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# Executive Insight Brief

March 3, 2023

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**Worth reading:** [Our military leaders need a national security ‘fast lane’ to compete with China](#), by TRG Senior Advisor Mike Holmes and Hudson Institute’s Dan Patt

## Aerospace & Defense

### [Lawmakers Question Pentagon on Ukraine Funds, Signaling Fresh Concerns \(NYT\)](#)

Republicans in Congress sharply questioned senior Pentagon officials on Tuesday about the tens of billions of dollars in military and other aid the United States has sent to Ukraine, casting fresh doubt on whether they would embrace future spending as Democrats pleaded for a clear-eyed assessment of how much more money would be needed. The exchanges at two House committee hearings, coming just days after the anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, highlighted how concerns about the high cost of sending weapons to Kyiv have intensified on Capitol Hill. The growing doubts have threatened what has been a strong bipartisan consensus in favor of the aid, and could make it more difficult for the Biden administration to win congressional approval of funds to replenish its military assistance accounts. The funding inflection point could come as soon as this summer, months earlier than previously expected. The hearings also illustrated how members of both parties, despite expressing confidence that a majority in Congress remains committed to supporting Ukraine, are concerned that a determined minority — including right-wing Republicans who eschew U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts and liberal antiwar Democrats — may weaken that resolve if the war continues to drag on. Pledges to send tanks, the grinding nature of the war on the ground and a steady clamor from certain corners of Congress to greenlight advanced systems for Ukraine have threatened to drain war funds at a faster clip than appropriators anticipated last December, when lawmakers approved about \$45 billion in military and other assistance, projecting it would last until the end of September. The steep price tag of the war has prompted Congress to issue a battery of oversight requirements for information about how the money has been spent. Some of those details have been provided to lawmakers, but few have reached the public. The accelerating spending and dearth of detailed information have fueled the resolve of several naysayers, who doubled down this week on a campaign to cast the Ukraine assistance program as a failed boondoggle, with the apparent tacit blessing of party leaders. Democrats, too, voiced concerns on Tuesday, pleading with Pentagon leaders to be straight with them about how much more money lawmakers could expect to be asked to approve for Ukraine.

## [How U.S. Weapons Play a Growing Role in the Ukraine War](#)

### [Chinese Weapons Could Sustain Russia's War Effort in Ukraine \(WSJ\)](#)

Military supplies from China would provide Russia with a lifeline in its Ukraine war effort, thanks to the compatibility of Chinese and Russian weapon systems and Beijing's large military manufacturing base. U.S. officials say China is considering supplying artillery and drones to the Russian military as Moscow's forces burn through ammunition and suffer from shortages of critical equipment. China denies it is contemplating such action and has, in turn, pointed a finger at the U.S. and its allies for fueling the conflict by providing Ukraine with weapons. Any move by Beijing to help the Russian military could have a far-reaching impact, both in China's relations with the West and on the battlefield because of Beijing's capacity to help supply Russia with a pool of materiel, including the artillery shells that Russian fighting units are calling for. China is also a major producer of drones, which have been used effectively by both sides in the Ukraine war. Trade data shows some commercial Chinese drones have already reached the front lines. For years, China has been a weapons exporter to conflict-stricken regions around the world, from Africa to the Middle East. If Beijing opts to send weapons to Russia, much of what Moscow wants would likely be found from existing supplies or could be produced relatively quickly, security analysts say. The reason is partly rooted in the countries' relationship. In the early decades of the Chinese Communist Party's rule, China relied on Soviet military know-how and exports that built the initial backbone of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Ties between the countries haven't always been cooperative, but an overlap in their military systems remains. Many Chinese weapons, ranging from small arms to jet fighters and even aircraft carriers, are based on Soviet-era designs. In some cases, China has reverse-engineered Russian weapons, such as missile systems, to create similar items. Russia provided 81% of China's weapons imports by value during the five years through 2021, according to data compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

