

THE MARSHALL CENTER

transnational weekly



A CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICE FROM THE MARSHALL CENTER

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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Estonia's Prime Minister Steps Down Under a Cloud

Andrew Higgins – The New York Times: 13 January 2021

Juri Ratas has resigned but denies any wrongdoing after a probe was opened into his ruling Center Party and its links with an Estonian businessman. A company owned by a party donor got a state loan with generous terms.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/world/europe/estonia-prime-minister-ratas-resigns.html>

Social engineering as a corruption risk

Kimberly Johns – World Bank: 7 January 2021

While technology has enabled remote work, remote schooling and remote government, it has also provided entry points for fraud and corruption. Technology designed to support communications, planning and tracking can be breached not only by hacking, but through social engineering, exploiting the vulnerability of people and leading to improper and criminal behavior.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/social-engineering-corruption-risk>

For more on this theme:

Romanian president approves corruption investigation against former PM

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-romania-corruption/romanian-president-approves-corruption-investigation-against-former-pm-idUSKBN2911S7>

Former Algeria premiers back on trial for corruption

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1789891/middle-east>

Deregulation law 'raises corruption risk' in Indonesia's forestry sector

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/01/indonesia-deregulation-omnibus-law-corruption-risk/>

The future of Vietnam's anti-corruption drive

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/01/12/the-future-of-vietnams-anti-corruption-drive/>

Myanmar Aviation Chief Charged with Corruption

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-aviation-chief-charged-with-corruption.html>

Former Almaty Mayor, Wife – Wanted On Corruption Charges – Given Asylum In Switzerland

<https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-almaty-mayor-wife-switzerland-asylum/31038564.html>

Down but not out: Corruption in South Africa and the arrest of ANC's no. 2

<https://africanarguments.org/2021/01/down-but-not-out-corruption-in-south-africa-and-the-arrest-of-ancs-no-2/>

New anti-corruption scheme to be launched on Jan. 26

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/new-anti-corruption-scheme-to-be-launched-on-jan-26/article33554005.ece>

DRUG TRAFFICKING

US prosecutors say Honduras President helped send cocaine to Americans

Caitlin Hu – CNN: 10 January 2021

U.S. prosecutors have filed motions saying that Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández took bribes from drug traffickers and had the country's Armed Forces protect a cocaine laboratory and shipments to the United States.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/10/world/honduras-president-drug-accusation-intl/index.html>

The Latin American Drug Cartel You Haven't Heard of

The Crime Report: 11 January 2021

Over the past 30 years, the Primeiro Comando da Capital has emerged as one of the most powerful criminal organizations in South America.

<https://thecrimereport.org/2021/01/11/the-latin-american-drug-cartel-you-havent-heard-of/>

For more on this theme:

Record amount of drugs seized in 2020 despite Covid-19 pandemic

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/record-amount-of-drugs-seized-in-2020-despite-covid-19-pandemic-1.4448034>

Why Courtroom Corruption Has Costa Rica Concerned

<https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/courtroom-corruption-costa-rica/>

GameChangers 2020: The Resurgence of the Central American Cocaine Highway

<https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/resurgence-central-american-cocaine-highway/>

Hezbollah denies any role in production of amphetamines

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-55602726>

DarkMarket, reportedly one of the biggest dark web marketplaces, shut down by authorities

<https://www.neowin.net/news/darkmarket-reportedly-one-of-the-biggest-dark-web-marketplaces-shut-down-by-authorities>

Time for a smarter approach to counternarcotics

<https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/533288-time-for-a-smarter-approach-to-counternarcotics>

Navy takes control of Mexican seaports to stem flow of synthetic drugs, precursor chemicals

<https://www.localsyr.com/border-report-tour/navy-takes-control-of-mexican-seaports-to-stem-flow-of-synthetic-drugs-precursor-chemicals/>

Mombasa detectives change tack in fight against drugs

<https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/coast/2021-01-07-mombasa-detectives-change-tack-in-fight-against-drugs/>

Amsterdam Wants to Restrict Tourists From Its Marijuana Shops

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-08/amsterdam-wants-to-restrict-tourists-from-its-marijuana-shops>

TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

'Zoohackathon' innovators seek to stop wildlife trafficking

Leigh Hartman – Share America: 13 January 2021

The U.S. State Department's fifth annual Zoohackathon convened university students, programmers and wildlife experts to devise innovative technological solutions to the worldwide problem of wildlife trafficking.

