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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Latin America Makes Little Progress Against Corruption
Sean Doherty – InSight Crime: 2 February 2023
Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are stagnating in their struggle with corruption, with most unable or unwilling to challenge robust criminal networks that profit from longstanding graft, a major report has shown.

Somalia is the most corrupt country in the world
Faustine Ngila – Quartz: 2 February 2023
Somalia sits at the bottom of the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index by corruption watchdog Transparency International, which surveyed 180 countries. Terrorism and armed conflict have created the world's biggest breeding ground for corruption.
https://qz.com/somalia-is-the-most-corrupt-country-in-the-world-1850063626

For more on this theme:
EU corruption scandal: 2 lawmakers lose immunity amid probe

CPI 2022 for Western Europe & EU: Undue influence and fragmented anti-corruption measures hurt progress

Mauritania’s former president faces corruption charges in landmark trial

U.S. funds not misused in Ukraine, U.S. Treasury says amid corruption crackdown
https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-treasury-says-no-indication-that-us-funds-were-misused-ukraine-2023-01-31/

CPI 2022: Corruption as a fundamental threat to peace and security

South Africa’s dysfunctional universities: the consequences of corrupt decisions
https://theconversation.com/south-africas-dysfunctional-universities-the-consequences-of-corrupt-decisions-198677

In the Middle East and North Africa, corruption and violence fuel each other
**DRUG TRAFFICKING**

**Record Cocaine Seizures in Colombia as Government Negotiates with Traffickers**
Juan Diego Posada – InSight Crime: 3 February 2023

Colombia seized 671 tons of cocaine in 2022, worth more than $16 billion at U.S. wholesale prices. The haul for 2023 may yet be higher because of likely record levels of production, providing the government with a huge challenge as it seeks to negotiate with the country's criminal groups.


**EU sees drug crime as threatening as terrorism, says must fight on European level**
Charlotte Campenhout, Clement Rossignol and Christian Levaux – Reuters: 8 February 2023

The EU regards organized drug crime as threatening as terrorism and wants to tackle the fight against it on a European level, Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson said during a visit to Belgium's port of Antwerp, Europe’s main entrance for cocaine.


*For more on this theme:*

- *Crime gangs needed new ‘methods’ to import drugs during COVID pandemic*

- *Brazil pins murders of UK reporter, activist on alleged drug lord*

- *Otoniel Pleads Guilty: Farewell to Colombia’s Narco Old Guard*

- *Social Media Used to Recruit Drug Smugglers, Cyber Criminals*
  https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/crime-courts/20230202-88234/

- *The reality of the Taliban's war against narcotics*
  https://www.sundayguardianlive.com/world/reality-talibans-war-narcotics

- *UAE: Beware of random WhatsApp messages, they could be from drug dealers, say police*

- *UN Launches Training Program to Combat Maritime Drug Smuggling in Pakistan*

- *Spike in Afghan drug trade raises concern, government plans tighter vigil*
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Luxury at a cost: China’s involvement in environmental crime
Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime: 3 February 2023

Chinese criminal syndicates are involved in a number of environmental criminal markets at home and abroad. Despite a solid regulatory framework, authorities must step up efforts to curb the unlawful exploitation of natural resources.

https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/china-environmental-crime-ocindex/

How a Team of Eco-Warriors Are Protecting Odisha’s Similipal Tiger Reserve
Deepanwita Gita Niyogi – The Wire: 6 February 2023

A team of youngsters — designated as “protection assistants” — work with the forest department to prevent poaching and stop illegal timber logging in the Similipal National Park.

https://thewire.in/environment/how-a-team-of-eco-warriors-are-protecting-odishas-similipal-tiger-reserve

For more on this theme:
Silencing Science: How Indonesia Is Censoring Wildlife Research
https://e360.yale.edu/features/indonesia-silencing-orangutan-research

Nature Under Threat in Ecuador as Gold Miners Target National Park

Coast Guard: Illegal Fishing Has Surpassed Piracy as a Global Threat
https://news.usni.org/2023/01/19/coast-guard-illegal-fishing-has-surpassed-piracy-as-a-global-threat

Study aims to unmask fishing vessels, and owners, obscured by loopholes

China’s Rampant Illegal Fishing Is Endangering the Environment and the Global Economy

CJNG Control of Illegal Mining in Michoacán, Mexico, Claiming Indigenous Lives

Lebanese villagers try to stem illegal logging scourge

Liberian courts rubber-stamp export shipment of illegal logs

Changing circumstances turn ‘sustainable communities’ into deforestation drivers: Study

How gold mining in Brazil is connected to hundreds of deaths
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

**Practising digital osmosis: India’s role in the global splinternet**

Shimona Mohan and Tobias Scholz – Observer Research Foundation: 7 February 2023

Through digital osmosis, India attempts to balance profits from international engagements with national security considerations.