## [India Moves Closer to Approving Purchase of Armed Drones From the U.S.](#)

### [Scholz struggles to reset German defense policy \(Financial Times\)](#)

A year ago, chancellor Olaf Scholz took to the floor of the Bundestag to deliver one of the most significant speeches in modern German history — one that tore up his country’s post-cold war dispensation. Speaking three days after Russia invaded Ukraine, Scholz described the war as a “Zeitenwende” — an epochal, tectonic shift — and promised to thoroughly revamp Germany’s foreign and defense policy in response. Scholz addressed the Bundestag again on Thursday to talk of the strides Germany has made towards redeeming that pledge and to challenge critics at home. Addressing protesters who have demanded peace talks to end the war, Scholz said you “can’t negotiate with a gun to your temple - unless it’s over your own total subjugation”, he told MPs. “ If Ukraine stopped defending itself, it would not be peace, but the end of Ukraine.” However despite his defiant tone, the Zeitenwende anniversary has been met in Berlin with a wave of criticism of Scholz, who stands accused of creating expectations that have not been matched by reality. Those hoping for a new, more assertive foreign policy — that Germany would assume a role in world affairs commensurate with its vast economic strength — have been left disappointed. “This war is a really profound turning point in our history [and] what the government is doing does not do that justice,” Friedrich Merz, leader of the opposition Christian Democrats (CDU), said earlier this week. “The impression remains that the chancellor hesitates, procrastinates and only ever makes decisions when pressured to do so.” Scholz’s supporters say the criticism fails to acknowledge the huge challenges he faces in overturning a foreign policy orthodoxy forged in decades of peacetime and stability — and undoing the damage inflicted on Germany’s defense capability by years of swingeing cuts. But others say that even within those limitations, Scholz is acting too slowly. He wrote in Foreign Affairs magazine last December that Germany would have to “step up as one of the main providers of security in Europe”. Yet there is little evidence of that so far.

## **Budget & Appropriations**

### [House GOP appropriators unveil tighter earmark rules \(Roll Call\)](#)

House Republican appropriators have banned earmarks from the Labor-HHS-Education, Financial Services and Defense bills and put fresh restrictions on "community project funding" in new rules regulating the process on that side of the Capitol. House Appropriations Chairwoman Kay Granger, R-Texas, announced the new rules Tuesday

night. Earmark spending will be capped at 0.5 percent of total discretionary spending in the House's fiscal 2024 bills, and members will have to submit a written statement describing the "federal nexus" for their earmark requests. If House Republicans are able to follow through on their pledge to cut total fiscal 2024 appropriations back to levels enacted two years ago, earmarked funds in House spending bills would drop to about \$7.4 billion. That's less than half of what was appropriated in this fiscal year's omnibus, and about 10 percent less than the \$8.2 billion included in last year's initial House bills. But the Senate's new earmark guidelines allow for a continuation of the current 1 percent cap on overall earmarked funds, so the final number for home-state projects — if there's an eventual fiscal 2024 spending agreement — could ultimately still approach last year's haul. Additionally, Republicans have banned memorials, museums and commemoratives — projects named for an individual or entity — from being eligible for earmarks. Other rules already in place for the process, which Senate and House Democrats brought back during the fiscal 2022 appropriations process, remain in place. For-profit recipients are banned, and members are required to disclose their requests and certify they do not have a financial interest in their projects. The Government Accountability Office will continue to audit a sampling of enacted projects. The guidelines keep in place the limit of 15 requests per member that the House had last year. Along with the new bans for the Defense, Financial Services and Labor-HHS-Education bills, the State-Foreign Operations and Legislative Branch subcommittees will continue to disallow earmarks.