<https://share.america.gov/zoohackathon-innovators-seek-stop-wildlife-trafficking/>

Region sets up site to track, fight wildlife crimes

Kennedy Senelwa – The East African: 8 January 2021

East African countries have set up a microsite to track wildlife trafficking and affiliated crimes in the region and will also collaborate in supporting the enforcement and prosecution of wildlife crimes.

<https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/region-sets-up-site-to-track-fight-wildlife-crimes-3250952>

For more on this theme:

NOAA and USAID join forces to help nations combat illegal fishing practices

<https://www.noaa.gov/news/noaa-and-usaid-join-forces-to-help-nations-combat-illegal-fishing-practices>

Galapagos Island guides struggle to rescue sharks from illegal fishing lines

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/galapagos-island-guides-struggle-rescue-150010780.html>

Shell Companies in Fishing Industry Get New Attention

<https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/shell-companies-in-fishing-industry-get-new-attention/>

Stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade: How artificial intelligence has become the latest conservation tool

<https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/ai-technology-wildlife-conservation-gabon-b1783812.html>

Photos: Africa's nature parks are in the midst of a pandemic-induced conservation crisis

<https://qz.com/africa/1954703/africas-safari-parks-face-covid-induced-conservation-crisis/>

Brazil environmental fines fall 20% as deforestation soars

<https://www.reuters.com/article/brazil-environment/brazil-environmental-fines-fall-20-as-deforestation-soars-idUSL4N2JN2K2>

Illegal wildlife trade finds a new marketplace—social media

<https://kathmandupost.com/climate-environment/2021/01/09/illegal-wildlife-trade-finds-a-new-marketplace-social-media>

New ad makes a powerful plea to end rhino horn use in Vietnam

https://blog.humanesociety.org/2021/01/new-ad-makes-a-powerful-plea-to-end-rhino-horn-use-in-vietnam.html?credit=blog_post_011321_id11926

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Cambodia adds human trafficking lessons to schools

Matt Blomberg – Reuters: 24 December 2020

Human trafficking has been added to the school syllabus in Cambodia as students return to classes for 2021. Both primary and secondary pupils will be taught laws, prevention and the different types of human trafficking that range from debt bondage to enforced prostitution and labor.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-slavery-education-trfn-idUSKBN28YOWL>

For more on this theme:

Thailand's Prime Minister Orders Crackdown on Officials Abetting Human Traffickers

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/thailands-prime-minister-orders-crackdown-officials-abetting-human-traffickers>

DOD Office Works to Prevent Trafficking in Persons

<https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2465985/dod-office-works-to-prevent-trafficking-in-persons/>

Traffickers Exploit High Unemployment Rate in Myanmar

<https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/traffickers-exploit-high-unemployment-rate-myanmar.html>

UNHCR calls for EU to ensure a new chapter for refugee protection

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/1/5ffc80f74/unhcr-calls-eu-ensure-new-chapter-refugee-protection.html>

ORGANIZED CRIME

Italy puts over 320 on trial for 'ndrangheta mob ties

Andrea Rosa and Frances D'Emilio – The Associated Press: 13 January 2021

A large trial has opened in southern Italy against the 'ndrangheta crime syndicate, arguably the world's richest criminal organization that quietly amassed power in Italy as the Sicilian Mafia lost its influence. The 'ndrangheta's various worldwide illicit and legitimate enterprises bring in an estimated \$61 billion per year for the syndicate.

