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Sent: Friday, February 3, 2023 8:00 AM
To: Ingram, Diane
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Executive Insight Brief



Executive Insight Brief

February 3, 2023

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Worth reading: [Japan's New National Security Posture and Taiwan's Security: Japan's Constitution is Not a Suicide Pact](#), by TRG Senior Advisor Wallace "Chip" Gregson

Aerospace & Defense

[Air Force general predicts war with China in 2025, tells officers to get ready \(NBC News\)](#)

A four-star Air Force general sent a memo on Friday to the officers he commands that predicts the U.S. will be at war with China in two years and tells them to get ready to prepare by firing "a clip" at a target, and "aim for the head." In the memo sent Friday and

obtained by NBC News, Gen. Mike Minihan, head of Air Mobility Command, said, "I hope I am wrong. My gut tells me we will fight in 2025." Air Mobility Command has nearly 50,000 service members and nearly 500 planes and is responsible for transport and refueling. Minihan said in the memo that because both Taiwan and the U.S. will have presidential elections in 2024, the U.S. will be "distracted," and Chinese President Xi Jinping will have an opportunity to move on Taiwan. He lays out his goals for preparing, including building "a fortified, ready, integrated, and agile Joint Force Maneuver Team ready to fight and win inside the first island chain." The signed memo is addressed to all air wing commanders in Air Mobility Command and other Air Force operational commanders, and orders them to report all major efforts to prepare for the China fight to Minihan by Feb. 28. After publication of this article, a defense department official said, "These comments are not representative of the department's view on China."

[How arming Ukraine is stretching the US defense industry](#)

[NDAA topline 'will be as big as it needs to be.' Rogers says \(Politico\)](#)

The new House Armed Services Committee chair says he's placing no limits on how much Pentagon spending the panel will propose in upcoming defense policy legislation — even as members of his own party push for cuts. Rep. Mike Rogers said in an interview Wednesday that he'll aim to authorize as much money as needed to counter China and Russia and build up the industrial base, while eyeing savings within the Pentagon budget. The Alabama Republican said the topline of the annual National Defense Authorization Act will be "whatever the number is to meet that threat." Rogers, who has publicly endorsed annual targets of up to 5 percent inflation-adjusted growth for the military, is taking the budget stance as defense hawks seek to preserve Pentagon spending amid a push for cuts. Rogers said he and the panel's top Democrat, Rep. Adam Smith (Wash.), agree on the approach of a threat-based topline. Congress has boosted President Joe Biden's defense spending proposals by tens of billions of dollars in consecutive years, with both parties closing ranks to rebuke the administration's plans. House Republicans are pushing to cap discretionary spending at fiscal 2022 levels and are pressing Biden and Democrats to concede cuts in return for an increase in the government's borrowing limit. Yet many top GOP leaders have argued the Pentagon should be spared from cuts. Some, including Speaker Kevin McCarthy haven't completely taken defense off the table, and have raised the prospect of cutting waste. Rogers said his panel would look to trim what lawmakers view as unnecessary spending, name-checking "woke" personnel policies Republicans have dinged the Pentagon over. He also said the panel would eye older weapons that won't be useful in a high-end potential fight with China.

[Ukraine can't retake Crimea soon, Pentagon tells lawmakers in classified briefing](#)

[U.S. Expected to Send Ukraine Longer-Range Smart Bombs in Next Aid Package \(WSJ\)](#)

The next batch of U.S. military aid for Ukraine that could be announced as soon as Friday is expected to include longer-range smart bombs for the first time, people familiar with the matter said. The new smart weapon is a Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bomb, or GLSDB, a precision-guided 250-pound bomb that is strapped to a rocket. It has a range of 94 miles, which is farther than any bomb the U.S. has so far provided to Ukraine. The expected delivery of longer-range weapons comes as the U.S. and European allies have moved to provide modern battle tanks and other advanced weaponry to Ukraine ahead of an expected Russian offensive. The U.S. has pledged to provide Ukraine with more than \$27 billion in military aid. The GLSDB can be fired from rocket-launchers such as the HIMARS system already supplied by the U.S. to Ukraine. The bomb is equipped with wings allowing it to glide to its target and a rocket motor to give it extra range. The GLSDB would be supplied through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which funds the acquiring or building of new weapons and systems rather than pulling from U.S. stockpiles. USAI-funded equipment usually takes longer to reach Ukraine than weapons and equipment in existing U.S. stockpiles.