## [Lawmakers Call for Broad U.S. Probes of Financial Conflicts by Federal Officials](#)

### [Manchin Urges Democrats to Pursue Spending Cuts With Republicans \(WSJ\)](#)

Sen. Joe Manchin, who has been a crucial vote in shaping major pieces of President Biden's agenda, urged Democratic colleagues to hold talks with Republicans on cutting federal spending, ahead of a summer deadline to reach a deal on raising the country's debt ceiling. "My Democratic friends don't want to say a word about our out-of-control spending and are outright refusing to even talk to Republicans about reasonable and responsible reforms," the West Virginia Democrat said in a speech on the Senate floor. "We're going to pay our debts, we have to pay our sins of the past, but can't we at least sit down and discuss?" he said. "Can we even talk about that and see if there's a pathway forward?" Mr. Manchin said he wanted a short-term deal to bring down spending this year

as well as a longer-term plan to tackle future fiscal challenges. The speech put him squarely at odds with the White House and most Democrats, who have rejected Republicans' demands for spending reductions as part of debt-ceiling talks. Mr. Manchin's stance shows that he remains intent on shaping the party's policies—and crossing party leaders at times—as he considers whether to run for re-election in 2024. President Biden, who is expected to release his fiscal 2024 budget next week, has said he wants a clean debt-ceiling increase with no conditions attached. While they haven't laid out a plan, Republicans say Social Security and Medicare are off the table and have indicated they won't seek to slash military spending. The country in January bumped up against its \$31.4 trillion limit, and the Treasury is using so-called extraordinary measures to avoid defaulting on debt payments or other government obligations such as Social Security checks. Those measures are expected to run out this summer. Budget deficits have ballooned under the leadership of both Republicans and Democrats in recent decades, with Covid-19 aid adding trillions of dollars to the debt in 2020 and 2021.

### [Opinion: The House China Committee makes a serious start](#)

#### [Student Loan Case Could Redefine Limits of Presidential Power \(NYT\)](#)

One of President Biden's most ambitious proposals — a \$400 billion program to forgive student loan debt for 40 million Americans — could become the latest victim of a legal tug of war with the Supreme Court over the powers of the presidency. Conservative justices on the court signaled Tuesday that they are deeply skeptical that Mr. Biden has the power to wipe out such a vast amount of student debt. In oral arguments, several justices said they believed a program that costs so much and affects so many people should have been more explicitly approved by Congress. It was not the first time the court has suggested that Mr. Biden overstepped his authority, but the case has the potential to curtail Mr. Biden's ambitions just as newly empowered Republicans in the House have vowed to block his every move in Congress. During Mr. Biden's first two years in office, the court has blocked him from enacting key parts of his agenda, including sweeping measures to address climate change, vaccine requirements at large companies and a ban on evictions during the pandemic. In each case, the court's conservative majority said the president needed clear congressional approval to pursue such major policies. The court's decision on whether to block the student loan program as well, which is likely to come by summer, will have a vast impact on millions of borrowers who have struggled to pay back their loans.

And it will set additional legal precedents, potentially defining new limits for presidential power. The ruling could have other broad political implications, forcing Mr. Biden and his allies to reshape their efforts to court one of the Democratic Party's most important constituencies ahead of the 2024 campaign: young people. Asked on Wednesday whether he was confident that the court would rule in the administration's favor, Mr. Biden said: "I'm confident we're on the right side of the law. I'm not confident about the outcome of the decision yet." The White House is not conceding defeat. In court on Tuesday, lawyers for Mr. Biden's administration argued that Congress had already given the secretary of education the authority to forgive student debt. But Mr. Biden's team has already shown its willingness to use the issue for its own political advantage, even if the best it can do is blame Republicans for stopping the plan.

