

22 January 2023

2 PEOPLE IN THE UK WHO WERE IMPORTING AND DISTRIBUTING COUNTERFEIT SHOES HAVE BEEN ISSUED CONFISCATION ORDERS WITH A COMBINED TOTAL OF £269,000

On 19 January, Securing Industry reported that the pair ran a business known as Apple Footwear Ltd and that police seized 280,000 pairs of counterfeit shoes from a warehouse and retail premises owned by one of them in 2019.

https://www.securindustry.com/clothing-and-accessories/uk-counterfeiters-have-ill-gotten-gains-confiscated/s107/a15046/?fbclid=IwAR09I662SVn5gPr7QDYf7uEqIMbzy_MUI5Dx3tWS2T3W-zDRkv4GOEb7V20#.Y8yVDMnMKUk

PANAMA: COLÓN FREE ZONE REJECTS REPORTS THAT IT IS A HUB FOR GOLD SMUGGLING

On 21 January, accusations by the OECD that the Colon Free Zone (ZLC) serves as a transit for gold smuggling from other countries in the region, have been strongly rejected. A OECD report entitled "Free Zones and Illicit Gold Flows in Latin America and the Caribbean", published in December, said that the country is "an important transit center for a series of goods, including smuggled gold from other countries in the region".

<https://www.newsroompanama.com/news/free-zone-rejects-reports-that-it-is-a-hub-for-gold-smuggling>

FREE TRADE ZONES AND ILLICIT GOLD FLOWS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The OECD report was published on 16 December and says that high-risk gold originating in Latin America and the Caribbean is often laundered within the region before advancing to destination markets. The report examines the risks and vulnerabilities linked to financial crimes in gold trade through FTZ, focusing on Colombia, Panama, and the Dominican Republic.

<https://www.oecd.org/publications/free-trade-zones-and-illicit-gold-flows-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-7536db96-en.htm>

THE US IMPORTS URANIUM FROM RUSSIA. WHAT IF SANCTIONS END THAT?

On 21 January, Stars & Stripes reported that Russia's state-owned nuclear power conglomerate, Rosatom, is suspected of supplying the Russian arms industry with components, technology and raw materials for missile fuel. There are concerns that the EU and US might place sanctions on Rosatom, which exports uranium for use in nuclear reactors. US reliance on Russian nuclear fuel is substantial, but US companies have some options if Rosatom is hit with sanctions.

<https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2023-01-21/us-russian-uranium-imports-8842240.html>

CUSTOM OFFICIALS SEEING SPIKE IN EGG SMUGGLING AT THE US-MEXICO BORDER AS PRICES SOAR

On 21 January, WHIO TV reported that officials at the US-Mexico border are reportedly seeing a spike in egg smuggling into the US due to soaring prices following an outbreak of the avian flu. Importing raw eggs and poultry from Mexico into the US is prohibited. It is said that more and more Americans are crossing into Mexico to buy raw eggs due to the increasing prices in the US. <https://www.whio.com/news/trending/custom-officials-seeing-spike-egg-smuggling-us-mexico-border-prices-soar/3U45UZ6MOZFERDD7P7G5HSDQYA/>

UK: ICAEW RAISES CONCERNS OVER REGISTER OF OVERSEAS ENTITIES REGULATIONS AMENDMENT

On 19 January, the Institute for Chartered Accountants in England & Wales commented on new regulations that address some of the practical difficulties identified after commencement of the Register, and amends certain provisions relating to the verification of information in the 2022 Regulations. The ICAEW expresses concerns around the criminal liability firms may be subject to when offering their services for verification – see <https://www.icaew.com/insights/viewpoints-on-the-news/2022/oct-2022/economic-crime-bill-2-what-it-means-for-you> – and does not believe that the amendment as it stands sufficiently addresses these concerns, particularly concerning strict legal liability for the provider of verification services. <https://www.icaew.com/insights/viewpoints-on-the-news/2023/jan-2023/ICAEW-raises-concerns-over-ROE-amendment>

WHY RED FLAGS THAT SUGGEST MATERIAL FRAUD ARE SO HARD TO SPOT

On 13 January, an Insight from the Institute for Chartered Accountants in England & Wales says that while fraud can be somewhat of a grey area, there are situations that auditors should scrutinise in particular. However, it says, there are red flags that may indicate material fraud in financial accounts, albeit they are often hard to spot. <https://www.icaew.com/insights/viewpoints-on-the-news/2023/jan-2023/Why-red-flags-that-suggest-material-fraud-are-so-hard-to-spot>

MINING AND METALS IN 2023

On 19 January, White & Case published an article following a survey of industry participants, with 156 senior decision-makers sharing their thoughts for the year ahead. The respondents paint a

mixed picture of what the industry expects. Inflation and geopolitics have overtaken ESG as the biggest concerns for 2023, while higher energy costs, shifting supply chains, and climate-related regulation and activism still worry businesses. There is surprisingly little agreement on what the economic outlook is, how market players will respond, or what will be the pervasive theme for the year ahead.

