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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Ukraine parliament restores powers of anti-corruption agency in bid for foreign loans
*Reuters*: 15 December 2020

Ukraine’s parliament has adopted a new law to reinstate the institutional mechanism for preventing corruption.


Sierra Leone’s tech-aided war on corruption
*Beenish Javed – Deutsche Welle*: 17 December 2020

Sierra Leone has shown some promise in fighting corruption, particularly since it incorporated digital technology. Could the country serve as a model for the rest of Africa?

https://www.dw.com/en/sierra-leones-tech-aided-war-on-corruption/a-55897439

For more on this theme:

UN agency hit with fraud and corruption allegations at climate projects

Albright Tells Congress Corruption ‘Crippling’ Western Balkans, Says U.S. Needs To Step Up Regional Presence

View: How technology makes it possible to solve corruption

No ‘Hybrid’ Solutions in Kosovo’s Anti-Corruption Fight, says Deputy PM

Albania must implement legal framework to prevent corruption of ministers, their advisers and the police

Social norms and poor services drive petty corruption in East Africa’s health sector

PM seeks data on corruption complaints related to Covid-19
**DRUG TRAFFICKING**

**Drug Cartels Are All Over Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok**  
*Robert Muggah and Pedro Augusto P. Francisco – Foreign Policy: 15 December 2020*

Latin American criminal gangs have embraced social media and messaging platforms to spread narcoculture and sell drugs.


**Inside the Sinaloa Cartel’s Move Toward Europe**  
*Cecilia Anesi and Giulio Rubino – Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: 15 December 2020*

A recent Italian police investigation, code-named Operation Halcon, has provided the most in-depth look yet into how the Sinaloa Cartel, Mexico’s leading drug traffickers, does business in Europe.


For more on this theme:

**Cartels flood border with synthetic drugs, exacerbating addiction and homicide rates**  

**Special Report: Burner phones and banking apps: Meet the Chinese ‘brokers’ laundering Mexican drug money**  

**Ex-youth worker spotlights UK child drug trafficking in ‘County Lines’ film**  

**India, Myanmar To Share Intelligence Information To Control Drug Trafficking**  

**Narcotics Kingpin Backs New River Port in Laos’ Golden Triangle**  

**USPS, CBP get ‘incomplete’ from Congress on stopping opioids in the mail**  

**Booming Meth Trade In ASEAN Amid The Pandemic**  

**Hits and highs: South Africa in the crossfire of warring drug cartels**  
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

**Indonesia’s female forest guardians fight for the environment**
Bener Mariah – Agence France-Presse: 16 December 2020

A unique team of female rangers is taking on illegal loggers and hunters, sometimes made up of their neighbors or even husbands, who are threatening at-risk wildlife and stripping their forests.

**Taiga King: Spies. Lies. Lumber**
*Earthsight: December 2020*

Lumber linked to a billion-dollar illegal logging scandal in Russia’s Far East has continued to enter Europe and end up in hardware stores, despite European Union laws banning such imports, according to an investigation by the U.K.-based environmental nonprofit Earthsight.
https://earthsight.org.uk/taigaking

For more on this theme:

**In China, public support grows to rein in the wildlife trade in the wake of the pandemic**

**Could sniffer dogs help BD combat illegal wildlife trade?**

**Illegal mining sparks malaria outbreak in Indigenous territories in Brazil**

**Poverty Pushes Zimbabwe Miners Into Underground, Dangerous Work, Observers Say**

**Interpol: Illegal Fishing Spawns a Wide Network of Organized Crime**

**Environmental education in schools can save Malaysia, says Jane Goodall**

**Chilean navy ships monitor huge Chinese fishing fleet**

**Interpol: Illegal Timber Industry Endangers Both Humans and Wildlife**
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Tackling human rights abuses is critical to sustainable life at sea and on land
Priya Vithani – World Economic Forum: 10 December 2020

Traditionally, Human Rights Day has focused on international human rights abuses that take place on land. But it is just as important to focus on those violations happening on the other 70% of the world’s surface, the oceans.


