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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

How Corruption Ruined Lebanon
The deadly port blast, the triple-digit inflation, the energy shortages — Lebanon’s many crises have a shared root: misrule by a self-dealing elite.

A corruption-busting Honduran prosecutor took on the president. It didn’t end well.
Drazen Jorgic – Reuters: 29 October 2021
A prosecutor made gains against graft in Honduras. As probes got ever closer to President Juan Orlando Hernandez, though, the government fought back. Reuters looks at the corruption and impunity leading record numbers of Hondurans to migrate north.

For more on this theme:
Buhari’s govt incompetent, failed to curb corruption — The Economist
Liberia to launch anti-corruption innovation project that will encourage citizens’ participation
Whistleblower Protections: A Key to the Success of President Biden’s “Fight Against Corruption”
https://www.natlawreview.com/article/whistleblower-protections-key-to-success-president-biden-s-fight-against-corruption
‘How corruption is plunging Nigerians further into poverty’
https://guardian.ng/features/law/how-corruption-is-plunging-nigerians-further-into-poverty/
Renewing Magnitsky: The best weapon against an emerging security threat
US sanctioning Lebanese businessmen, lawmaker over alleged corruption
https://thehill.com/policy/finance/578929-us-sanctioning-lebanese-businessmen-lawmaker-over-alleged-corruption?rl=1
Mexican judge jails ex-Pemex boss at center of corruption case
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Laos makes Asia's largest ever drug bust
BBC News: 28 October 2021

Laotian police have netted Asia’s biggest single seizure of illegal drugs, according to a United Nations official.

Afghan poppy season returns in force under Taliban rule
Moyuru Baba – Nikkei Asia: 29 October 2021

Afghanistan’s opium poppy farmers resumed cultivating the crop this month with apparent impunity, despite assurances from the Taliban that the country will not become a hotbed for the illegal drug trade.

For more on this theme:

US sanctions reveal how Mexico's powerful Jalisco cartel is seizing control at a major Pacific port

How a Single Mom Became the Boss of Guatemala’s Drug Lords

Turkish-backed Syrian groups pursue drug operations in Aleppo

Women Are Rising to Power in the Legendary Sinaloa Cartel

Syria's Black Desert emerges as centre of Captagon drug boom

Watch Iraqi special forces raid drug rings 'more dangerous than terrorism'

The Inside Story – Afghanistan's Addiction Crisis TRANSCRIPT

Smuggler's paradise: Captagon production thrives in Lebanon's lawless Bekaa valley

Corrupt politicians and Hezbollah terror cells tied to region's drug epidemic, says UN
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

**Kenya is Africa’s gate for illegal wildlife trade – Sentry**
*Victor Amadala – The Star: 3 November 2021*

Kenya remains a leading spot for laundering proceeds of illegal wildlife trafficking, logging and fishing in Africa, a report by Sentry on illicit financial flow shows.

https://www.the-star.co.ke/business/kenya/2021-11-03-kenya-is-africas--gate-for-illegal-wildlife-trade-sentry/

**Illegal wildlife trade is much more damaging than we think**
*Fermin Koop – ZME Science: 28 October 2021*

Species are targeted around the globe by illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade, leading to biodiversity loss and extinction. So far, nothing new — but the effects of trade on targeted species are the tip of the iceberg, with repercussions that affect ecosystems and society in more ways than thought, a new study warns.


For more on this theme:

**Mexico loses thousands of hectares of forests every year due to clandestine logging**

**$200 million in gold extracted in Amazon mine through illegal licenses**

**Pandemic-fueled wave of illegal fishing boats prompts call to divert Border Force resources**

**China’s ivory ban at risk from legal online trade in woolly mammoth tusks, secret probe finds**

**Numerous endangered species in SE Asia face extinction, studies show**

**Africa’s Crackdown on Informal Gold Miners Spreads to Mali**

**Congo to Ban Log Exports to Reduce Pressure on its Forests**
https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/congo-to-ban-log-exports-to-reduce-pressure-on-its-forests/6295514.html

**Brazil is failing to stop illegal logging of the Amazon**
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Can Technology Stop Human Trafficking?
Andrea Cipriano – The Crime Report: 1 November 2021