*For more on this theme:*

*(Global) Safer Internet Day 2023 — bolstering the fight to protect children online*

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/safer-internet-day-2023-bolstering-the-fight-to-protect-children-online/

*(U.S., Global) Security expert warns of AI tools’ potential threat to democracy*


*(Global) Experts Explain: How will the metaverse change our lives?*

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/metaverse-jeremy-bailenson-experts-explain/

INTERNET FREEDOM

**Twitter access restricted in Turkey, complicating rescue efforts**

Irem Koca – Toronto Star: 8 February 2023

The restriction sparked outrage on social media as Twitter had been the primary means of communication and coordination of rescue efforts after earthquakes hit 10 southeastern provinces and killed thousands.


*For more on this theme:*

*(Asia, Africa) Asians suffer internet censorship more than Africans — Report*


*(Global) Web blackouts don't just silence dissent — they hurt your wallet too*

https://cybernews.com/tech/web-blackouts-hurt-your-wallet/

*(Russia) Inside The Obscure Russian Agency That Censors The Internet: An RFE/RL Investigation*

https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-agency-internet-censorship/32262102.html

*(China) Apple takes down anonymous social media app Damus from China App Store*

CYBER STRATEGY AND STATECRAFT

US Cyber Diplomat Calls for Bolstering American Advantage in Global Tech Policy
Edward Graham – Nextgov: 2 February 2023

The head of the State Department’s Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy said that a more prominent U.S. focus on tech policy necessitates greater international engagement.


For more on this theme:

(Philippines) Digital transformation named as PH’s national priority

(GLOBAL) Digital diplomacy and cyber diplomacy swing the world of geopolitics

(Africa) Tech in Pandemic Response, But Many Left Behind: Lessons from Africa

(GLOBAL) India’s G20 Presidency: Decoding the Digital Technology Agenda
https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/indias-g20-presidency-decoding-the-digital-technology-agenda/

CYBER ATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Italy warns hackers targeting known server vulnerability
Reuters: 5 February 2023

Thousands of computer servers have been targeted by a global ransomware attack targeting VMware ESXi servers, Italy’s National Cybersecurity Agency said, warning organizations to take action to protect their systems.

https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-sounds-alarm-large-scale-computer-hacking-attack-2023-02-05/

For more on this theme:

(UK) Ransomware attack on data firm ION could take days to fix — sources
https://www.reuters.com/technology/ransomware-attack-data-firm-ion-could-take-days-fix-sources-2023-02-02/

(GLOBAL) ChatGPT May Already Be Used in Nation-State Cyber Attacks

(UK) UK Engineering Company Vesuvius Hit by Cyber Attack

(U.S.) Feds say cyberattack caused suicide helpline’s outage
CYBERCRIME

Interpol Will Fight Cyber Crime In The Virtual World Of The Metaverse
Dominic Kimani – Business 2 Community: 6 February 2023

In an interview with the BBC, Jurgen Stock, the secretary-general of Interpol, announced that it is working on how to solve metaverse crimes.


For more on this theme:

(Global) ChatGPT Is A ‘Powerful’ Tool For Cybercrime: Recorded Future

(Global) Government Sanctioned Cybercrime — What is the Lazarus Group?

(Global) The $10 Trillion Case For Decentralized Cybersecurity
https://www.forbes.com/sites/lawrencewintermeyer/2023/02/02/the-10-trillion-case-for-decentralized-cybersecurity/?sh=6e9eb95359da

(Global) Cybercrime Shows No Signs of Slowing Down
https://www.darkreading.com/zscaler/cybercrime-shows-no-signs-of-slowing-down

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

New challenges in protecting critical EU infrastructure
Frank Umbach – GIS: 6 February 2023

Attacks on the Nord Stream gas pipelines have highlighted the rising threats to Europe’s energy infrastructure and submarine cable networks.

https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/europe-critical-infrastructure/

For more on this theme:

(U.S., Global) Allies’ Critical Infrastructure — And Its Resilience — Are Essential to Deter Authoritarian Rivals

(Ukraine) How Ukraine’s Cyber Police fights fraud, scams, and attacks on critical infrastructure

(U.S.) Cybersecurity High-Risk Series: Challenges in Protecting Cyber Critical Infrastructure
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

**Why Taliban Rule in Afghanistan Could Strengthen the Islamic State**
*Farzad Ramezani Bonesh – European Eye on Radicalization: 6 February 2023*

After more than a year of the Taliban’s returned rule, it seems there has been a stabilization of the Islamic State group’s Afghanistan affiliate and its decentralization into cells and small groups.