Traffickers, smugglers exploiting COVID-19, Interpol warns after global crackdown
Reuters: 11 December 2020

Interpol has made more than 200 arrests as part of an international operation to bring down criminal smuggling networks. The international police agency warns that human traffickers are exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic.


For more on this theme:
Migrants: Human trafficking not tied to other crimes, study

Rohingya trafficking network sells dreams but delivers violence and extortion
https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/16/asia-pacific/rohingya-trafficking-network/

Set up toll-free helpline numbers, special surveillance to tackle human trafficking: NHRC

Special ATII Report: Crypto transactions and human trafficking – A non-traditional investigation perspective for traditional financial institutions

Peril at sea, danger on shore for migrants trapped in Libya
https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants-libya-idUKKBN28ROWN

Students to learn info on human trafficking
https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/students-learn-info-human-trafficking

OPINION: Invisible crimes like human trafficking rise during COVID-19
https://news.trust.org/item/20201216122708-84btm

Tackling Health Consequences of Human Trafficking in Ghana

Europe Targets Human Rights Abusers With ‘Magnitsky’ Laws
https://www.voanews.com/europe/europe-targets-human-rights-abusers-magnitsky-laws
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

International Law and Cyberspace: It's the “How”, Stupid
Wolfgang Kleinwächter – CircleID: 10 December 2020

The internet has enhanced freedom of communication, ignored national borders, and removed time and space barriers. But cyberspace was never a law-free zone. Nevertheless, the issue is part of an ongoing international controversy.


For more on this theme:

(Global) A world with three internets
https://english.elpais.com/the_global_observer/2020-12-08/a-world-with-three-internets.html

(Global) Don't Institutionalize the Internet
https://sdg.isd.org/commentary/guest-articles/dont-institutionalize-the-internet/

(Global) ‘Digital colonisation’: A tiny island nation just launched a major effort to win back control of its top-level internet domain

INTERNET FREEDOM

5 Predictions for Beijing’s Assault on Internet Freedom in 2021
Sarah Cook – The Diplomat: 10 December 2020

The events in China over the past year highlight several censorship patterns that will likely continue and grow over the next 12 months.

https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/5-predictions-for-beijings-assault-on-internet-freedom-in-2021/

For more on this theme:

(Ethiopia) For Ethiopia’s Diaspora, Seeking News Amid Communication Blackout is a Challenge

(Pakistan) Tech giants call for ‘changes’ to Pakistani censorship laws

(Cuba) Cuban dissidents report house arrests and social media blackouts since protest
PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Tech lobby map rates states’ cybersecurity and digital efforts
Benjamin Freed – Statescoop: 15 December 2020

A new interactive map published this month by the Internet Association scores every state government’s cyber security, digital government and modernization efforts in an attempt to evaluate their information technology readiness.

For more on this theme:
(Global) WhatsApp criticizes Apple privacy labels as anti-competitive

(Europe) European Audit Institutions pool their work on cybersecurity
https://www.eureporter.co/frontpage/2020/12/18/european-audit-institutions-pool-their-work-on-cybersecurity/

(U.S.) FTC opens privacy study into major internet platforms

CYBER STATECRAFT

The Cybersecurity Strategy
European Commission: 16 December 2020

On 16 December 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented a new European Union Cybersecurity Strategy.

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) Cross-agency plans for space cybersecurity will strengthen the US in all domains
https://www.c4isrnet.com/opinion/2020/12/01/cross-agency-plans-for-space-cybersecurity-will-strengthen-the-us-in-all-domains/

(Global) Has digitisation weakened democracy’s defences?
https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/digitisation-democracy/

(Romania) Romania to host the EU’s new cybersecurity research hub
https://www.zdnet.com/article/romania-to-host-the-eus-new-cybersecurity-research-hub/
CYBER CRIME

Home working has exposed us all to more cybercrime. Here's how to close the breach
Ruth Shoham and Yosi Aviram – World Economic Forum: 8 December 2020

With more people working from home, there are more opportunities for cyber crime. Additionally, there is a growing gap in skilled cyber security practitioners. More training could help solve these issues.