## Advanced Technologies

### [Biden vows to wield 'all instruments' in fighting cyberthreats \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Biden administration in its highly anticipated cyber strategy pledged to use "all instruments of national power" to disrupt and dismantle malicious cyber actors near and far, while also promising to invigorate international relationships, including with nations previously untapped. The strategy, rolled out March 2 after much buzz and speculation within the cybersecurity community, describes the digital domain the world has become reliant upon as a reflection of its users and its architects — and one that needs protecting, even if it means upheaval in the short-term. "We must make fundamental changes to the underlying dynamics of the digital ecosystem, shifting the advantage to its defenders and perpetually frustrating the forces that would threaten it," it reads. "Our goal is a defensible, resilient digital ecosystem where it is costlier to attack systems than defend them, where sensitive or private information is secure and protected, and where neither incidents nor errors cascade into catastrophic, systemic consequences." The document, more than two-dozen pages and spanning five "pillars," is colored by Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine, which days ago ground past its bloody one-year anniversary. It specifically calls out China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and other autocratic states for alleged "reckless disregard for the rule of law and human rights in cyberspace." "Looking back at the last 24 months of the Biden-Harris administration, and especially over the last year, as we recently hit the one-year mark of the war in Ukraine, we've seen the cyberthreat be at the forefront of geopolitical crises," Anne Neuberger, deputy national security adviser for cyber and

emerging technology, told reporters this week. “And as we know, the threat is not only Russia. We’ve seen disruptive cyber and ransomware attacks executed by cybercriminals and other countries across the globe.” The U.S. dispatched cyber experts to Ukraine in late 2021, as tensions in Eastern Europe boiled and lawmakers pressed the White House to slap Russian President Vladimir Putin with sanctions. The so-called hunt-forward operation — a defensive and cooperative measure, undertaken at the invitation of a foreign government — was designed to root out malign activity, identify network weaknesses and glean information about the tools hackers use. Spearheaded by Cyber Command, the operation has since been credited with blunting Russia’s cyber efficacy.

## [National Cyber Strategy seeks to 'rebalance' cyber responsibility towards industry](#)

### [Chipmakers receiving US federal funds barred from expanding in China for 10 years \(Financial Times\)](#)

Chipmakers must agree not to expand capacity in China for a decade if they are to receive money from a \$39bn US federal fund designed to build a leading-edge US semiconductor industry, according to new commerce department rules. The department on Tuesday called for applications for funds from the Chips Act passed by Congress last year, as it launched a landmark industrial policy programme designed to counter China. In announcing the move, commerce secretary Gina Raimondo stressed the department would be implementing safeguards to ensure the programme was not abused. “Recipients will be required to enter into an agreement restricting their ability to expand semiconductor manufacturing capacity in foreign countries of concern for a period of 10 years after taking the money,” said Raimondo, who did not mention China by name. She added companies that received funding must also not “knowingly engage in any joint research or technology licensing effort with a foreign entity of concern that involves sensitive technologies or products”. Congress passed the Chips Act in an effort to create an industry capable of mass-producing leading-edge semiconductors, which are mostly made in Taiwan at present. In addition to measures to help US companies, the commerce department has taken measures to slow China’s chip making industry, including the imposition of sweeping export control regulations last October that will make it hard for Beijing to obtain advanced chips. A commerce department official said companies that received more than \$150mn would have to return some money to the government when they made returns that

surpassed original projections by an agreed threshold. The official said the \$39bn could potentially be leveraged to provide another \$75bn in federally supported funding. "Total possible programme outlays . . . could be well over \$100bn." Raimondo said companies would have to agree to other restrictions, including a prohibition on using the money for share buybacks or dividend payments. Raimondo said companies applying for more than \$150mn would also have to outline in advance how they would provide affordable childcare for workers — a move that reflects concern that the US does not have enough skilled workers to ensure the goal of the Chips Act is met.