Budget & Appropriations

[Social Security, Medicare Cuts Sidelined in Debt-Ceiling Talks \(WSJ\)](#)

Republicans are backing away from proposals to reduce spending on Social Security and Medicare as they enter talks with Democrats over raising the nation's borrowing limit, sidelining for now a politically perilous fight over how to best firm up the finances of the popular benefit programs. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.) has said he wants to slash federal spending in exchange for voting to raise the debt ceiling, but in recent days he stressed publicly and privately that he isn't seeking cuts to Social Security and Medicare. Democrats for weeks have pressed Republicans to provide more specifics of what they plan to cut, while warning against entitlement-eligibility changes some GOP lawmakers had sought to tie to a debt-limit deal. Following a meeting with President Biden on Wednesday, Mr. McCarthy reiterated that Social Security and Medicare, which account for large and growing chunks of the budget, were off the table in debt-ceiling discussions. He also threw cold water on the idea of a commission to recommend cuts to the programs. Mr. Biden insisted again Wednesday he wanted a debt-limit increase without conditions, though he says he is willing to negotiate separately over how to get the \$31.4 trillion national debt under control. He had previously accused Republicans of wanting to gut Social Security and Medicare, while GOP lawmakers have said changes are needed to ensure the programs' future. The partisan wrangling underscores the difficulty of finding a legislative solution to the stark long-term financial challenges facing both programs, which provide retirement and healthcare benefits to seniors. Overhauling Social Security and Medicare carries such risk—for Democrats who favor raising taxes and for Republicans eyeing cuts to future benefits—that it has become known as the third rail of American politics, threatening to zap any politician who tries to touch it.

[Here's how the debt crisis could end – if Biden-McCarthy talks fail](#)

[White House to release budget proposal on March 9 \(The Hill\)](#)

The White House will release its budget proposal for next fiscal year on March 9, officials said Tuesday, as they pressure Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) to release a detailed budget of his own outlining House Republicans' spending plans. The White House on Tuesday circulated a memo from National Economic Council Director Brian Deese and Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young ahead of President Biden's meeting with McCarthy on the debt ceiling. The two officials confirmed Biden would unveil his budget for fiscal 2024 in early March. The president's proposed budget is typically seen as a messaging document about the administration's priorities and is often disregarded by lawmakers as they seek to pass funding bills through Congress. But in this case, White House officials are using the release of the budget to lean on McCarthy to be transparent about whether he wants to cut programs like Social Security and Medicare as members of his caucus call for spending cuts.

[Sarah Sanders to Give GOP Response to Biden State of the Union](#)

[House passes resolution to remove Ilhan Omar from Foreign Affairs Committee \(CNN\)](#)

The Republican-led House of Representatives voted on Thursday to pass a resolution to remove Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar from the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee. House Republicans have argued Omar should not serve on the committee in light of past statements she has made related to Israel that in some cases been criticized by members of both parties as antisemitic. Democrats have criticized the push to oust Omar, arguing it amounts to an act of political revenge and that the Minnesota Democrat has been held accountable for her past remarks. The action comes after House Speaker Kevin McCarthy officially denied seats on the House Intelligence Committee to Democratic Reps. Eric Swalwell and Adam Schiff, the former chairman of the panel – a decision that was condemned by Democrats. McCarthy vowed last year that if Republicans won back the House majority, he would strip Schiff, Swalwell and Omar of committee assignments, arguing that Democrats created a "new standard" when they held the majority by removing Republican Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Paul Gosar of Arizona from committees for violent rhetoric and posts. Omar, Schiff and Swalwell have pushed back in reaction to McCarthy's effort to strip them of committee seats. McCarthy has the power to unilaterally block Schiff and Swalwell from serving on the House Intelligence Committee because it is a select committee. Ousting Omar, however, from the House Foreign Affairs Committee required a vote of the full House of Representatives.