**American Islamic State Emir Convicted on All Counts**
*Jeff Seldin – Voice of America: 8 February 2023*

A naturalized U.S. citizen who became so enamored with the Islamic State group that he abandoned his wife and child to join it in Syria — eventually rising to the rank of emir — faces life behind bars.

https://www.voanews.com/a/american-is-emir-convicted-on-all-counts/6954072.html

For more on this theme:

**CENTCOM Month in Review: The Fight Against ISIS in Iraq and Syria**


**UN designates Islamic State of Iraq and Levant in South-East Asia as global terrorist organization**


**Islamic State Khorasan: Global Jihad in a Multipolar World**


**Is Islamic State in Hind Province Regrouping?**

https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/is-islamic-state-in-hind-province-regrouping/

**Syrians fear Islamic State resurgence as Kurdish-led forces sweep Raqqa**


**End Near for Mindanao’s Islamist Militants?**

https://www.asiasentinel.com/p/end-near-dawlah-islamiyah-philippines

**US Calls for Redoubled Efforts to Fight Insurgents in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado**

Lack of jobs drives recruitment by armed groups in Africa: UN
AlJazeera: February 2023

The lack of employment — even more than religious belief — is driving people to join fast-growing militant groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to a report by the U.N. Development Program based on interviews with hundreds of former fighters.


For more on this theme:

JNIM Kidnappings Continue Across West Africa
https://jamestown.org/program/briefs-381/

Why Terrorist Organizations Use Human Trafficking

Al Qaeda in the Indian Sub-Continent: Still a Threat to India?

Northern Mali clans swear allegiance to JNIM

Boko Haram kidnappings signal expansion, desperation

How terrorism is spreading to Southern Nigeria through North Central — Research experts
https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/01/how-terrorism-is-spreading-to-southern-nigeria-through-north-central-research-experts/

Pakistan Cannot Defeat the Tehreek-i-Taliban
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/pakistan-cannot-defeat-tehreek-i-taliban-206139

Human rights must be defended in the fight against terrorism: UN chief

Countering Terrorism: 2023 and Beyond
https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/01/26/countering-terrorism-2023-and-beyond/

Terrorism and the media: a handbook for journalists
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247074

Why terrorism is a symptom of the problem Africa faces

The Resurgence of Terrorism in Pakistan
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

For more on this theme:

**Taliban Refill Afghan Jails**  

**Al-Qaeda threat, blowback for Pakistan increasing from an Afghanistan in chaos**  

**Somalia hosts regional summit to discuss fighting al-Shabab**  

**Twenty terrorist groups 'with foreign objectives' operating in Afghanistan**  

**Nigeria’s War on Terror**  
https://greydynamics.com/nigerias-war-on-terror/

**Becoming Hezbollah: The Party’s Evolution and Changing Roles**  
https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/crown-conversations/cc-16.html

**What’s behind the Pakistani Taliban’s insurgency?**  

**Indonesia's Vicious Cycle: Terrorist Convicts Making a Comeback?**  

**Virtual Violence: Terrorists, Criminals and Malign States Use Cyberspace as A Battlefield to Destabilize Society**  

**Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: Exploiting the climate crisis in Yemen**  

**SWJ Book Review – Enemies Near and Far: How Jihadist Groups Strategize, Plot, and Learn**  

**Sub-Saharan Africa is ‘new epicenter’ of extremism, says UN**  
https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-politics-organized-crime-africa-098f5a2cf237f92d3d1217fade5ca0b

**Ghana braces as Sahel war spills into Gulf of Guinea**  
CRIME AND CONFLICT

Violence Against Women Regular Tactic for Venezuela Criminal Groups
InSight Crime: 6 February 2023

The latest figures on femicide in Venezuela show organized crime is one of the main drivers of violence against women, with community leaders, family members of criminals and workers in illicit economies particularly vulnerable.