Experts from around the world met online to discuss strategies to combat the global rise in human trafficking, as well as come up with ways to use technology to prevent and investigate cases, according to United Nations News.

https://thecrimereport.org/2021/11/01/can-technology-stop-human-trafficking/

For more on this theme:

Traffickers abusing online technology, UN crime prevention agency warns

Act now to stamp out child labour by 2025: FAO chief

Explained: Why Human Trafficking Remains One Of The Top Organised Crimes In India

COVID Exacerbated Human Trafficking – But New Tools Are Emerging to Fight it
https://eurweb.com/2021/10/30/covid-exacerbated-human-trafficking-tools-to-fight-it/

Final Draft of National Action Plan against Human Trafficking Out Soon

Ghana needs national data on human trafficking – FTS

The Surge In Online Child Exploitation, Trafficking And Abuse — And What To Do About It

Illegal Cigarettes Produced with Slave Labor in Brazil

Colombia’s most powerful cartel is making millions ‘helping’ desperate migrants get through a deadly South American jungle
https://www.businessinsider.com/colombian-cartel-profiting-off-of-migrants-going-through-deadly-jungle-2021-10
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET FREEDOM

Media targeted during Sudan’s military coup
International Press Institute – IFEX: 1 November 2021

Freedom of expression and digital rights have come under fire during Sudan’s military coup as journalists have been detained and access to social media has been blocked.

https://ifex.org/media-targeted-during-sudans-military-coup/

Full report:

Sudan’s military must free arrested journalists, end internet block
https://ipi.media/sudans-military-must-free-arrested-journalists-end-internet-block/

For more on this theme:

(Indonesia) Indonesian internet blocks amid social unrest lawful, court rules

(Russia) Russia strengthens its internet censorship powers

(Pakistan) ‘Chilling pattern’: Pakistani journalists ‘targeted’ by cyber law

CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

UAE Cyber Security Council launches internship programme
Khaleej Times: 23 October 2021

A new program seeks to enhance interns’ cybersecurity skills and knowledge, provide them with professional and business acumen, and further protect the United Arab Emirates’ digital transformation.


For more on this theme:

(Global) DiploFoundation Develops Simulated Cyber-Attack Game

(Vietnam, Singapore) Vietnam, Singapore Explore Strengthening Cybersecurity Ties
https://opengovasia.com/vietnam-singapore-explore-strengthening-cybersecurity-ties/

(U.S.) DISA Moves to Combat Intensifying Cyber Threats with Artificial Intelligence
PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

What Agencies and Industry Can Learn from Sharing Cyber Threat Intel
Tony D’Angelo – Nextgov: 25 October 2021

Federal agencies should seek industry partners that can keep them better informed and offer resources they can’t access.


For more on this theme:
(South Korea) South Korea’s Approach to the Metaverse

(Africa) Airtel Africa and UNICEF announce multi-million dollar partnership to scale-up digital learning for children across Africa

(Global) Connecting every school to the internet

CYBERCRIME

These ransomware criminals lost millions of dollars in payments when researchers secretly found mistakes in their code
Danny Palmer – ZDNet: 26 October 2021

BlackMatter ransomware had a bug that allowed cybersecurity researchers at Emsisoft to hand out decryption keys to victims — removing the need to pay ransoms.


For more on this theme:
(Libya) Libyan HoR passes controversial “combating cyber crime” bill

(Global) Cybercrime matures as hackers are forced to work smarter

(Scotland, Global) Sharing valuable lessons after a cyberattack
https://futurescot.com/sharing-valuable-lessons-after-a-cyberattack/
CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Hackers-for-hire are biggest cybersecurity threat -EU agency
Foo Yun Chee – Reuters: 28 October 2021

Hackers for hire emerged as the biggest threat to online security in the past 15 months, European Union cybersecurity agency ENISA said in its annual report. The COVID-19 pandemic and home working created opportunities for cybercriminals.

https://www.reuters.com/technology/hackers-for-hire-are-biggest-cybersecurity-threat-eu-agency-2021-10-27/

For more on this theme:
(Africa) INTERPOL Report Identifies Top Cyber Threats in Africa

(India) Centre launches pan-India helpline for cyber crime, frauds

(Global) Natural Disasters Can Set the Stage for Cyberattacks

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

India’s critical infrastructure like gas and water vulnerable to cyber attacks: study
M.P. Praveen – The Hindu: 23 October 2021

“India topped the list of 20 countries with 13 critical installations using default credentials, making them highly vulnerable,” said Rahul Sasi, the founder of CloudSEK, a global artificial intelligence-driven digital risk management enterprise.