Advanced Technologies

[White House optimistic on tech sharing for AUKUS security pact \(Financial Times\)](#)

The White House has expressed optimism that the US, UK and Australia will clear the main obstacle to their landmark security deal, allowing technology transfers that will enable Canberra to obtain nuclear-powered submarines. Jake Sullivan, US national security adviser, said there had been progress in easing some technology export restrictions that the US partners have long been concerned could slow, or even possibly derail, the so-called Aukus security pact. Asked by the Financial Times on Tuesday about the technology transfer constraints, Sullivan said he was “feeling very good about the pathway on Aukus”, the most confident statement from Washington on overcoming the regulatory barriers that have complicated the deal. Sullivan told a small group of reporters that Aukus had “challenged some of the historic assumptions about what the United States could or wouldn’t be prepared to do in a different era”. The groundbreaking Aukus pact was unveiled in 2021 as a trilateral alliance to counter Chinese military power through the delivery of nuclear-powered submarines and the development of technology ranging from quantum computing to hypersonic weapons. Australian deputy prime minister Richard Marles told the FT on Tuesday that the partners were “close to an announcement” following an 18-month planning phase to determine how and where to build the boats and what US technology and information would be required. But the planning has been complicated by longstanding US curbs on technology and information sharing, which apply to Australia and the UK even though the countries are members of the Washington-led Five Eyes intelligence sharing network that also includes Canada and New Zealand. Two crucial decisions will be the choice of submarine design and where the submarines will be built, given concerns that America’s shipyards do not have the capacity to take on more work.

[TikTok Dealt Another Hit as Democratic Senator Joins Calls for Ban](#)

[Military Chip Maker Mercury Systems Up For Sale \(WSJ\)](#)

One of the Pentagon’s top manufacturers of microchips is up for sale, just as the defense industry faces a shortage of crucial semiconductors that executives said could stretch for another two years. Mercury Systems Inc. said its board has launched a strategic review, a move widely viewed by analysts as a precursor to a possible sale after activist investors pushed for change at the Andover, Mass.,-based company. A sale could fetch well over \$3.5 billion, said analysts, and provide another test for antitrust regulators. Lockheed Martin Corp., the world’s biggest defense company, dropped a bid to buy rocket maker Aerojet Rocketdyne Holdings Inc. last year after the Federal Trade Commission sued to block it on competition grounds, while regulators unsuccessfully tried to stop the sale of a

maker of defense software. Mercury Systems shares soared by as much as 20% Wednesday, lifting its market value to \$3.3 billion. Mercury Systems creates the high-end chips and electronic systems from supplies drawn mainly from big producers such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. and others in Asia that dominate the global market. Like most of the manufacturing sector, Mercury has suffered from shortages as overseas plants struggled with demand during the pandemic. Lockheed, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman Corp. accounted for half of Mercury's sales in its last fiscal first quarter, according to regulatory filings. The sale to a larger defense company or private equity group could help give Mercury more scale to buy chips and speed delivery, said analysts. The squeeze on supplies has dented Mercury's profits, and two activist investors have taken ownership stakes in an effort to direct its strategy or pave the way for a potential sale.

[Defense Innovation Board Launches Survey to Boost Private Partnerships](#)

[U.S. launches high-level defense and tech initiative with India \(Washington Post\)](#)

The United States and India on Tuesday formally established a high-level initiative on defense and emerging technologies — what national security adviser Jake Sullivan called “a strategic bet” on the relationship between democratic partners. The initiative on critical and emerging technologies, or iCET, follows on a commitment last May by President Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and will, among other things, promote joint production of defense equipment — including military jet engines, long-range artillery and armored infantry vehicles. Sullivan met with his counterpart Ajit Doval at the White House on Tuesday to launch the initiative, which he said would serve both countries' deeper strategic interests. The two aides are spearheading the initiative. It comes as Russia's war in Ukraine enters its second year and as India seeks to lessen its decades-long dependence on Russian military equipment. Beijing's regional provocation — including a rising tempo of Chinese economic and military coercion — also serves as a spur to increased partnership between New Delhi and Washington. Violent Chinese border clashes with India have escalated tensions between the two countries. Much of the initiative so far consists of stated intentions to pursue cooperation in multiple areas, including semiconductors, 5G and 6G wireless infrastructure, and in commercial spaceflight, including lunar exploration. Another element of the initiative is semiconductor supply chain diversification, a concern that has become more urgent with Chinese threats to Taiwan, which dominates the global supply of high-tech semiconductors. Part of the U.S. plan is to help India grow its legacy chip-making capabilities while continuing the flow of top engineers that study and work in the United States, Sullivan said.

