary Wagner Group has been accused of war crimes in Syria. Now it’s allegedly set to be deployed in Mali. Germany and France are threatening to withdraw their troops.


For more on this theme:

Russian Wagner Group’s Entrance into Mali Creates New Challenges

https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/russian-wagner-group%E2%80%99s-entrance-mali-creates-new-challenges-194062

Central African Republic war: No-go zones and Russian meddling

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

White House blacklists Russian ransomware payment ‘enabler’

The U.S. government seeks to choke the finances of criminal ransomware gangs, announcing sanctions against a Russia-based virtual currency brokerage that officials say helped at least eight ransomware gangs launder virtual currency.

For more on this theme:

Stop election cyberattacks, Germans warn Russia

U.S. Vows “Surge” to Fight Nation-state Ransomware Backers

U.S. Cybersecurity Company Says Chinese Hackers Likely Infiltrated Some Indian Orgs

Budapest mayor: cyberattack halting primaries came from China

IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND POWER PROJECTION

Chinese Disinformation Operations: What Central and Eastern Europe Can Learn From Taiwan
Alicja Bachulska and Lin Pu – The Diplomat: 17 September 2021

The Taiwanese government and civil society’s tough, yet successful, battle against Chinese propaganda can be a lesson for democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.

For more on this theme:

Belarus Is Drifting Back to Russia
https://nationalinterest.org/feature/belarus-drifting-back-russia-193891

Is Moscow’s Thirst for Great Power Status a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/moscows-thirst-great-power-status-self-fulfilling-prophecy-194197

China’s ‘Standards 2035’ Project Could Result in a Technological Cold War