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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Europe wins a big anti-corruption battle
*The Christian Science Monitor: 25 November 2019*

While quite a few countries in Central and Eastern Europe give some reason for worry, Romania is potentially turning into a good news story. The country is moving away from its long legacy of corrupt government, albeit gradually, toward being a more transparent democracy where the rule of law is applied more honestly. Romania’s presidential election reelection of an anti-graft president is likely to push the country further in this direction.


*For more on this theme:*

**Political Turmoil And Corruption Allegations Cast A Shadow Over Kuwait**

**Lebanon’s Mass Anti-Corruption Protests Enter Second Month, With Demonstrators and Government In ‘Stalemate’**
https://www.newsweek.com/lebanon-mass-anti-corruption-protests-enter-second-month-1472242

**Banks facilitated South Africa corruption under Zuma, says Peter Hain**

**Political corruption isn’t just wrong, it also devalues business, ASU study finds**
https://asunow.asu.edu/20191101-discoveries-political-corruption-isnt-just-wrong-it-also-devalues-business-asu-study-finds

**Russia corruption: Putin’s pet space project Vostochny tainted by massive theft**

**Half a million Algerian workers jobless following corruption investigations**
https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191119-half-a-million-algerian-workers-jobless-following-corruption-investigations/

**Former Malaysian PM Najib’s Third Corruption Trial Opens**
https://apnews.com/8a7e4ca9e50247aacbcbcd8d2145fcc2e7

**Ghana: Corruption and neglect of the north threatens security**

**Corruption in the Balkans: the elephant in the room**
https://euobserver.com/opinion/146614

**Over 2,000 Venetians protest cruise ships, corruption after flooding**

**Innovation on the ground — approaches to tackling land corruption**
https://voices.transparency.org/our-approaches-to-tackling-land-corruption-33778778cc76
DRUG TRAFFICKING

A ruthless Mexican drug lord's empire is devastating families with its grip on small-town USA
Beth Warren – Louisville Courier Journal: 25 November 2019

The Mexican drug cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación is flooding small-town America with dangerous drugs, and many smaller cities and towns lack the resources to effectively combat a sophisticated, billion-dollar enterprise.


The global drugs trade shifts to west Africa
The Economist: 21 November 2019

A seizure of nearly 2,000 kilograms of cocaine in the small West African country of Guinea-Bissau in September surprised observers. It wasn’t because the country isn’t a recognized transshipment point for South American narcotics destined for Europe, but like other poor countries in the region, cocaine shipments prop up kleptocratic governments.


For more on this theme:

Europe's first 'narco-submarine' caught off Spain with 3,000 kilos of cocaine

Bogotá Raid Shows Importance of Mexico Cartels for Colombian Coca

Colombia Criminals Confuse Authorities with False Identities

A Marijuana Strain Nicknamed 'Creepy' Is Helping to Fuel Colombia's Narco War

Irish communities severely affected by drug gang violence - EU report

Council of Europe deputies discuss drug policy and human rights

EU agencies blame globalisation and technology for rise in drug trafficking

Who is El Mencho? He's the most powerful drug kingpin you've never heard of

Treasure, Corruption and Legal Machinations – Gerald's Legacy in Ecuador
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Report: South Sudan Rebels, Government Trade in Illegal Timber Sales
Lasuba Memo – Voice of America: 26 November 2019
South Sudanese rebel and government commanders stand accused of illegally logging and selling teak and mahogany trees, according to a new report from the United Nations.

How a library of tree DNA could protect the world’s forests
Jenny Marc – CNN: 27 November 2019
A group of organizations is joining forces to build a database of tree samples that will help officials crack down on illegal logging.

For more on this theme:
Is ASEAN serious about saving its marine turtles?

Homes, land destroyed as desperate Zimbabweans turn to illegal gold mining

Tanzania Rallies to Protect World’s Largest Population of Lions
https://allafrica.com/stories/201911210388.html

The climate crisis has sparked a Siberian mammoth tusk gold rush
https://www.wired.co.uk/article/mammoth-tusk-hunters-russia-china

New tool helps fisheries enforcement track criminal fishing around the world

Chinese medicine could bring about destruction of half the world’s donkeys, new report reveals

NGO Traffic warns of rise in international trafficking of glass eels

Focus: How Britain’s biggest fund managers invest your money in China’s trade in rare animals

Rising affluence and cultural beliefs driving illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia: NGO
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Migrant Smuggling: What Financial Institutions Need to Know
Alison Jimenez – Reuters: 15 November 2019

Financial institutions can and must play a key role in detecting and identifying migrant smuggling because criminal organizations are exploiting migrants’ desperation, often at a deadly price.

http://www.legalexecutiveinstitute.com/migrant-smuggling/

The return of migrants from Europe is causing problems for The Gambia
Judith Altrogge and Franziska Zanker – Quartz: 21 November 2019

Nearly 40,000 Gambians became irregular migrants between 2013 and 2017 while the country was run by President Yahya Jammeh. Many of these migrants, mostly young men, sought asylum in Europe, but many have been turned away and deported back to The Gambia.