Military Installations & Communities

[U.S., Philippines Strike Military-Base Deal \(WSJ\)](#)

The U.S. reached an agreement that gives it access to four more military bases in the Philippines, broadening Washington's efforts to counter China's influence and strengthening an alliance that a few years ago appeared in danger of collapse. "These efforts are especially important as the People's Republic of China continues to advance its illegitimate claims," U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said, referring to Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea. Mr. Austin, who announced the deal Thursday along with acting Philippine Defense Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., said the two sides discussed ways to strengthen their alliance and military capabilities. The deal falls under the countries' Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, which dates back to 2014. The EDCA allows the U.S. military to build facilities at agreed-upon Philippine bases, preposition equipment, refuel and maintain aircraft and vessels and rotate troops through the bases. In 2016, the two sides designated five Philippine bases for use under EDCA. The deal Thursday adds four more sites, nearly doubling the U.S. footprint. U.S. officials said earlier this week that one of the sites could be on the northern island of Luzon, near Taiwan, and another in the southwestern province of Palawan, which sits on the edge of the South China Sea. Greater access could give U.S. forces more logistical support over a wider area in the event of a conflict, the officials said. Rotating U.S. troops in the Philippines positions them to respond to threats to Taiwan or if tensions flare in the South China Sea, where China has built military bases upon artificial islands and is engaged in territorial and maritime disputes with other countries in the region, including the Philippines. There are currently about 500 rotating U.S. military personnel in the Philippines, according to a spokesman for the Indo-Pacific Command, which oversees U.S. military operations in the region.

[Modular Apartments in Philadelphia Could Be 'Model' for Combating Veteran Homelessness](#)

[Air Force Says Proposed Chinese-Owned Mill in North Dakota Is 'Significant Threat' \(New York Times\)](#)

After more than a year of debate about whether a Chinese company's plan to build a corn mill in North Dakota was an economic boon or a geopolitical risk, an assistant secretary of the Air Force has weighed in with a warning that the "project presents a significant threat to national security." The letter from Assistant Secretary Andrew P. Hunter, released publicly on Tuesday by North Dakota's senators, noted the proximity of Grand Forks Air Force Base to the proposed mill and said the project raised "near- and long-term risks of significant impacts to our operations in the area." The debate over Fufeng USA's plan to build a giant milling facility on the edge of Grand Forks, less than 15 miles from the Air Force base, divided the Republican power structure in North Dakota and showed just how swiftly the economic relationship between the United States and China had changed. Though the Air Force letter did not name specific threats, residents had voiced numerous concerns. Some in town said it was unwise to deepen economic ties with China, while

others speculated that the mill could be used for spying on the Air Force, which the company denied. The city's Republican mayor, Brandon Bochenski, a former supporter of the project, said on Tuesday that because of the federal guidance, he would move to block construction by trying to deny building permits and by refusing to connect city infrastructure to the building site.

[Tricare Will Pay for More Dialysis Services Following COVID-Linked Rise in Kidney Disease](#)

[Workforce woes are top 'strategic challenge' for Navy, admiral says \(Military Times\)](#)

The U.S. Navy and its suppliers have thousands of open jobs at government repair yards and in the private shipbuilding and ship repair industrial base, as hiring and retaining skilled workers has become "our No. 1 strategic challenge across the enterprise," according to the head of Naval Sea Systems Command. Vice Adm. Bill Galinis said Monday government and industry are competing against each other for an undersized pool of talent in both trades and white-collar specialties. Across the Navy's four public shipyards, which repair and modernize the fleet of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines, he said the Navy ended 2022 short about 1,200 workers. The Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii was generally sufficiently staffed, he said, but the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Washington was short on engineers and technical experts, while the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Virginia and Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Maine faced "pressure points" in their trade shops. Among the new challenges, Galinis said at an American Society of Naval Engineers conference here, is a shrinking wage gap between these Navy jobs and "some of the fast food restaurants, Starbucks, and Amazon and those types of companies."