### [Pentagon to Reap Rewards From \\$53 Billion Chips Act](#)

#### [U.S. House panel approves bill giving Biden power to ban TikTok \(Reuters\)](#)

The U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee voted on Wednesday along party lines to give President Joe Biden the power to ban Chinese-owned TikTok, in what would be the most far-reaching U.S. restriction on any social media app. Lawmakers voted 24 to 16 to approve the measure to grant the administration new powers to ban the ByteDance-owned app - which is used by over 100 million Americans - as well as other apps considered security risks. "TikTok is a national security threat ... It is time to act," said Representative Michael McCaul, the Republican chair of the committee who sponsored the bill. "Anyone with TikTok downloaded on their device has given the CCP a backdoor to all their personal information. It's a spy balloon into their phone." Democrats opposed the bill, saying it was rushed and required due diligence through debate and consultation with experts. The bill does not precisely specify how the ban would work, but gives Biden power to ban any transactions with TikTok, which in turn could prevent anyone in the United States from accessing or downloading the app on their phones. The bill would also require Biden to impose a ban on any entity that "may" transfer sensitive personal data to an entity subject to the influence of China. TikTok has come under increasing fire in recent weeks over fears that user data could end up in the hands of the Chinese government, undermining Western security interests. The White House this week gave government agencies 30 days to ensure that TikTok is not on any federal devices and systems. More than 30 U.S. states, Canada and European Union policy institutions have also banned TikTok from being loaded onto state-owned devices. The fate of the latest measure is still uncertain and faces significant hurdles before it can become law. The bill would need to be passed by the full House and U.S. Senate, which is controlled by Democrats, before it can go to Biden. The

Biden administration did not say whether it was in favor of moving ahead with the bill or not, or answer if it believed Biden has the legal authority now to ban TikTok.

## Military Installations & Communities

### [Lawmakers propose tax credit to encourage more military spouse employment \(Stars and Stripes\)](#)

Congressional lawmakers want to amend the federal tax code to encourage employers to hire military spouses, arguing the revision would help address one of the top issues affecting active-duty families. A bill introduced Wednesday in the Senate would make employers of spouses of service members eligible for the work opportunity tax credit, an incentive available to companies who hire individuals from groups facing significant barriers to employment. Unemployment for military spouses has hovered at about 21% for years, according to Defense Department data. “It is common for military spouses to struggle to find employment due to relocation and other factors,” bill co-sponsor Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., said in a statement. “This business tax credit is a commonsense and concrete way to help our military families.” The credit currently applies to qualified veterans, ex-felons and members of other targeted groups. The maximum tax credit is generally \$2,400, according to the Internal Revenue Service. Military spouse employment is the top issue impacting active-duty families and a major contributor to financial stress, according to a 2021 survey by the nonprofit organization Blue Star Families. Research by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Syracuse University shows military spouses make up one of the most unemployed and underemployed sectors of the job force, with an unemployment rate up to four times higher than their civilian counterparts. “My mother was a military spouse, and I am keenly aware of challenges facing partners of active-duty service members, who often have to relocate their families long distances,” said Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va., who introduced a companion bill in the House. The proposed tax credit legislation is led by a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including Sens. Tim Kaine, D-Va., and John Boozman, R-Ark. Beyer, a member of the tax-writing House Committee on Ways and Means, said he was confident the measure would win support from the panel.

## [VA Deputy Secretary to Step Down After Nearly Two Years](#)

### [Better Housing, Health Care, Pay and a Call for National Service Needed to Buoy Recruitment, Enlisted Chiefs Say \(Military.com\)](#)

Access to quality housing, health care and child care remain top concerns of military members and their families, the services' top enlisted leaders told Congress on Tuesday. So too does a national narrative about the decision to serve -- an idea that enlisting in the U.S. military is to "place your life on hold" for four years or a waste of talent. With the services vying for recruits as young Americans show waning interest, they must have the ability to offer better benefits and decent pay rates, according to senior enlisted leaders of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Space Force. That needs to be joined by a national emphasis placed on the intangibles of service, echoing a March 2020 report by the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service that got buried by the pandemic, the chiefs said. "I'd ask this committee, and all Americans, just to say the military, not just the Army, is a great place to serve and it's also a great place to grow," said Sergeant Major of the Army Michael Grinston in remarks to the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies. He was joined by two other top enlisted advisers in calling on Congress to help lead the call to national service. The services are hoping to revive the commission's 164 recommendations detailed in the 2020 report, calling for increased civic education and an emphasis on education with a community services component, as well as additional opportunities to inspire young people to serve, either in the military or in non-uniformed volunteer or paid positions such as in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, conservation, disaster response or something else. While support for individual service members and veterans remains strong, the armed services have received their share of bad publicity on nearly every cultural touchstone, including mental and physical health, COVID-19, suicide and sexual assault.