For more on this theme:

Italy: Outspoken but unheard - How diasporas in Europe shape migration along the Central Mediterranean Sea route (October 2019)

IOM Tracks Repatriations of Haitian Migrants from The Bahamas

Kurdish-Led Forces Bust ISIS Human Smuggling Ring in North Syria

War on human trafficking: EU must continue to cooperate with UK ministers, warns expert
https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1209590/Human-trafficking-eu-news-UK-warning

Egypt hosts 1st regional forum on fighting human trafficking in Africa

Efforts to prevent human trafficking
https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/efforts-to-prevent-human-trafficking/cid/1721574

Human trafficking survivors form forum

Shining light on the dim reality of human trafficking issues

High-Seas Rescues Put Migrants in Harm’s Way
MONEY LAUNDERING

How Westpac is alleged to have broken anti-money laundering laws 23 million times
Ian Fargher – The Conversation: 24 November 2019

Australia’s second-largest bank, Westpac, is accused of breaching laws aimed at hindering criminal money laundering and the financing of terrorism. With some of those breaches involving suspicious transactions in Southeast Asia, it is alleged that Westpac has potentially facilitated the most heinous of crimes — the commerce of child sex abuse.

https://theconversation.com/how-westpac-is-alleged-to-have-broken-anti-money-laundering-laws-23-million-times-127518

Following massacre of Americans, we need a new strategy to defeat drug cartels
Sen. Bill Cassidy and Dr. Vanila M. Singh – The Hill: 20 November 2019

Tackling trade-based money laundering may be the best way to go after and defeat violent drug cartels. The systems are largely in place, but key players need to work together to make it work.


For more on this theme:

How AI can help reduce money laundering

Money Laundering on Video Games: Play On or Game Over?

Anti-Money Laundering Start-Up ToekiTaki Raise £9.8 Million
https://www.cbronline.com/news/tookitaki

Phoenix Thoroughbreds owner denies money-laundering allegations

US authorities arrest Brazilian ex-CEO in bribery case
https://apnews.com/e6b5555197174e629c9d022d28ba9bae

Money laundering in Estonia. Russian secret services benefited?
https://warsawinstitute.org/money-laundering-estonia-russian-secret-services-benefited/

Saudi Arabia’s Public Prosecutor leads coalition of authorities to fight money laundering
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1588801/saudi-arabia

Feds target Venezuelan brothers in new $4.5 billion money-laundering investigation

Money-Laundering Trouble Spot Says It’s Turned Over a New Leaf
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Contract for the Web: Tim Berners-Lee launches plan to fix the web
Rob Thubron – Techspot: 25 November 2019
Tim Berners-Lee, credited with inventing the World Wide Web, has released a plan to save the internet from becoming a “digital dystopia” and ensure that knowledge is freely available to everyone. The plan was developed with input from more than 80 organizations from government, business and civil society.
Full report:
Contract for the Web
https://contractfortheweb.org/

For more on this theme:
(China, U.S., UN) UN Secretary-General: US-China Tech Divide Could Cause More Havoc Than the Cold War
https://www.wired.com/story/un-secretary-general-antonio-guterres-internet-risks/

(Global) Sticking to Crypto’s Core Philosophy Is the Way to Prevent Its Abuse

(UN, Global) In 2019, Can Democracy Flourish Without Internet Access?

INTERNET FREEDOM

Russia Moves to Ban Sales of Gadgets Without Russian-Made Software
Victoria Song – Gizmodo: 22 November 2019
The lower house of the Russian parliament recently voted to ban the sales of internet accessible gadgets — from smartphones to smart TVs, computers and refrigerators — that don’t have Russian software that allows state-run internet providers to track, filter and redirect internet traffic.