Homeland Security

[Homeland Security intel chief describes revamp of department amid radicalization in the US \(CNN Politics\)](#)

The Department of Homeland Security is reviewing the structure and mission of its intelligence division as the US navigates a period of heightened polarization and radicalization, the agency's intel chief said in an interview with CNN. Extreme public discourse and divisive politics of recent years is in part to blame for pushing people on the margins of radicalization "over the line," Ken Wainstein, the DHS Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, said in a wide-ranging interview in the wake of several high-profile mass shootings and an attempted arson attack on a New Jersey synagogue. "[Y]ou're hearing sharp-edge commentary directed against different groups and religious groups more. And I think that that kind of language stirs people up," Wainstein said. Wainstein, who took on the top DHS intel job in June, called it a "troubling period in

American history,” where acts and threats of violence against people for their beliefs are on the rise. The DHS intelligence office monitors a range of issues from violent extremism to migration patterns and is the only member of the intelligence community that is required to disseminate information to state and local agencies.

[Biggs rolls out new articles of impeachment against DHS Secretary Mayorkas](#)

[US Border Agents Seize 300% More Eggs From Americans Looking for Lower Prices in Mexico \(Bloomberg\)](#)

With egg prices surging in the US, some Americans are trying to lower their grocery bills by buying them south of the border. The only problem: It's illegal to bring them back into the country, and now seizures of eggs at some US-Mexico border crossings have surged more than 300%. Since Nov. 1, [egg](#) seizures are up 91% at the agency's El Paso field office, 301% in Laredo, 333% in Tucson and 368% in San Diego compared to the same period a year earlier, according to Customs data through Jan. 17. In most cases, the seizures involve no more than a few 30-egg flats that travelers say they purchased for themselves to take advantage of lower prices in Mexican stores, said Roger Maier, a spokesman for US Customs and Border Protection. Residents of border towns often buy groceries in Mexican stores, but some agricultural products are barred from import to the US, including raw eggs, which can spread Newcastle Disease and avian flu, Maier said. In most cases, the eggs were seized from travelers who declared their purchase to inspectors at the border and consequently weren't fined. Recently, agents have encountered “a very small number” of undeclared eggs and travelers were subject to fines, he added. Eggs prices in the US have shown some of the most jolting increases among food staples in the past year. The cost of eggs in December was 60% higher than a year earlier, according to the most recent data from the Labor Department's consumer price index. Avian flu outbreaks and the resulting destruction of hen flocks have largely driven the price increases, though the wholesale price of eggs has eased a bit over the past month, signaling some relief ahead for consumers.

[Report: Global Homeland Security Market to Reach \\$580.9 Billion by 2030](#)

[January 6 Committee Lays Blame on FBI, DHS for Failing to Prevent Capitol Riots \(National Review\)](#)

The lead investigator of the House select January 6 Committee, Tim Heaphy, believes that the FBI and Department of Homeland Security could have prevented the Capitol riots based upon intelligence the organizations had gathered leading up to the event. Although

Heaphy accepts that former President Donald Trump “was the proximate cause,” igniting the spark by encouraging rioters to intervene in the election validation process, federal law enforcement agencies’ own incompetence contributed to the situation. “[W]hat happened at the Capitol was also affected by law enforcement failures to operationalize the ample intelligence that was present before Jan. 6, about the threats of violence,” Heaphy told NBC News. “Law enforcement had a very direct role in contributing to the security failures that led to the violence.” “There was a lot of advance intelligence about law enforcement, about carrying weapons, about the vulnerability of the Capitol,” Heaphy added. “The intel in advance was pretty specific, and it was enough, in our view, for law enforcement to have done a better job.” As a result, committee investigators concluded, the Capitol was left unprotected as both the FBI and DHS failed to deploy adequate security forces.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Leaders of Self-Driving-Truck Company Face Espionage Concerns Over China Ties \(WSJ\)](#)

