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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Malawi Anti-Corruption Body Says Graft Continues Unabated
Lameck Masina – Voice of America: 18 November 2021
Malawi’s Anti-Corruption Bureau says official graft continues to rise in the country, with complaints doubling in the past year. If the trend continues, Malawi will never reach its development goals, warned Martha Chizuma, the bureau’s director, who took office in May.

Is Corruption a Serious Problem in the Pacific?
Joshua Mcdonald – The Diplomat: 23 November 2021
A recent report illustrates that the people of the Pacific believe corruption is a massive problem for them and their governments.

For more on this theme:

Former Austrian Chancellor Kurz loses immunity, clearing way for corruption probe

Peru’s Presidential Palace Searched by Anti-Corruption Prosecutor

Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission to Investigate All Elections
Commission Commissioners
https://frontpageafricaonline.com/front-slider/ liberia-anti-corruption-commission-to-investigate-all-elections-commission-commissioners/

Youths’ role stressed to eliminate corruption

RFE/RL Investigation: Famed Russian Children’s Camp Complex Plagued By Corruption
https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-investigation-camp-corruption/31575582.html

Using tax to combat corruption in Nigeria
https://guardian.ng/opinion/using-tax-to-combat-corruption-in-nigeria/

Pandora Papers and the power of open-source data
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/pandora-papers-and-the-power-of-open-source-data

Curbing corruption must top South African municipal agendas
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/curbing-corruption-must-top-south-african-municipal-agendas
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Mexican Cartels Are Embracing Aerial Drones and They’re Spreading
Robert J. Bunker and John P. Sullivan – War on the Rocks: 11 November 2021

Cartel commandos are attacking rival gangs and security forces with armed drones, enhancing their combat power.

Afghan Poppy Crops Continue To Grow, Despite Talk Of Taliban Ban
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: 19 November 2021

After the Taliban took over Afghanistan in August, the group’s leaders said they would put an end to the cultivation of opium poppies in the country, but they have yet to enact those plans. In the Marja district of Helmand province, poppy cultivation continues to expand as an economic crisis makes farmers even more dependent on the lucrative crop.
https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-opium-poppy-drug-trade/31569776.html

For more on this theme:

Colombian troop surge seeks to stem drug-linked Venezuelan border violence

Afghan Opium Production Rises for a Fifth Year, UN Report Says

‘Absence of onboard security, super cargo fueling drug trafficking at ports’

Cocaine Seizures Soar as Hong Kong Becomes Regional Drug Hub

Culture of silence, fear and government corruption exacerbate Honduras’ drug problem

Colombian environmentalists face off against drug trafficking groups

Unrest in Syria is fuelling smuggling of drugs into Jordan, minister says

Tackling drug trafficking
https://www.fijitimes.com/tackling-drug-trafficking/

Inside a Booming Black Market for Heroin in the Shadow of the Himalayas
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

The Greater Mekong region: A hotspot of wildlife and crime
Sheryl Lee Tian Tong – Mongabay: 17 November 2021
The global illegal timber trade generates up to $152 billion a year, accounting for up to 90% of deforestation in tropical countries and attracting the world’s biggest organized crime groups. https://news.mongabay.com/2021/11/the-greater-mekong-region-a-hotspot-of-wildlife-and-crime/

Colombia’s San Andrés Losing Battle Against Illegal Fishing
Scott Mistler-Ferguson – InSight Crime: 17 November 2021
As Colombia and Nicaragua continue battling over fishing rights and policing around the Caribbean archipelago of San Andrés, its waters have become vulnerable to illegal fishing. https://insightcrime.org/news/colombias-san-andres-losing-battle-against-illegal-fishing/

For more on this theme:
Proposed changes to endangered species law include stiffer penalties for offenders

Report Warns of China’s Traditional Medicine Expansion in Africa
https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/15511-report.warns.of.china.s.traditional.medicine.expansion.in.africa

Cheetahs are fast running to extinction as cub trade thrives

Cambodia targets Mother Nature group in latest crackdown on dissent

Researchers develop global timber tree barcoding library

Google’s smart snapshots and scientists are helping to save the planet

Illegal mining and deforestation increase pressure on Madagascar

Illegal mining depleting Apamprama Forest Reserve
https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2021/11/17/illegal.mining.depleting.apamprama.forest.reserve/

China is pillaging global fisheries
https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/china.is.pillaging.global.fisheries/

Why Australia Should Burn Illegal Fishing Boats
MONEY LAUNDERING

Montenegro Urged to Step Up Efforts to Tackle Money-Laundering
Samir Kajosevic – Balkan Insight: 23 November 2021

A new report by the Council of Europe says that Montenegro is not conducting enough investigations into money laundering and not prosecuting enough wrongdoers.


For more on this theme:

Exposing illicit funds, money laundering through Nigerian BDCs
https://guardian.ng/opinion/exposing-illicit-funds-money-laundering-through-nigerian-bdcs/

Australian banks are opening up to cryptocurrency: what does it mean for you?