For more on this theme:
(U.S., Europe, China, Global) What’s next for content moderation?
https://www.cio.com/article/3454988/whats-next-for-content-moderation.html

(Iran, China, Venezuela, Russia, Ethiopia) ‘Tool of repression’: Iran and regimes from Ethiopia to Venezuela limit Internet, go dark online
https://amp.usatoday.com/amp/4268948002

(Hong Kong) Fear of Internet Censorship Hangs Over Hong Kong Protests
PRIVACY AND SECURITY

US Cyber Command Calling Out North Korean Hackers
Nicole Lindsey – CPO Magazine: 21 November 2019

The U.S. government has a new strategy in its ongoing battle against state-sponsored hackers from North Korea: Out the hackers on public forums. The U.S. Cyber Command now posts malware samples from North Korean hackers on an information-sharing platform known as VirusTotal.


For more on this theme:
(U.K.) Airbus Launches Human Centric Cyber Security Accelerator
https://wales247.co.uk/airbus-launches-human-centric-cyber-security-accelerator/

(Australia) My Health Record exposed to shared cyber security risks

(U.S.) You’re Tracked Everywhere You Go Online. Use This Guide to Fight Back.

CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Cyberwarriors lack planning tools. That could change.
Mark Pomerleau – Fifth Domain: 25 November 2019

The U.S. Air Force and the Pentagon’s Strategic Capabilities Office are working on a plan named Project IKE that will help commanders coordinate and conduct cyber operations. “The objective of IKE is to develop automated artificial intelligence/machine learning techniques to assist human understanding of the cyber battlespace, support development of cyber warfare strategies and measure and model battle damage assessment,” A Pentagon spokesman said.


For more on this theme:
(Global) The Cybersecurity 202: The U.S. is racking up tactical victories in Huawei fight

(Australia) China says self-confessed spy defector is fraudster
https://apnews.com/33788b76328a475894f8a7aa8e689fae
CYBER STATECRAFT DEVELOPMENT

Labour promises to review UK’s cybersecurity defences
Silicon Republic: 22 November 2019

The United Kingdom’s Labour Party has pledged to overhaul the country’s cyber security with the creation of a coordinating minister and a review of the National Cyber Security Centre’s role. In its 2019 manifesto, the party warned that services such as nuclear facilities, transport systems and communications networks are vulnerable to cyber attacks.

https://www.siliconrepublic.com/enterprise/uk-cybersecurity-defences-review-labour-party

For more on this theme:

(India) The Cyber Challenge: Dilemmas of an Indian response

(Australia) Renewed calls for dedicated Australian cyber minister and cyber leadership

(U.S.) Cyber strategy bolsters allies, partners ahead of 2020 election

CYBER ATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Cyber threats to IoT in 2020
Ohad Amir – TechRadar: 20 November 2019

As our homes become more connected, we become more vulnerable to hackers. As the internet of things industry continues to change, what issues are we likely to see in 2020?


For more on this theme:

(India) Kudankulam cyberattack no threat to plant operations, minister confirms
http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Minister-confirms-details-of-Kudankulam-cyberattack?feed=feed

(South Africa) Massive DDoS attacks – South African Internet providers crippled

(Iran, Global) A Notorious Iranian Hacking Crew Is Targeting Industrial Control Systems
https://www.wired.com/story/iran-apt33-industrial-control-systems/

(Global) Tech experts predict rise in cyber threats in 2020
CYBER PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Israeli defense firm develops cutting-edge cyber defenses to protect critical infrastructure  
Yaakov Lappin – JNS: 25 November 2019

Rafael Advanced Defense Systems built a Cyber Security Operations Center for Israel Railways — a critical infrastructure that faces 10 million attempted cyber attacks a month.


For more on this theme:

(EU, Global) Port cybersecurity: Safeguarding operations against cyber attacks  

(EU, Global) European Cybersecurity Agency Publishes Report on Smart Car Security  

(Iran) Are Iranian Hackers Planning An Attack On Key Oil Assets?  

(U.S.) Small, regional utilities located near critical infrastructure targeted in cyberattack: WSJ  

COMBATING TERRORISM AND CYBER CRIME

Cheap Cyber Weapons Threaten Unintended Consequences  
George I. Seffers – Signal: 26 November 2019

The vast array of cyber weapons, the ease with which they can be obtained and the ever-decreasing cost of such weapons is driving nations and nonstate actors to reshape the cyber threat landscape.

https://www.afcea.org/content/cheap-cyber-weapons-threaten-unintended-consequences

Full report:  
The Commoditization of Cyber Capabilities: A Grand Cyber Arms Bazaar  

For more on this theme:

(New Zealand) Study: Business has never been better for cybercriminals  
https://itbrief.co.nz/story/study-business-has-never-been-better-for-cybercriminals

(Global) A model to classify cyberattacks using swarm intelligence  
NOTEWORTHY PODCASTS

**The Hunt: US Army using cyber expertise to turn the internet against terrorists**
J.J. Green – WTOP; 20 November 2019

In this week’s edition of The Hunt, Col. Andrew Hall, director of the Army’s Cyber Institute, said the U.S. Army is using cyber technology to “defend forward” in cyberspace against terrorists.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Hacking since age six | Cyber Work Podcast

(Global) The CyberWire Daily Podcast – Episode 977

(U.S., Global) Compliance, regulation and small businesses.