The Justice Department has been urged by representatives of a U.S. national-security panel to consider economic-espionage charges against leaders of TuSimple Holdings Inc., an American self-driving-truck company with ties to China, according to people familiar with the matter. The recommendation for criminal charges, made late last year, stemmed from concerns that two founders and the current chief executive of the San Diego-based company were improperly transferring technology to a Chinese startup, the people said. The concerns were based on material gathered as part of a national-security review of TuSimple launched earlier last year. That review is being conducted by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, known as Cfius. The panel is led by the Treasury Department and includes the Justice and Defense departments as well as other federal agencies. Cfius reviews foreign investments for national-security concerns and has the authority to impose safeguards or recommend that the president block investments. The Biden administration has ordered a range of steps to try to prevent U.S. technology from advancing China’s military power, and is considering others. The Pentagon has specifically pushed to increase the U.S. military’s use of autonomous vehicles and to counter American adversaries’ technological advances in the field. The recommendation to the Justice Department didn’t come from the full Cfius panel. Representatives who are part of the Cfius review process can make their own recommendations to law enforcement, according to lawyers familiar with the panel’s workings. It couldn’t be determined how the recommendation was received by the Justice Department, which declined to comment.

[Why America’s Water Infrastructure Is Crumbling](#)

[Biden Offers Millions for New York Rail Tunnel, Courtesy of His Infrastructure Law \(New York Times\)](#)

For more than a decade, commuters have watched as state and federal officials promised and failed to revamp the century-old rail tunnel connecting New Jersey to Midtown Manhattan, which has become a symbol of America's aging infrastructure. During a trip to New York City on Tuesday, President Biden promoted his \$1 trillion infrastructure package as the solution. He said his administration would contribute \$292 million in grants from the bill for the first stages of the sprawling project, known as Gateway. Mr. Biden's decision to back a project that was neglected for years amounted to a signature moment for the development, even though much of the funding for the project — which will cost more than \$30 billion — has yet to be finalized, and construction is expected to take years. Tuesday's announcement was the first of multiple grants from Mr. Biden's infrastructure package to be awarded to the Gateway program, according to a senior White House official who requested anonymity to describe the competitive grant process underway. The money will go toward the extension of a concrete casing for the tunnels on the West Side of Manhattan, between Pennsylvania Station and the Hudson River. That work would be a prelude to the digging of the 2.4-mile tunnels under the Hudson, which is expected to take several years and cost more than \$16 billion. The entire Gateway project includes a rail bridge in North Jersey that is under construction now and an expansion of Penn Station. That's why the total price tag is more than \$30 billion, while the estimated cost of the tunnels is just over \$16 billion.

[Transportation industry representatives attack infrastructure law rollout](#)

[Boeing delivers last 747, a jumbo jet that 'shrank the world' \(Financial Times\)](#)

The giant jet that has been compared to the Parthenon, name-checked in a Joni Mitchell song and nicknamed Queen of the Skies is flying off into the sunset. The last Boeing 747 was delivered on Tuesday after a ceremony at the US company's factory in Washington state, to cargo carrier Atlas Air. The plane, when it was introduced at the Paris Air Show in 1969, captured the spirit of the jet age and through its capacity, efficiency and range helped make commercial flight affordable to the masses. "It democratized air travel," said Boeing corporate historian Michael Lombardi. "The 747 shrank the world." Over five decades Boeing built 1,574 747s for more than 100 customers. The tail is as tall as a six-storey building, and it travels the length of three football fields per second. The largest version could transport more than 500 passengers. Boeing has cut back production of the four-engine 747 for years. The market gradually shifted to favor more efficient twin-engined jets for even the longest routes, after aviation regulators approved such aircraft for transatlantic flights in the 1980s. Boeing delivered the last 747 designed to carry passengers to Korean Air in 2017, though the ability to load cargo through the plane's nose kept carriers ordering freighters for longer.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[Lawmakers ask Biden to add drug czar to Cabinet \(The Hill\)](#)

A group of congressional lawmakers on Thursday called on President Biden to reinstate the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to a Cabinet-level position in order to better address the overdose epidemic in the U.S. In their letter, the Congress members commended Biden for prioritizing the opioid epidemic in his State of the Union address last year. They urged Biden to announce the reinstatement of this position to the Cabinet level in his upcoming State of the Union address on Feb. 7. The ONDCP coordinates with 19 federal agencies to lead U.S. drug policy as a component of the president's executive office. The head of the ONDCP, a role currently occupied by Rahul Gupta, was a Cabinet-level position until 2009, when former President Obama demoted it. The office was established in 1988 with the signing of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act by former President Reagan. Lawmakers including Sens. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Reps. David Trone (D-Md.) and Katie Porter (D-Calif.) were among those who signed the letter to Biden.