For more on this theme:

InSight Crime's 2022 Homicide Round-Up

Latin America's anti-femicide crusades need help

UN experts call for war crimes probe into Wagner group, gov't forces in Mali

In Evaluating Immunities before a Special Tribunal for Aggression Against Ukraine, the Type of Tribunal Matters

Russia hits civilian targets anew, EU officials visit Kyiv
https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-politics-government-european-union-30925e2a28638d1f971b6d10acd6f8

European Commission to Set Up Center for Prosecution of Russia’s ‘Crime of Aggression’

Helping Ukraine’s sex-crime survivors

ICC trial brings mixed feelings for Darfur Janjaweed victims
https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2023/02/08/Sudan-Darfur-ICC-Ali-Kushayb

Haiti in 2023: Political abyss and vicious gangs
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/02/03/haiti-in-2023-political-abyss-and-vicious-gangs/

Punish Putin’s Aggression
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Ukrainians are united in rejection of any compromise with the Kremlin

Mariia Zolkina – Atlantic Council; 6 February 2023

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine will pass the one-year mark with no end in sight to what is already the largest European conflict since World War II.


For more on this theme:

China to EU: Drop calls for Ukraine’s ‘complete victory’

Ukraine’s resilience and why it continues to fight

Ukrainian SBU: Protectors of the Homeland
https://greydynamics.com/ukrainer-sbu-protectors-of-the-homeland/

Kazakhstan’s Tokayev Is Playing With Fire at Home — and With Russia
https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/tokayev-kazakhstan-elections-protests-russia-politics/?share-code=90rwYZc3zo7V

The Risks of Russia’s Growing Dependence on the Yuan
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88926

Russia’s Second, Silent War Against Its Human Capital
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88983

What to know about the Wagner group, a ‘brutal’ Russian military group fighting in Ukraine

Russian presence at Paris Olympics risks normalizing Ukraine invasion

How to get the private sector involved in reconstructing Ukraine

What would happen if Sweden and Finland split up their NATO bids?

The Belarusian opposition can help defeat Putin in Ukraine
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Ukraine warns that Russia's major new offensive could begin on the 1-year anniversary of the war: 24 February

The second year of Russia's war: Scenarios for the Ukraine conflict in 2023

Sanctioning Evasion Network Supporting Russia's Military-Industrial Complex

One Year Later, Americans Still Stand by Ukraine

Estonian intelligence: Russia underestimated Ukraine’s cyber resilience

China Aids Russia's War in Ukraine, Trade Data Shows

Losing Crimea Would Escalate Russian-Ukraine Conflict, Former Defense Secretary Says

Why some EU countries in the east are still pro-Russia

Analysis: Ukraine’s new weapon will force a Russian shift

The end of the Russia-Ukraine war and the fall of Putin: A thought experiment
https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europblog/2023/02/03/the-end-of-the-russia-ukraine-war-and-the-fall-of-putins-a-thought-experiment/

Winners And Losers In The Russia-Ukraine Cyberwar — Analysis

One year on: Impact of the Ukraine war on global energy prices

What Russia Got Wrong: Can Moscow Learn From Its Failures in Ukraine?

War Can Help Ukraine's Economic Rebirth
https://cepa.org/article/war-can-help-ukraines-economic-rebirth/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Putin’s Enforcers Pour Into Occupied Ukraine
https://cepa.org/article/putins-russia-enforcers-pour-into-occupied-ukraine/

Ukraine’s Caverns Offer Europe Energy Security
https://cepa.org/article/ukraines-caverns-offer-europe-energy-security/

Ukraine’s War of No Return
https://cepa.org/article/ukraines-war-of-no-return/

Latvia Poised to Summon Conscripts as Russian Menace Grows

What would a ‘Marshall Plan’ for Ukraine look like?
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/marshall-plan-for-ukraine/

EU to launch platform to fight Russian, Chinese disinformation
https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-to-launch-platform-to-fight-russian-chinese-disinformation/

The Case for Caution on Crimea
https://warontherocks.com/2023/02/the-case-for-caution-on-crimea/

Abstaining in absentia: does SADC have a common position on Ukraine?
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/abstaining-in-absentia-does-sadc-have-a-common-position-on-ukraine

What Are the Kremlin’s Hopes for Its War Against Ukraine?
https://jamestown.org/program/what-are-the-kremlins-hopes-for-its-war-against-ukraine/

The Kremlin’s Narratives for Its War Against Ukraine
https://jamestown.org/program/the-kremlins-narratives-for-its-war-against-ukraine/