Corporate Transparency Act Expands Anti-Money Laundering Burden Beyond Banks to Business Customers (Part 4)

Money-laundering scandal overshadows Venezuelan elections

Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing: Supervision Report 2019-20

The state and money laundering – Jason Azzopardi

A Simple Guide to the Law on Money Laundering under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002

Israel authorities amp up regulations for crypto and FinTech
https://cryptoslate.com/israel-authorities-amp-up-regulations-for-crypto-and-fintech/
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

India eyes to become key stakeholder in Internet governance worldwide
Muntazir Abbas – ETTelcom: 22 November 2021

India, representing a sizable portion of the world population with the highest data consumption, is aiming to become a key stakeholder internationally in the internet governance domain. A white paper promoting India’s ideas and requirements will be issued at the upcoming India Internet Governance Forum.


For more on this theme:
(China, Global) China trying to export its Great Firewall and governance model

(Spain) Internet Governance Forum in Spain 2021: Internet unites us

INTERNET FREEDOM

How are the Authorities in Central Asia Trying to Control the Internet?
Human Rights Watch: 18 November 2021

Central Asian countries have been actively regulating online activities, adopting various laws that help them control the internet. How are things going with internet censorship in these countries?


For more on this theme:
(China) China’s VPN providers face harsher punishment for scaling the Great Firewall under new data regulation

(China, Russia, Global) Opinion: China and Russia are exporting digital repression. Democracies should fight back.

(China) How China’s Huawei technology is being used to censor news halfway across the world

(China) China blocks CNN’s signal to prevent reporting about tennis star
CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Coast Guard Cyber Protection Teams Train for the Fight

Homeland Security Today: 22 November 2021

The evolution of cyberspace makes it easier for adversaries to transcend time zones and borders to disrupt marine transportation systems.
https://www.hstoday.us/uscg/coast-guard-cyber-protection-teams-train-for-the-fight/

For more on this theme:
(Africa) African internet growth depends on greater engagement, not AFRINIC

(Africa) Bridging Africa’s digital divide: The rise of community internet

(U.S.) Higher pay, less red tape: U.S. launches effort to recruit talent to fight cyberattacks

(Pakistan) Building capabilities in cyber security vital to protect national data: President

CYBER CRIME

Ransomware gangs are using these ‘ruthless’ tactics as they aim for bigger payouts

Danny Palmer – ZDNet: 11 November 2021

More sophisticated ransomware attacks are on the way as cybercriminals tailor campaigns to raise the chances of a ransom payment.
https://www.zdnet.com/article/ransomware-gangs-are-now-using-ruthless-tactics-as-they-aim-for-bigger-payouts/

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) Additional Steps Needed to Protect Schools from Cyber Attacks, Says GAO
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/additional-steps-needed-to-protect-schools-from-cyber-attacks-says-gao/

(Europe) Pace of Cybercrime Evolution Is Accelerating, Europol Warns
https://www.bankinfosecurity.com/pace-cybercrime-evolution-accelerating-europol-warns-a-17902

(Global) Why cyber crime groups are some of the world’s most effective startups
https://www.information-age.com/why-cyber-crime-groups-are-some-of-worlds-most-effective-startups-123497733/
CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

CISA, Microsoft warn of rise in cyber attacks from Iran
Shaun Nichols – TechTarget: 18 November 2021

Security experts are warning administrators to be on the lookout following a recent outbreak in cyberattacks launched by Iranian-backed hacking groups.

For more on this theme:
(Iran) Iran's Mahan Air says it's has foiled a cyber attack – TV

(Global) Vestas data 'compromised' by cyber attack

(U.S.) Riviera Utilities hit by cyber attack affecting email systems

(Indonesia) Indonesia probes police data breach in latest cyber attack

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Number of cyber-attacks infiltrating critical New Zealand networks soars
Adam Bannister – The Daily Swig: 16 November 2021

New Zealand’s National Cyber Security Centre has observed a 15% year-on-year jump in cyberattacks against the country’s “nationally significant” organizations.

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) CISA working group assessing cyber risks to space infrastructure

(U.S.) Countering The Rising Threat Of Critical Infrastructure Attacks With A Security-First Approach

(U.S.) Hundreds participate in electric grid cyberattack simulation amid increasing threats
ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

ISIS using TikTok to recruit suicide bombers to carry out attacks around Christmas: Report
OpIndia: 22 November 2021
The terrorist organization ISIS has been using the short-video social-media platform TikTok to recruit young suicide bombers to carry out attacks during Christmas celebrations.

US Cracking Down on Finances for Islamic State’s Afghan Affiliate
Jeff Seldin – Voice of America: 22 November 2021
The United States is taking aim at the Islamic State's affiliate in Afghanistan, sanctioning some of the group's top officials as well as a financier charged with bolstering the terror group’s numbers with foreign fighters.