### [Opinion: Federal government is not powerless to stop Chinese real estate deals near sensitive US military bases](#)

### [MCPON: Sailors need speedier, easier access to counseling \(Military Times\)](#)

A sailor in crisis can't get the mental health help they need when they need it, the top enlisted sailor told lawmakers this week. Tricare bureaucracy means they have to make an appointment with one doctor in order to get a referral to see another – a process that can add days or weeks to access counseling. “That takes away the intent of the program, for us to have more accessible mental health care”, said Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy James Honea on Tuesday, testifying along with other senior enlisted advisors before the House Appropriations subcommittee on military construction, veterans affairs, and related agencies. Honea advocates following the same system available to Navy dependents, who have immediate access to telehealth counseling, without going first to their primary care doctor. Honea's testimony shows how hard the nationwide shortage of mental health providers has hit the military. Tricare has been expanding its telehealth services to offer more mental health care, but the two-step process to access counseling is still limiting the immediate access Honea says his people need. Honea and other senior enlisted personnel described other challenges with military health care. “We must improve our current health care systems,” said Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Troy Black. The lawmakers brought in the senior enlisted leaders to testify about the quality of life of their troops, including issues like improving troop barracks and expanding access to childcare, as well as reviewing the current system of pay and compensation.

## Homeland Security

### [Human Smugglers Now Using Drones to Surveil U.S. Border Patrol \(HST\)](#)

The U.S. Border Patrol discovered human smugglers are using small unmanned aircraft systems, common referred to as drones, to surveil agents on patrol. At approximately 11 p.m. on Jan. 30, two Border Patrol agents encountered approximately 30 migrants crossing illegally into the U.S. through the cargo truck lanes at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry. After they apprehended two migrants inside the port, additional agents pursued the remaining migrants as they fled north. Smugglers were observed picking up several of the migrants, and ultimately transporting them to a suspected stash house in National City. The following day, as agents conducted surveillance on the house, several suspected undocumented subjects were observed attempting to leave the location in a white sedan. Agents conducted a vehicle stop on the white sedan and interviewed the driver and the passengers. It was determined that the passengers in the vehicle were undocumented

noncitizens who had recently crossed into the United States illegally. The driver was a 23-year-old male United States citizen (USC). After securing the vehicle, agents turned their attention back to the house. Upon entering the stash house, agents encountered a 35-year-old female USC, who was later determined to be responsible for managing the stash house. Two additional undocumented migrants were encountered inside the home. Agents also found \$1,000 in cash and a fully loaded AR-15 style rifle.

### [House Foreign Affairs sets first hearing to review Afghanistan withdrawal](#)

### [GOP-led Homeland Security panel holds 1st border hearing, highlighting 'human costs' \(ABC News\)](#)

House Republicans on Tuesday once again seized on the issue of U.S. immigration following a trip to see the Biden administration's border security apparatus firsthand. The House Homeland Security Committee -- now under Republican control -- held its first full hearing on immigration since President Joe Biden took office. The panel heard from a variety of witnesses, including a mother whose two sons died of opioid overdoses and a hospital executive from Arizona who spoke to the level of uncompensated care provided to migrants who entered the country illegally. Ahead of the hearing, Chairman Mark Green told ABC News that "we're going to show the human costs to every American. We're going to show the financial costs. We're going to show the criminal costs." Green led members on a trip to the Mexican border last week to meet with regional officials and observe U.S. Customs and Border Protection operations. "It's been eye-opening," he said, adding that he heard extensively from border officials about the diversionary tactics used by criminal smuggling organizations. Much of Tuesday's hearing focused on the hotly debated link between the Biden administration's border policies and illegal narcotics smuggling. The testimony from the mother whose sons both died from the synthetic opioid fentanyl quickly became an emotionally charged moment.