[What the End of the Covid Public Health Emergency Could Mean for You](#)

[Google's ex-CEO Eric Schmidt tapped for federal biotech commission that allows members to keep biotech investments \(CNBC\)](#)

On Dec. 30, leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services committees announced the selection of former Google CEO Eric Schmidt and 11 others to serve on a new federal commission on biotechnology. Tasked with reviewing the biotech industry and suggesting investments that would benefit U.S. security, the National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology is expected to have a prominent voice on policy and federal spending in the cutting-edge industry. The appointment, however, doesn't require commission members to divest their own personal biotech investments — even as they help shape U.S. policy overseeing the industry. Through a venture capital firm known as First Spark Ventures, Schmidt holds stakes in several biotech companies, placing him in a position to potentially profit if those companies are the beneficiaries of a new wave of federal biotech spending. A spokesperson for the Senate Armed Services Committee, which will oversee the commission, said Schmidt and other members were selected by bipartisan leaders in the House and Senate and are expected to follow government ethics rules.

[A biotech startup pledges to bring back the dodo](#)

[Microsoft signs first AI healthcare partnership in Vietnam \(Healthcare IT News\)](#)

AI healthcare software company VinBrain, a company backed by Vietnam's largest

conglomerate Vingroup, has entered into a formal collaboration with Microsoft. According to a press release, the partnership, which is a first for the global tech company in Vietnam, will work on three areas of AI healthcare: data sharing, cross-product validation, and R&D. VinBrain will leverage DrAid, its suite of AI-powered pathology solutions which can detect 21 disease indicators of the heart, lungs and bone. The US FDA-approved platform is being used by around 2,000 doctors and more than 100 hospitals in Vietnam. The AI platform runs on a dataset of over 2 million images sourced from multiple regions – the United States, Asia, and Europe. These data will be shared via Microsoft Azure, which will also ensure privacy and security, manage ever-changing compliance regulations, and improve data governance. As part of the collaboration, VinBrain will also use Azure Cognitive Services for Computer Vision to validate new deep-learning models, including Microsoft's latest computer vision model called Florence. It also seeks to use Azure Cognitive Services to develop its own AI capabilities for processing and returning images and building, deploying, and improving image classifiers, expecting that the service will help increase the accuracy of DrAid's imaging capability. The same service will also be used by both companies in their joint R&D to come up with new AI products that tackle global healthcare challenges.

Climate & Development

[OPEC+ Ministers Stick to Cutting Plan Amid Oil-Demand Uncertainty \(WSJ\)](#)

A panel of OPEC+ energy ministers Wednesday said the group of petrostates would continue cutting oil production, amid uncertainties about demand in China and the impact of sanctions on Russian crude supplies. Maintaining the status quo will allow the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and a group of producers led by Russia—collectively known as OPEC+—to take more time to assess consumption data from China, the world's biggest oil importer, and determine how a resurgence of Covid-19 cases there and European Union sanctions on Moscow have affected demand. Delegates said that OPEC+ wants to remain conservative in their approach until there are clearer signals that markets require higher crude supplies. OPEC+ decided in December to lock in a 2 million-barrel-a-day production cut that had been decided in October. The decision suggests that the world's leading oil producers are uncertain about the direction of crude prices, ahead of a price cap on Russian petroleum exports set to take effect. Oil prices have stabilized in recent weeks above \$80 a barrel as fear of supply disruptions following escalating Western oil sanctions on Russia were offset by concerns over a resurgence of Covid-19 cases in China. Brent crude, the international oil contract, barely moved on the news. At 8:40 a.m. ET, Brent traded at \$85.66 a barrel, up 0.23% on the day but down 4.05% compared with a year ago. The alliance isn't planning to review its production until its next meeting in June but the panel meeting Wednesday, known as the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee, can call for a full OPEC+ meeting if warranted. The next meeting for the committee will be held on April 3.