For more on this theme:
Central Asia Struggles To Reintegrate Islamic State Returnees
https://www.rferl.org/a/central-asia-islamic-state-repatriation/31548973.html
The destruction of Yazidi heritage under ISIS: Report
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/151120212
U.S. defense watchdog warns of ISIS “insurgency”
ADF: The group blamed for the bombings in Uganda
ISIS supporter Begum claims she was groomed online before going to Syria
https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2021/11/22/shamima-begum-i-was-groomed-online-for-months-before-joining-issa/
Islamic State Strengthening Its Foothold In Central Africa
“Without Us, There Would Be No Islamic State:” The Role of Civilian Employees in the Caliphate
Islamic State in Iraq, Syria Down but Not Out, Analysts Say
Holiday Terror Threats: How Extremists Encourage Violence During the Season  
*Bridget Johnson – Homeland Security Today: 23 November 2021*

The logistics and symbolism of attacks on Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year’s Eve can attract a variety of ideologies.

https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/holiday-terror-threats-how-extremists-encourage-violence-during-the-season/

**Ethiopia’s border fight: The war against al-Shabaab**  
*Jamal Osman – Channel 4 News: 23 November 2021*

While Ethiopia’s conflict rages in the north, another enemy is looking to exploit the situation in the east. Somali militants from the al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab are trying to expand their influence and have increased activity across Ethiopia’s border.


*For more on this theme:*

**In a changing Middle East, Hezbollah is losing relevance**  
https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/comment/2021/11/14/in-a-changing-middle-east-hezbollah-is-losing-relevance/

**Anxiety in Afghanistan as Taliban struggles for legitimacy**  

**Lake Chad Basin: Fighting terrorism, ‘decisive test’ on biggest challenges of our time**  

**Military expenditure reduces the negative effect of terrorism on economic growth**  

**The Taliban is No ‘Partner,’ Says Top US Special Ops Commander**  

**Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad Say New Jihadist Terrorism Threats Warrant Change of Military Response**  

**East Africa’s terrorism hotspots: examining the roots and solutions**  

**Indonesia arrests senior cleric for ties to Jemaah Islamiah**  
Access to the comments  
https://www.euronews.com/2021/11/18/indonesia-security

**Taliban announces commission to purge ‘people of bad character’**  
RADICALIZATION

How terrorist recruiters are editing extremist content to evade moderation on Instagram and YouTube
Ruchira Sharma – iNews: 17 November 2021

Extremists are constantly changing the language they use to evade moderation on social media sites such as Instagram and YouTube as a tool to recruit terrorists, an expert said.

For more on this theme:
Research reveals potential new way to fight radicalization in ‘true believers’

More people may have self-radicalised online in pandemic, warns minister
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/16/more-people-may-have-self-radicalised-online-in-pandemic-warns-minister

IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES AND PRIVATE MILITARY GROUPS

Pulling Back the Curtain on China’s Maritime Militia
Gregory B. Poling and Harrison Prétat – Center for Strategic & International Studies: 18 November 2021

Since completing the construction of its artificial-island outposts in the Spratly Islands in 2016, China has shifted to asserting control over the rest of the South China Sea. A key component has been the expansion of China’s maritime militia — a force of vessels ostensibly engaged in commercial fishing but which operate alongside Chinese law enforcement and military to achieve political objectives in disputed waters.
https://www.csis.org/analysis/pulling-back-curtain-chinas-maritime-militia

For more on this theme:
Israel prepares for Hezbollah dirty bomb strike

PFLP Boasts About its Ties to Iran

How can Iraq’s destructive pro-Iran militias be tamed?
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1969396/middle-east

Why Lebanon’s Iran-backed Hezbollah is unlikely to disarm voluntarily
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1968576/middle-east

Vladimir Putin weaponises human misery in this new proxy battle in Belarus
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/putin-weaponises-human-misery-in-this-new-proxy-battle-jztb885bb
IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

Russia may be ‘looking to move further’ into Ukraine, its foreign minister warns
Conor Finnegan and MaryAlice Parks – ABC News: 11 November 2021
As it again masses troops and equipment on the border with Ukraine, the Russian government is “looking for the opportunity to move further” into Ukrainian territory, according to the Ukrainian foreign minister.

For more on this theme:
Will Russia’s new push in ASEAN be another failure?
As Belarus Facilitates Migrant Crisis With EU, Putin Could See Chance To Use Clout
Russia is weaponizing migrants and Europe’s energy crisis to achieve its interests
Belarus Linked to Big European Disinformation Campaign
China’s Search for Allies
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-11-15/chinas-search-allies
China’s history is revised, to the glory of Xi
https://indianexpress.com/article/world/chinas-history-is-revised-to-the-glory-of-xi-7626763/
China’s Content Manipulation Reaches New Frontiers
Australia toughens rules on foreign interference at universities
China using ‘immoral’, ‘unethical’ tactics to influence World Bank’s Doing Business ranking
Australia aims to protect, promote critical technologies
https://apnews.com/article/technology-business-china-australia-scott-morrison-06e169a3456e4d615d09861b4141c312
Austin: U.S. Will Work With Ukraine, Allies to Counter Russian Aggression