For more on this theme:
(U.S.) America’s new war on terror has gone digital
https://www.msnbc.com/opinion/america-s-new-war-terror-has-gone-digital-n1282011

(U.S., Global) DHS Secretary: “Killware,” Malware Designed To Do Real-World Harm, Poised To Be World’s Next Breakout Cybersecurity Threat

(Global) Cyberattacks to critical infrastructure threaten our safety and well-being
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

ISIS-K Expanding ‘Faster than Anticipated,’ Experts Warn
Trevor Filseth – The National Interest: 28 October 2021
While ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) and the Taliban share ideological similarities, the two groups have emerged as major enemies in Afghanistan, and ISIS-K has acted to undermine the Taliban’s legitimacy among Sunni Afghans.
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/isis-k-expanding-%E2%80%98faster-anticipated%E2%80%99-experts-warn-195655

The Fractious Future of the Islamic State in West Africa
Stig Jarle Hansen – War on the Rocks: 3 November 2021
Africa was supposed to be the Islamic State’s success story. Observers saw the group’s rising attacks there as proof that the continent had become the new center of global jihad. In reality, the Islamic State faces many problems in Africa, largely of its own making.

For more on this theme:
Anjem Choudary orchestrating online campaigns in support of extremists despite Isis conviction
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/anjem-choudary-twitter-telegram-prison-b1943749.html

Sweden repatriates 3 women accused of ties to ISIS, 8 children from Syria

Nigerian official says new leader of ISIL-linked group killed

New wave of ISIS-affiliated families leave al-Hol camp
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/24102021

Sweden will aid anti-ISIS mission for as long as Iraq wants: Ambassador
https://www.rudaw.net/english/interview/22102021

ISIS-K Fighter Hiding In Afghanistan Reveals The Terrorist Group's Cross-Border Ambitions

Why Is the Islamic State in Afghanistan's Propaganda Targeting China?
https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/is-the-islamic-state-in-afghanistan-targeting-china/
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Timeline for Potential Attacks by Islamic State, Al-Qaida Getting Shorter
Jeff Seldin – Voice of America: 26 October 2021

Both the Islamic State terror group’s Afghan affiliate and al-Qaida could be ready to launch strikes against the United States and the West sooner than previously thought following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.


Al-Shabaab profiting from climate change, UN Panel of Experts on Somalia says
Aggrey Mutambo – Nation: 30 October 2021

In a report submitted to the United Nations Security Council, the panel said the terrorist group al-Shabaab was using people’s exposure to climate change to cement their influence in Somalia and the region.


For more on this theme:

Al-Qaeda terrorists flee as Yemeni forces capture strategic region in Ma’rib

US military exit from Syria unlikely anytime soon, officials say

‘Why I returned to Boko Haram and how I escaped’

Hezbollah Has No Choice but Escalation

Is Hezbollah trying to spark a confrontation between the army and the Lebanese Forces?
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1954546

Foreign Aid Won’t Moderate the Taliban

Afghan Pilots Who Fled To Tajikistan Say Taliban Is Threatening Relatives Back Home
https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghan-pilots-taliban-threatening-families/31525885.html

Putin Says Russia Mulling Removing Taliban From Terrorist List
https://www.rferl.org/a/putin-taliban-terror-list/31523297.html

Syrian jihadi group cracks down on last pocket of rivals in Idlib
RADICALIZATION

Australian defence force strengthens vetting procedures to prevent extremists from joining

Daniel Hurst – The Guardian: 31 October 2021

The measures, which include better information sharing with the intelligence agency Asio, are driven by concerns that extremists have sought to join the Australian defence force "to obtain training and capability."