(U.S.) Hackers Welcome: Why Federal Regulators Are Welcoming Simulated Hacks In Hospital Settings

TRAINING AND EXERCISES

**Finland Rehearses For Ransomware Attacks With 235 Mock Bitcoin Ransom Demands**
John Loeffler – Interesting Engineering: 23 November 2019

The Finnish Population Register Centre is coordinating a simulated ransomware cyber attack on more than 200 Finnish cities and public organizations. The program instructs participants on ways to protect themselves from attacks and how to respond to ransom requests from hackers.


For more on this theme:

(U.S.) Quantum Dawn Cyber Exercise Simulates a “Doomsday” Global Ransomware Attack

(Global) #InfosecNA: The Benefits of Training Employees to Hack

(Global) WEBINAR: 4 Reasons Your Next Cybersecurity Tabletop Will Flop
https://securityboulevard.com/2019/11/webinar-4-reasons-your-next-cybersecurity-tabletop-will-flop/

(Singapore) Singapore completes two-day cyber resilience exercise
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS

US and Syria’s Kurds target ISIS in joint action
The National: 24 November 2019

American-led forces and their Syrian Kurdish allies have carried out their biggest joint operation against ISIS in Syria since President Donald Trump ordered a pullback of U.S. forces there. Coalition officials say the operation captured dozens of militants. The news came on the same day Vice President Mike Pence visited Iraq and worked to reassure America’s Kurdish allies in the region.


Caliph Abu Unknown: Succession and Legitimacy in the Islamic State
Haroro J. Ingram and Craig Whiteside – War on the Rocks: 25 November 2019

The ISIS announcement of Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi as the new “emir of the Muslims” was a surprise to many, given that he’s a relatively unknown figure. To understand what is happening in ISIS now, it is important to examine its history of succession.


For more on this theme:

Baghdadi’s Elimination: ISIS Down but Not Out
https://idsa.in/idsacomments/baghdadi-elimination-gg-dwivedi-131119

Counting AK47s and learning trigonometry for snipers. How children were taught math under ISIS

ISIS expected to revamp operations in Syria, grow ability to target the West, says Pentagon watchdog

Islamic State claims rare attack in Algeria

How Iraq helped to flush out ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

Islamic State may decentralise financing: US official
https://www.deccanherald.com/international/islamic-state-may-decentralise-financing-us-official-778269.html

Iraqi spy chief warns ISIS is rebuilding
FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Denmark takes first passports off ISIS fighters after passing new law

Nicky Harley – The National: 26 November 2019

Denmark’s new law allows the country to take away the passports of returning foreign fighters.


For more on this theme:

UK to repatriate British orphans of ‘Islamic State’ fighters


‘IS fighters not yet coming in droves, but alert must remain’


The Observer view on Isis children stranded in Syria


Germany repatriates Islamic State bride and children from Syria


Dutch state not obliged to take back Islamic State children: appeals court


Evidence is everything: How US is tackling return of Islamic State fighters

https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/evidence-everything-why-us-has-been-hesitant-take-back-fighters

WHITE NATIONALIST TERRORISM

What factors into far-right extremism? A UMN researcher wanted to find out

Hana Ikramuddin – Minnesota Daily: 26 November 2019

A University of Minnesota graduate student identified two traits that may come together to create a far-right extremist — a focus on hierarchical structures in society and the extent to which an individual identifies as “white.”


For more on this theme:

Are we witnessing the rise of a new terrorist trend?

https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/are-we-witnessing-rise-new-terrorist-trend/

He was a member of a white supremacist group. Here’s how he got out.