<https://apnews.com/article/italy-trial-ndrangheta-mob-ties-5a3a4a024b934bdda3b9d85f8f910f3d>

For more on this theme:

Counterfeit Money Trade Thrives in Brazil Amid Pandemic

<https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/brazil-counterfeit-money-trade/>

PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET FREEDOM

Buying Silence: The Price of Internet Censorship in China

Ryan Fedasiuk – *The Jamestown Foundation*: 12 January 2021

The Chinese government was authorized to spend more than \$6.6 billion on monitoring and guiding public opinion online.

<https://jamestown.org/program/buying-silence-the-price-of-internet-censorship-in-china/>

For more on this theme:

(Uganda) Uganda cuts internet hours before election

<https://www.africanews.com/2021/01/13/uganda-cuts-internet-hours-before-election/>

(China) ‘Great Firewall Of China’: Beijing Plans Stringent Norms & Massive Crackdown To Curb Internet ‘Misuse’

<https://eurasianimes.com/great-firewall-of-china-beijing-plans-stringent-norms-massive-crackdown-to-curb-internet-misuse/>

(Hong Kong) A Hong Kong Website Gets Blocked, Raising Censorship Fears

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/technology/hong-kong-website-blocked.html>

CYBER STATECRAFT

We must bolster our cyber war defences

Francis Galbally – *The Australian*: 12 January 2021

To meet the cyber challenge that Australians are facing will require an acknowledgment of the massive task ahead, the appropriate funding and resourcing by government, and the cooperation of government, corporations and infrastructure providers.

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/commentary/we-must-bolster-our-cyber-war-defences/news-story/4714cddec9832d9022280486b87b488c>

For more on this theme:

(Global) The Rise Of International Hacker Networks

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2020/12/21/the-rise-of-international-hacker-networks/>

(Zambia) Zambia’s cabinet approves cyber security blueprint

<https://africa.cgtn.com/2021/01/12/zambias-cabinet-approves-cyber-security-blueprint/>

(Serbia) Serbia leading in cybersecurity development and application – report

<https://www.smart-energy.com/industry-sectors/cybersecurity/serbia-leading-in-cybersecurity-development-and-application-report/>

CYBER ATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Hackers used 4 zero-days to infect Windows and Android devices

Dan Goodin – Ars Technica: 13 January 2021

Project Zero, Google's zero-day bug-hunting team, revealed a hacking campaign coordinated by "a highly sophisticated actor" and targeting Windows and Android users with zero-day exploits.

<https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2021/01/hackers-used-4-0days-to-infect-windows-and-android-devices/>

For more on this theme:

(EU, Global) Some data from last month's cyber attack leaked online, says EU drugs regulator

<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN29H210>

(U.S.) New Sunspot malware found while investigating SolarWinds hack

<https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-sunspot-malware-found-while-investigating-solarwinds-hack/>

(Global) United Nations data breach exposed over 100k UNEP staff records

<https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/united-nations-data-breach-exposed-over-100k-unep-staff-records/>

(Global) APT27 Turns to Ransomware

<https://shared-public-reports.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/APT27+turns+to+ransomware.pdf>

CYBER CRIME

Economic uncertainty to shape cyber crime in Africa

ITWeb: 12 January 2021

"Thanks to the increased connectedness of people, the rise in unemployment will not only see a spike in traditional crime, but this will also extend to the digital environment – something we are already seeing," says Lehan van den Heever, enterprise cyber security advisor for Kaspersky in Africa.