[‘Recession Resilient’ Climate Start-Ups Shine in Tech Downturn](#)

[Republicans push resolution to repeal Biden Clean Water Act rule \(Washington Examiner\)](#)

Congressional Republicans are trying to repeal the Biden administration's recently finalized definition of "waters of the United States" on the grounds that it creates regulatory uncertainty and is bad for business and property owners. House and Senate Republicans introduced Congressional Review Act resolutions Thursday that seek to cancel WOTUS, which governs how broadly the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers can regulate bodies of water under the Clean Water Act. EPA and the Army Corps finalized WOTUS at the tail end of last year, effectively bringing back the definition as it was before 2015 with some updates to "reflect existing Supreme Court decisions, the latest science, and the agencies' technical expertise." Republicans argue the rule is too onerous and would make it too difficult for property owners and businesses to perform basic work such as clearing ditches. Republicans have pushed other resolutions to repeal agency rulemaking. The conference, along with Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV), advanced a Congressional Review Act resolution Wednesday that would repeal a Labor Department rule allowing fiduciaries to weigh environmental, social, and corporate governance factors when making investment decisions for U.S. retirement accounts.

[General Motors invests \\$650mn in US lithium mine to secure EV battery materials](#)

[Biden Clears the Way for Alaska Oil Project \(New York Times\)](#)

The Biden administration on Wednesday took a crucial step toward approving a \$8 billion ConocoPhillips oil drilling project on the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, drawing the anger of environmentalists who say the vast new fossil fuel development poses a dire threat to the climate. The Bureau of Land Management issued an environmental analysis that says the government prefers a scaled-back version of the project, which is known as Willow. The assessment calls for curtailing the project to three drill sites from five, as well as reducing the proposed length of both gravel and ice roads, pipelines and the length of airstrips to support the drilling. The analysis is the last regulatory hurdle before the federal government makes a final ruling on whether to approve the Willow project. If approved, this project would produce about 600 million barrels of oil over 30 years, with a peak of 180,000 barrels of crude oil a day. Separately, Bureau of Land Management and White House officials are considering additional measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and environmental harm, such as delaying decisions on permits for one of the drill sites and planting trees, according to two people familiar with the discussions. The final decision could come within the next month. But, in concluding that limited drilling could occur on the land in Alaska's North Slope, the Biden administration has already sent a strong signal that

it is likely to give the project a green light, both supporters and opponents said.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committees

House:

Tuesday, February 7, 2023, 10:00 AM EST: Full Committee Hearing: [“The Pressing Threat of the Chinese Communist Party to U.S. National Defense”](#)

Witnesses:

- Ambassador Robert C. O'Brien, Former National Security Advisor
- Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr., USN (Ret.), Former Commander, U.S. Pacific Command
- Dr. Melanie W. Sisson, Foreign Policy Fellow, Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology

Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 11:00 AM EST: Full Committee Hearing: [“State of the Defense Industrial Base”](#)

Witnesses:

- The Honorable Eric Fanning, President and Chief Executive Officer, Aerospace Industries Association
- The Honorable David Norquist, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Defense Industrial Association
- Mr. Matthew Paxton, President, Shipbuilders Council of America

Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 3:00 PM EST: ISO Hearing: [“The Role of Special Operations Forces in Great Power Competition”](#)

Witnesses:

- Seth Jones, Senior Vice President, Center for Strategic and International Studies

- Lieutenant General Charles T. Cleveland (ret.) United States Army, Former Commander, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC)
- Dr. David H. Ucko, Professor and Department Chair, College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University

Senate: None Listed

Appropriation Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: None Listed

Homeland Security Committees

House: None Listed

Senate:

Thursday, February 9, 2023, 11:00 AM EST: Full Committee Hearing: [“Organizational business meeting to consider committee rules and an original resolution authorizing expenditures by the committee for the 118th Congress”](#)

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