Are We Entering a New Era of Far-Right Terrorism?

https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/are-we-entering-a-new-era-of-far-right-terrorism/
How jihadists struck gold in Africa’s Sahel
David Lewis and Ryan McNeill – Reuters: 22 November 2019
As al-Qaida and ISIS expand in Africa, hundreds of gold mines are bringing a billion-dollar trade within reach of the terror groups. Besides attacking industrial operations, two of the world’s most feared extremist forces are tapping the $2 billion informal gold trade in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

How the Sahel has slipped into a new post-Jihadist era
Bakary Sambe – The Conversation: 26 November 2019
So far, military operations in the Sahel have been less than successful against terrorism in the region. It’s time to start addressing the situation differently.
https://theconversation.com/how-the-sahel-has-slipped-into-a-new-post-jihadist-era-127538

For more on this theme:
- Taliban frees two Western prisoners, U.S. sees hope for wider Afghan peace
- Iran Supplies Taliban With Weapons: Pentagon Report
  https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/iran-supplies-taliban-weapons-pentagon-report
- Tales of an American Lone Wolf Terrorist
  https://nationalinterest.org/feature/tales-american-lone-wolf-terrorist-98577
- Militant Group Vows Retaliation Following Indian Court Ruling
- Trends in Global Terrorism
- The Sahel is a Growing Arena of Competition for Jihadist Groups
  https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-the-sahel-is-a-growing-arena-of-competition-for-jihadist-groups/
- A Crystal Ball For Predicting Terrorist Effectiveness? We Created One
  https://www.forbes.com/sites/brianuzzi/2019/11/22/a-crystal-ball-for-predicting-terrorist-effectiveness-we-created-one/#b44d392e0059
- The al Qaeda terrorist threat is alive
  https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/the-al-qaeda-terrorist-threat-is-alive
- Boko Haram Funded By €30bn Drug Market -Report
  http://saharareporters.com/2019/11/26/boko-haram-funded-%e2%82%ac30bn-drug-market-report
- Al-Shabab’s video gives partial view of its leader
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

View on Africa: Preventing violent extremism
Isel van Zyl – Institute for Security Studies: 20 November 2019

Many efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism in Africa are being carried out by local and international organizations. Despite this work and considerable amounts of funding for these initiatives, practitioners still struggle to determine what effect their efforts are having, both negative and positive. Based on an analysis of many projects in Central, East and West Africa, this report considers questions about donor funding, the duration of funding, theories of change, and monitoring and evaluation.

https://issafrica.org/media-resources/videos-and-infographics/view-on-africa-preventing-violent-extremism

Deported Afghans at risk of radicalization: study
Austin Davis – Deutsche Welle: 26 November 2019

A new study from Medico International and the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization concludes that Afghans deported from European Union countries are at risk of death, economic hardship and radicalization.


For more on this theme:

Tony Blair calls for Global Education Charter to fight extremism
https://www.thenational.ae/world/tony-blair-calls-for-global-education-charter-to-fight-extremism-1.937801

State to regulate madrassas in efforts against radicalization

Profile of a Lone Terrorist: Who They Are, What They Believe, Why They Attack

Religious leaders unite in fight against extremism

Nazi Symbols and Racist Memes: Combating School Intolerance

Can We Fight Radicalization by Fixing Terrorists’ Problems with Life?
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/can-we-fight-radicalization-by-fixing-terrorists-problems-with-life/

Radicalizing in the Name of Islam
https://www.meforum.org/59292/johanna-markind-radicalizing-in-name-of-islam

‘British IS children at risk of radicalisation’, says former MI6 counter-terrorism chief
TERRORISM AND THE INTERNET

European police attack Islamic State’s online presence
Stephanie van den Berg – Reuters: 25 November 2019

In a major blow to terrorist radicalization efforts, European law enforcement agencies have stripped Islamic State propaganda from popular online services. Over 26,000 items, including videos, publications, social media accounts and communication channels, were flagged by authorities as being terrorist propaganda. Europol, the European Union’s law enforcement agency, worked with nine of the largest internet platforms.


For more on this theme:
The Nazi in your feed: Regulating social media and hate speech

How Machine Learning Can Find Extremists on Social Media
https://insights.som.yale.edu/insights/how-machine-learning-can-find-extremists-on-social-media

Governments need to work with tech companies to curb hate speech, says Facebook anti-terror chief

Digital footprint led to the arrest ISIS terror module in Assam

COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES

From child soldier to child ‘terrorist’: safeguarding innocence from counter-terrorism
Sandra Krähenmann and Paulien Vandendriessche - International Committee of the Red Cross: 20 November 2019

Despite legal prohibitions, children continue to be recruited and used in various capacities during armed conflict, in some cases by armed groups labeled as “terrorist.” It is essential that policies and practices countering extreme violence by such groups treat children first and foremost as victims, irrespective of their association with armed groups, and work toward solutions in the best interest of the child.


For more on this theme:
Balancing act: Anti-terror efforts and humanitarian principles
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