### [Tom Ridge: Reflections, and regrets, 20 years after I opened the Department of Homeland Security](#)

[Government watchdog report finds FBI, Capitol Police identified but didn't share "credible threats" before Jan. 6 \(CBS News\)](#)

Federal agencies responsible for protecting the U.S. Capitol did not "fully process" or share critical information — including about militia groups arming themselves ahead of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection — a failure that stymied the response that day, according to a new 122-page report by the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office. The FBI and the U.S. Capitol Police had seen "threats that were true or credible" days ahead of the assault on the Capitol building, the report said. But much as with the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, a failure by multiple agencies to share information and connect dots left those securing the Capitol unprepared for the onslaught. "Some agencies did not fully process information or share it, preventing critical information from reaching key federal entities responsible for securing the National Capital Region against threats," the report said. The GAO report also revealed specific tips that were obtained by some federal agencies ahead of the attack. For example, the Capitol Police obtained information "regarding a tip that a member of the Proud Boys had recently obtained ballistic helmets, armored gloves, vests, and purchased weapons, including a sniper rifle and suppressors for the weapons." The tip, which the Secret Service also obtained from its Denver Field Office, revealed the individual flew with others to Washington D.C. "on January 5, 2021" to incite violence. According to the report, the Secret Service interviewed the individual and his son when they arrived in Washington, D.C., and investigated whether they were traveling with "loaded weapons." Capitol Police also attempted to locate the individual using "cell phone pings." According to the report, investigators from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security reviewed a tip a day before the Jan. 6 attacks about an individual who had "staked out parking lots of federal buildings to determine how to bring firearms into D.C. at January 6th events." The report also indicates there was a threat against the D.C. water system between Dec. 16, 2020 - Jan. 4, 2021. Information about the threat was obtained by the Architect of the Capitol and was shared with the Capitol Police. In addition to the Capitol Police and the FBI, five other federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security, United States Secret Service, Park Police, Senate Sergeant at Arms and Postal Inspection Service "developed a total of 27 threat products specific to the planned events of January 6 prior to the attack on the Capitol," according to the obtained report. The GAO found that "14 products included an assessment of the likelihood that violence could occur."

**Transportation & Infrastructure**

### [USDOT's Federal Railroad Administration Announces New Safety Initiative with a Focus on Hazardous Materials \(USDOT\)](#)

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator Amit Bose today announced a national initiative for focused inspections on routes that carry high-hazard flammable trains (HHFTs) and other trains carrying large volumes of hazmat commodities. Working with USDOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), FRA will identify these routes and prioritize them for inspection beginning immediately. The inspections will start in East Palestine, Ohio, and expand to communities nationwide. FRA inspectors, using a combination of human visual inspections and technology, will assess the overall condition of rail infrastructure as well as railroads' compliance with FRA regulatory requirements governing track. Information will be shared with railroads as well as rail labor organizations, and it will be periodically published for the public to increase transparency. "Safety is always our number one priority, and the Norfolk Southern derailment reminds us of the importance of ensuring no industry can put its profits over the safety of its workers and the communities it serves," said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. "As our investigators continue their work to support NTSB's investigation, we are also taking additional steps right now to prevent future disasters and we insist that the rail industry do the same." FRA's Automated Track Inspection Program (ATIP) inspection vehicles, which are paired with human inspections, surveyed approximately 180,000 miles of track last year and help remediate around 10,000 track safety defects annually.