<https://www.itweb.co.za/content/VgZeyqJo1EAvdjX9>

For more on this theme:

(Moldova) Moldova's Cyber Crime Defences Questioned After DarkNet Sting

<https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/13/moldovas-cyber-crime-defences-questioned-after-darknet-sting/>

(Global) Cybercrime peaked astronomically in 2020: Learnings and predictions for 2021

<https://betanews.com/2021/01/13/cybercrime-learnings-and-predictions-2021/>

(Brazil) Brazil continues to be a hotspot for cybercrime – Accenture

<https://www.smart-energy.com/industry-sectors/cybersecurity/brazil-continues-to-be-a-hotspot-for-cyber-crime-accenture/>

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND INFORMATION SHARING

A Cyber Opportunity: Priorities for the First National Cyber Director

Mark Montgomery and Robert Morgus – War on the Rocks: 7 January 2021

While the U.S. is moving in the right direction, there is much work to do to accelerate the pace of the improvements, especially by way of improved security and public/private collaboration.

<https://warontherocks.com/2021/01/a-cyber-opportunity-priorities-for-the-first-national-cyber-director/>

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) National Maritime Cybersecurity Plan Includes New Contract Mandates, Intel Sharing

<https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/maritime-security/national-maritime-cybersecurity-plan-includes-new-contract-mandates-intel-sharing/>

(U.S.) Agencies Propose Faster, Broader Reporting of Cyber Incidents for Banks

<https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2021/01/agencies-propose-faster-broader-reporting-cyber-incidents-banks/171326/>

(U.S.) Cyber Intelligence Facility in Port of Los Angeles to Thwart Maritime Threats

<https://www.natlawreview.com/article/cyber-intelligence-facility-port-los-angeles-to-thwart-maritime-threats>

MASS SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

China, world's worst abuser of internet freedom, pushes censorship and surveillance to unprecedented levels

Manish Shukla – Zee News: 7 January 2021

China's ruling Communist Party does not permit its citizens the same freedoms as other nations, and the country was deemed the world's worst abuser of internet freedom for the sixth consecutive year by Freedom House.

<https://zeenews.india.com/world/china-worlds-worst-abuser-of-internet-freedom-pushes-censorship-and-surveillance-to-unprecedented-levels-2334537.html>

For more on this theme:

(Global) Microsoft, Google, Cisco, VMware join legal battle against hacking company NSO

<https://www.reuters.com/article/facebook-nso-cyber-idUSL1N2J12KG>

PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

ISIS, Reborn: The Islamic State's African Revival is a Lethal Blind Spot

Jordan Cope – The National Interest: 13 January 2021

With four burgeoning safe havens, ISIS has revived itself in Sub-Saharan Africa and could be deadlier than ever. Embedding at the cross borders of failing countries, ISIS has achieved near untouchability, the author argues.

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/isis-reborn-islamic-state's-african-revival-lethal-blind-spot-176301>

What do we know about Islamic State group in the DR Congo?

Djamel Belayachi – France 24: 24 January 2021

The armed Islamist group Allied Democratic Forces carried out at least two attacks on villages in the area of Béni in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo since December 28. One of the attacks was claimed by the branch of ISIS in Central Africa. What are the links between these two groups, and is ISIS' influence growing in the region?

<https://observers.france24.com/en/africa/20210111-video-adf-beni-dr-congo-islamic-state>

For more on this theme:

ISIS using 'Discord', 'Rocket Chat' messenger, security agencies alert govt

<https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-isis-using-discord-game-rocket-chat-messenger-indian-security-agencies-alert-government-2866005>

Rising in the East: The Evolution of the Islamic State in the Philippines

<https://ctc.usma.edu/rising-in-the-east-the-evolution-of-the-islamic-state-in-the-philippines/>

Three Foreign Nationals Charged with Conspiring to Provide Material Support to ISIS

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/three-foreign-nationals-charged-conspiring-provide-material-support-isis>

Monitor Reports Strong Return of ISIS to Syria's Desert Badia

<https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2732501/monitor-reports-strong-return-isis-syria's-desert-badia>

Afghanistan foils ISIS plan to assassinate the top US envoy to Kabul

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/13/middleeast/isis-assassination-attempt-us-intl/index.html>

ISIS Wives at Syria's Al-Hol-Camp Complain about Struggles of Living in 'Isolated State'