<https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/mining-metals-2023-lifting-fog-uncertainty>

KOSOVO IS A COUNTRY, AND A COUNTRY MEANS A STATE, RULES THE EUROPEAN COURT

On 20 January, a post on the European Journal of International Law reported that, on 17 January, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled in a case that that Kosovo could be considered as a country, noting that the EU, on behalf of all Member States, had already agreed to enter into international agreements with Kosovo when it had signed, among others, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. It also notes that Kosovo has joined a number of international organisations without necessarily altering its bilateral relations with states that do not recognise it as a country.

<https://www.ejiltalk.org/kosovo-is-a-country-and-a-country-means-a-state-rules-the-court-of-justice-of-the-european-union/>

WHAT NEXT FOR NORTHERN AFRICA'S CONFLICT ZONES?

On 22 January, Eurasia Review offered an analysis of the situation, saying that West Africa, and the Sahel region in particular, represent serious security concerns in a global context. France is pulling out of francophone Africa and the gap this leaves is being filled by an assortment of new and old players who seek influence.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/22012023-what-next-for-northern-africas-conflict-zones-analysis/>

MINE USE CONTINUES AS LANDMINE BAN TREATY MARKS ANNIVERSARY

The Arms Control Association says that Russia has used at least 7 types of anti-personnel mines since it invaded Ukraine in February, and noted an escalation in landmine use by Myanmar, especially around infrastructure such as energy pipelines and mobile phone towers. It says that new use of landmines by non-state armed actors in at least 5 countries, including the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, and Myanmar. It is said that, despite the challenges of new use by a small number of non-state actors and contamination remaining in more than 50 countries globally, the 1997 treaty is still widely considered a success, with 164 countries, including every NATO member except for the US, as states-parties. Those parties collectively have destroyed more than 55 million stockpiled landmines.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-01/news/mine-use-continues-ban-treaty-marks-anniversary>

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HAS VOTED TO WIDEN THE SCOPE OF PROPOSED REGULATION DESIGNED TO PREVENT THE MISUSE OF SHELL COMPANIES

On 17 January, ICIJ reported that the EU Parliament had adopted a report by its Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs that suggested amendments to a proposed EU Directive that introduces new criteria to identify entities in the EU that are solely used to obtain tax advantages. The amendment lowers the thresholds below which companies are exempt from the reporting requirements, and further details penalties for entities that fail to comply with the new regulation, including those with zero or low income. It also clarifies that “there can be valid reasons for using companies with minimal economic substance”. However, it also notes that the Directive requires unanimity in the EU Council for its adoption and negotiations are ongoing.

<https://www.icij.org/investigations/pandora-papers/european-parliament-votes-to-expand-proposed-rules-targeting-shell-companies-after-pandora-papers-highlighted-their-role-in-tax-evasion/>

VENEZUELA'S POLICE REFORM UNLIKELY TO HALT CORRUPT TIES TO ORGANISED CRIME

On 18 January, Insight Crime reported that President Nicolas Maduro has announced a police reform plan that, on the surface, could appear to be a blueprint for a police state. If enacted, it says, it would achieve little more than flooding the streets with easily-corruptible police forces. The proposal would more than double the size of its national police force, the Bolivarian National Police, increasing the number of officers from approximately 44,000 to 100,000. There are also plans to create a national industry dedicated to arming and equipping the PNB, including setting up a new weapons factory.

<https://insightcrime.org/news/venezuela-police-reform-corrupt-ties-organized-crime/>

US: ART COLLECTOR SPENT \$118,000 ON 400-YEAR-OLD WOODBLOCKS AND ALLEGEDLY GOT FAKES

On 18 January, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that an art collector in Pennsylvania spent about \$118,000 on centuries-old woodblocks but received fakes, it is claimed in a lawsuit. Now, the sellers in Hawaii are facing charges of fraud and money laundering. The woodblock art pieces were sold on eBay from 2013 to 2016. The article details other sales of allegedly fakes.

<https://www.star-telegram.com/news/nation-world/national/article271339607.html>

JUVENTUS (AND OTHER CLUBS) ACCUSED OF INCREASING THE MARKET VALUE OF PLAYERS TO GENERATE MORE REVENUE – CLUB HAS 15 POINTS DEDUCTED

On 20 January, La Estrella de Panama reported on the case in Italy in which the Juventus football club faces the deduction of 15 points this season for the case of capital gains and irregularities in some transfers. In addition, 11 directors of the club will be sanctioned and 8 other clubs (Sampdoria, Pro Vercelli, Genoa, Parma, Pisa, Empolia, Novara and Pescara), with their respective coaches and managers, acquitted.

<https://www.laestrella.com.pa/deportes/futbol/230120/juventus-sancionado-15-puntos-caso-plusvalias>

PANAMA DENIES “HELPING” IRAN; SAYS IT HAS CANCELLED REGISTRY TO 136 IRAN-LINKED VESSELS

On 22 January, Insurance Marine News reported that Panama’s vessel registry has withdrawn its flag from 136 ships linked to Iran’s state oil company over the past 4 years, the country’s maritime authority AMP revealed. One-fifth of the 678 ships for which AMP withdrew flags for various reasons since 2019 were Iran-linked, an AMP spokesperson said. Panama has the world’s largest vessel registry, providing its flag to about 8,650 ships.

<https://insurancemarineneews.com/insurance-marine-news/panama-denies-helping-iran-says-it-has-cancelled-registry-to-136-iran-linked-vessels/>

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/KolvM842y>