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/12/cybersecurity-skills-shortage-cybercrime/

For more on this theme:

(India) How India’s premier cyber agency is fighting evolving threats

(U.K.) Cyber Helpline awarded lottery funding to support victims

(Global) Covid drives cybercrime to become “more professional”
https://www.capacitymedia.com/articles/3827203/covid-drives-cybercrime-to-become-more-professional-


CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

These three countries are in the lead to be Africa’s e-hub after the free trade agreement
Jeffrey Mason – Quartz: 14 December 2020

The African Continental Free Trade Area will be the largest in the world and will open the possibility for an African nation to fill the same niche for Africa as Estonia fills for Europe – that of an e-Residency pioneer and gateway into the continent.


For more on this theme:

(Central Asia) The importance of connecting Central Asia

(Africa) Southern Africa shows how unlocking data can drive economic recovery
https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2020-12-16-southern-africa-shows-how-unlocking-data-can-drive-economic-recovery/

(Europe) Lisbon eyes undersea cable investment to bolster EU tech infrastructure
CYBER PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Building a cyber-resilient electricity sector is a key priority for the post-COVID era
Rosa Kariger and Georges de Moura – World Economic Forum: 30 November 2020

The COVID-19 crisis is having a dramatic impact on our society and has reinforced our reliance on a stable internet and power infrastructure.

For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Protecting critical infrastructure and distributed organizations in an era of chronic cybersecurity risk

(U.S., Global) Ransomware Threat To Critical Infrastructure Is A New Priority

MASS SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

The Spread of Surveillance Technology in Africa Stirs Security Concerns
Bulelani Jili – Africa Center for Strategic Studies: 11 December 2020

The spread of Chinese influence and technology coupled with the absence of a clear regulatory framework leaves many African countries vulnerable to misuse of surveillance technologies.

For more on this theme:
(China) China censors internet over occupied territories like Tibet

(China, Africa) Exclusive-Suspected Chinese hackers stole camera footage from African Union – memo

(China) Blacklist vs. ‘redlist’: What to know about China’s new corporate social credit score
https://fortune.com/2020/12/10/china-corporate-social-credit-system-cscs-blacklist-redlist/
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Excluded, abandoned: Children born under Islamic State era still paying heavy price
Charlotte Bruneau – Reuters: 10 December 2020

Between social stigmas, government bureaucracy and sometimes abandonment, thousands of children born to ISIS militants or under the ISIS regime are unable to live a normal life.


IS Built up Arsenal After ‘Red Flags’ Ignored: Study
Agence France-Presse: 8 December 2020

ISIS worked to build up a network of suppliers and technicians that provided the group with an extensive arsenal of weapons, according to a newly published study by the London-based Conflict Armament Research organization. Thanks to this arsenal, ISIS was continuously able to expand its areas of control in Iraq and Syria beginning in 2014.

https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/12/08/is-built-up-arsenal/

For more on this theme:

ISIS sows terror in North Sinai planting explosives in homes

Iraqi FM, ICRC discuss return of ISIS-linked children
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/041220204

Handling of ‘terrorists’ discussed with Rojava officials: Belgian delegation
https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/051220201

US offers $5 million reward for information on ISIS oil, antiquities trafficking
https://www.rudaw.net/english/world/03122020

Islamic State shadow follows families as Iraq closes camps

Kurdish Families Pay Islamic State Ransom to Free Loved Ones
https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/kurdish-families-pay-islamic-state-ransom-free-loved-ones

What does the MIT’s latest attack in Indonesia say about the group?