<https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2738936/isis-wives-syria's-al-hol-camp-complain-about-struggles-living-'isolated-state'>

ISIS has 'regained strength' in Iraq, Syria: French armed forces minister

<https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/110120211>

France repatriates seven 'particularly vulnerable' ISIS-linked children from Rojava

<https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/130120211>

TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

The Iran-al-Qaida Axis

U.S. Department of State: 12 January 2021

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused Iran of actively supporting al-Qaida, saying the country now serves as a “home base” for the terror group and provides operatives with travel documents and logistical support.

<https://www.state.gov/the-iran-al-qaida-axis/>

Al Qaeda and the Islamic State’s rivalry in South Asia

*Mohammed Sinan Siyech and Suraj Ganesan – Observer Research Foundation:
11 January 2021*

Terrorist group rivalries, which normally come with the burden of increased volatility, have been useful to the peace of South Asia, given the differing trajectories on the part of al-Qaida and ISIS. It is up to security agencies to understand how best to capitalize on these differences and weaken such groups in the long term.

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/al-qaeda-and-the-islamic-states-rivalry-in-south-asia/>

For more on this theme:

Terrorist Designation of Abd al-Aziz Malluh Mirjirash al-Muhammadawi

<https://www.state.gov/terrorist-designation-of-abd-al-aziz-malluh-mirjirash-al-muhammadawi/>

How Qaeda-Friendly GSIM Became the Sahel’s Leading Jihadists

<https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/01/11/gsim-leading-jihadists-sahel/>

Is Al-Qaeda affiliate expanding attacks beyond Syrian town of Idlib?

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/01/syria-hurras-al-din-idlib-raqqa-attack-islamic-state.html>

If Ayman al-Zawahiri is really dead, what’s next for al Qaeda?

<https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/if-ayman-al-zawahiri-really-dead-whats-next-al-qaeda>

Parents agonise as their children join Al-Shabaab

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202101130274.html>

387 Days of Power: How Al-Qaeda Seized, Held and Ultimately Lost a Yemeni City

<https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/12247>

Cameroon Says Boko Haram, Separatists on Offensive

<https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-says-boko-haram-separatists-offensive>

With the Expansion of Boko Haram, Nigeria Faces an Increasingly Transnational Threat

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/29336/with-the-expansion-of-boko-haram-nigeria-faces-an-increasingly-transnational-threat>

Boko Haram blocks Lake Chad trade routes

<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/boko-haram-blocks-lake-chad-trade-routes>

RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

UN official: Terrorists using pandemic to stoke extremism

Edith M. Lederer – The Associated Press: 12 January 2021

Vladimir Voronkov, the head of the United Nations' counterterrorism office warned that terrorists are taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic and appealing to new "racially, ethnically and politically motivated violent extremist groups."

<https://apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-coronavirus-pandemic-united-nations-terrorism-united-states-71fe8fc4b22317609d8d9c131c297582>

For more on this theme:

From Separatism to Salafism: Militancy on the Swahili Coast

<https://www.cfr.org/blog/separatism-salafism-militancy-swahili-coast>

Mainstream gender in countering violent extremism interventions

<https://www.the-star.co.ke/opinion/2021-01-08-mainstream-gender-in-countering-violent-extremism/>

IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

China Covered Up Pandemic, Continues Crackdown on COVID-19 'Rumors'

Radio Free Asia: 13 January 2021

At the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the Chinese government withheld crucial information from the public, underreported cases, downplayed the severity of the infection, and dismissed the likelihood of transmission between humans, according to an international rights group.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/crackdown-01132021105640.html>

For more on this theme:

Treasury Takes Further Action Against Russian-linked Actors

<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1232>

China's Double Standard for Diplomatic Speech Online Sparks a Global Backlash

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29340/in-china-censorship-of-foreign-diplomats-ramps-up-sparking-a-global-backlash>