For more on this theme:

Psychology of the Radical

https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/psychology-radical

Repentant Boko Haram Fighters Should Have A Faculty In Nigerian Army University — Gombe Governor

http://saharareporters.com/2021/10/27/repentant-boko-haram-fighters-should-have-faculty-nigerian-army-university-%E2%80%94-gombe

Iraqi envoy to Saudi Arabia reviews anti-terror center’s efforts against extremism

https://www.arabnews.com/node/1961181/saudi-arabia

How the world can stop the radicalization of innocents in Syria

https://thehill.com/opinion/international/579829-how-the-world-can-stop-the-radicalization-of-innocents-in-syria?rl=1

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CYBER

Google Issues Public Warning About Iranian State-Sponsored Hacking Group

Scott Ikeda – CPO Magazine: 28 October 2021

For some years now, Google has been issuing warnings directly to users who appear to have been targeted by a state-sponsored hacking group. The company has taken the unusual step of issuing a general public warning about one of these groups via its blog because of a large-scale campaign targeting academics and international conference attendees.


For more on this theme:

China Flaunts Its Offensive Cyber Power

https://warontherocks.com/2021/10/china-flaunts-its-offensive-cyber-power/
IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

Iran’s drones are a buzzing menace for Saudi Arabia
Ilan Zalayat – Atlantic Council: 28 October 2021

Going largely unnoticed, small but sophisticated Iranian-made armed drones have undercut the security balance in the Gulf region and the Arabian Peninsula over the past few years, ushering in a novel asymmetrical menace.

https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/irans-drones-are-a-buzzing-menace-for-saudi-arabia/

For more on this theme:

Saudi-Iran ‘proxy wars’ play out in embattled Lebanon

Iran Responsible for Drone Attack on U.S. Base in Syria
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/iran-responsible-drone-attack-us-base-syria-195658

Biden targets Iran drone program with sanctions
https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/579104-biden-targets-iran-drone-program-with-sanctions?rl=1

IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

China: The patriotic ‘ziganwu’ bloggers who attack the West
Tessa Wong – BBC: 21 October 2021

A new crop of bloggers known as the “ziganwu,” whose rise in fame on Chinese social media has been inextricably linked with the ascendancy of Chinese nationalism, has been attacking the West on popular sites. Their name refers to the infamous “wumao” army of trolls who are paid to spread state propaganda — but the difference is that the ziganwu do it for free.


For more on this theme:

Exposing the Chinese government’s oppression of Xinjiang’s Uyghurs

Biden says China and Russia skipping summit will diminish their influence

China trying to influence media, businesses in US, other places: Pentagon

China’s Growing Influence in Cambodia and Laos Has Vietnam on Edge
IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

Australia expands footprint in Southeast Asia to tackle China’s influence
Tom Allard – Independent: 27 October 2021

Australia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations agreed to establish a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” a sign of Canberra’s ambition to play a bigger role in the region.

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/australia-southeast-asia-china-influence-b1946380.html

For more on this theme:

China hounds Taiwan with ‘greyzone’ war plane incursions
https://news.yahoo.com/china-hounds-taiwan-greyzone-war-035919214.html

Australia accuses China of undermining world trade

China’s U.N. Interference Reaches a Brazen New Stage
https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/chinas-u-n-interference-reaches-a-brazen-new-stage/

China exploits Afghan vacuum

China’s influence in South Asia grows amid Covid-19 pandemic: Report

Is Russia Starting to Sour on China?
https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/is-russia-starting-to-sour-on-china/

Wake Up: China Is Engaging in Media Warfare Against Taiwan
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/wake-china-engaging-media-warfare-against-taiwan-195477

How China Learned to Harness Israel’s Media and Booming Tech Scene

Europe must defend itself against Vladimir Putin’s energy weapon
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/europe-must-defend-itself-against-vladimir-putins-energy-weapon/

Kosovo Expels Two Russian Diplomats
https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-expels-russian-diplomats/31524923.html

Three groups of influence pushing Russia’s interests operating in Ukraine — NSDC secretary