ISIS Followers Told to Kill American, French Civilians ‘Like Insects’ in Holiday Season

ISIS affiliate in Somalia declares war on Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabab
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Dushanbe Reinforces Border After Tajik Militants Appear In Video Fighting In Afghanistan
In early December, a 10-minute video appeared on social media purportedly showing Tajik insurgents fighting with the Taliban against Afghan government forces in Maymay, which borders Tajikistan. As a result, Tajikistan has deployed additional troops along its southern border with Afghanistan.

For more on this theme:
Nigeria likely to face food crisis after Boko Haram massacre: All you need to know

Rethinking Global Counterterrorist Financing
https://www.lawfareblog.com/rethinking-global-counterterrorist-financing

Is Africa overtaking the Middle East as the new jihadist battleground?

Time to consider talks with Boko Haram?
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/time-to-consider-talks-with-boko-haram

Hezbollah Accused Of Using European Countries For Money-Laundering Operations
https://www.the961.com/hezbollah-europe-money-laundering-operations/

Combatting Terrorism Amid The Pandemic
https://theaseanpost.com/article/combatting-terrorism-amid-pandemic

Factbox: The violence and insecurity affecting Nigeria

Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Target Nigeria's Highways

Joint Chiefs chairman meets with Taliban on peace talks

U.S. designates Bahrain-based group as terrorist, accusing it of having Iran backing

Jihadism in Francophone Western Indian Ocean Islands: Cases from Comoros, Réunion, and Mauritius
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

Tajikistan: Building Resilience to Radicalization amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic
*The World Bank: 14 December 2020*

The World Bank offers recommendations to Tajikistan on building resilience to radicalization, especially in the face of difficult economic and social pressures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Template for the Global South? Understanding the Promises and Pitfalls of Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism in Kenya
*Michael Jones – Royal United Services Institute: 17 December 2020*

The progress made with Kenya’s National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism and various subnational offshoots sets the country’s experience apart from similar efforts across the Global South. As a regional hub for Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism activities, Kenya also provides valuable lessons for practitioners.

For more on this theme:

**Enhanced Strategies Needed To Deal With Enduring Threat Of Radical Ideology – Analysis**

**New global hub to study factors driving radicalization and violent extremism**

**Mozambique Knew of Jihadists Five Years Before Attacks: President**

**Extreme radicalisation is happening on Facebook and YouTube – what can be done to stop it?**

**Why Africa has become the new jihadist battleground**

**The weapon we should be using against terrorists. No, it’s not just the gun**
https://theprint.in/pageturner/excerpt/the-weapon-we-should-be-using-against-terrorists-not-just-the-gun/564457/

**The Sudden Rise of Indian Tech Platforms: Are they Prepared for the Challenge of Online Extremism?**
IRREGULAR WARFARE: SOFT POWER

In Indonesia, Confucius Institutes Struggle to Dislodge Anti-Chinese Sentiment
Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat and M. Habib Pashya – The Diplomat: 17 December 2020

In recent years, China has greatly expanded its economic and political footholds in Indonesia. Beijing has also employed cultural diplomacy, including the establishment of Confucius Institutes throughout the archipelago. Despite their existence, however, Confucius Institutes have been unable to improve China’s image and minimize anti-China and anti-Chinese sentiment.


For more on this theme:

Russian aid in Syria: An underestimated instrument of soft power

Why China's vaccine diplomacy shouldn't be a high-profile charm offensive

IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

Facebook says Russian disinformation campaign targeted Africa and Middle East
Kevin Collier – NBC News: 15 December 2020

Russian misinformation trolls have targeted African voters on Facebook.

For more on this theme:

Poland, Lithuania are targets of cyber disinformation attack
https://apnews.com/article/technology-poland-lithuania-russia-hacking-4eaae5334d-d2403c37e8560e4de71219

EU, Russia, and the tug-of-war on disinformation
https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Russia/EU-Russia-and-the-tug-of-war-on-disinformation-207213

Russia to establish navy base in Sudan for at least 25 years
https://apnews.com/article/international-news-sudan-moscow-africa-russia-0e1932a384bba427e13e-590a4ac7a1f8