### [US awards nearly \\$1 billion to airports in infrastructure grants](#)

### [The Biden administration plan to protect U.S. infrastructure from cyberattacks: regulate \(Politico\)](#)

The Biden administration will pursue a policy of more aggressive regulation to secure critical systems like banks, electric utilities and hospitals against cyberattacks, according to a new national cyber strategy unveiled Thursday. That approach signals a break from two decades of efforts to get companies in critical sectors to voluntarily strengthen their cybersecurity. It comes as officials are increasingly worried about cyberattacks on U.S. soil from Russia and China, and as cybercriminals ramp up "ransomware" attacks where they hold networks hostage for payments. "Information sharing and public-private partnerships are inadequate for the threats we face when we look at critical infrastructure," Anne Neuberger, deputy national security advisor for cyber and emerging technology, told reporters in a briefing about the strategy. It's time, she said, "to implement minimum

mandates.” Neuberger pointed to work already done by the Transportation Security Administration to secure pipelines and railroads against attacks, and said that additional sectors where cybersecurity regulations will be put in place will be announced soon. The plan — put together by the White House’s Office of the National Cyber Director — is the first new cyber strategy in five years, and serves as a roadmap for setting out the administration’s goals for securing the nation in cyberspace. A senior administration official said that the White House is working on an “implementation plan” to put into action the goals the strategy lays out. The plan will be released in the coming months. The White House provided the briefing to reporters on the condition that the official be granted anonymity.

[Rail unions tell Biden officials that workers have fallen ill at Norfolk Southern derailment site](#)

[Hawaii DOT announces start of rebate program for electric bikes \(Transportation Today\)](#)

The Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT) recently launched a rebate program for electric bikes and electric mopeds. To qualify for a rebate, residents must be at least 18 years old and must have made their purchases at retail stores after July 1, 2022. The vehicles must have been purchased new, and electric bicycles must have a maximum speed of 28 miles per hour. In addition, residents must not own a motor vehicle with four or more wheels; must be enrolled in school, community college, or university; and must participate in a low-income assistance program. Rebates will be capped at 20 percent of the retail price per vehicle or \$500, whichever is lower. Eligible residents can apply online or request a paper form. “Wide adoption of electric vehicles, including bicycles and mopeds, will help move us toward our clean energy goals while filling a key gap in mobility for many in our state,” HDOT Director Ed Sniffen said. “HDOT will continue to support programs that encourage Hawai'i residents to use vehicles with lower emissions that enhance their transportation alternatives.” The purpose of the rebate program is to reduce the cost of living and cost of transportation for people who receive financial assistance or don't own cars.

**Biotechnology & Healthcare**

### [Bipartisan senators introduce bill to close pharma competition loophole \(The Hill\)](#)

Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) and Mike Braun (R-Ind.) on Wednesday reintroduced legislation intended to close a loophole that drug companies can exploit to block competition, including from lower-cost generic drugs. Federal regulators will sometimes require that drug manufacturers have a Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) program for potentially dangerous medications. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), REMS are not designed to mitigate all the adverse events of a medication, but are focused on preventing, monitoring or managing a specific risk — for instance, requiring training for doctors to prescribe the drug. But some pharmaceutical companies patent their REMS program as a way to delay or block alternate versions of the medication from entering the market, in order to stop competition and keep prices high. The lawmakers cited a report published Monday in The New York Times detailing how Jazz Pharmaceuticals used the strategy of patenting its REMS program for a narcolepsy drug in order to block the release of a similar drug from a competitor. “Our bipartisan bill would finally close this absurd loophole that big pharmaceutical companies, such as Jazz, can use to slow down the release of better, cheaper drugs in order to line their own pockets,” Hassan said in a statement.

### [New Jersey Cancer Care launches remote patient monitoring](#)

### [Eli Lilly to cut insulin prices, cap costs at \\$35 for many people with diabetes \(CNN\)](#)

Eli Lilly announced Wednesday a series of price cuts that would lower the price of the most commonly used forms of its insulin 70% and said it will automatically cap out-of-pocket insulin costs at \$35 for people who have private insurance and use participating pharmacies. Lilly says it will also expand its Insulin Value Program, which caps out-of-pocket costs at \$35 or less per month for people who are uninsured. President Joe Biden heralded the announcement as “a big deal.” “For far too long, American families have been crushed by drug costs many times higher than what people in other countries are charged for the same prescriptions. Insulin costs less than \$10 to make, but Americans are sometimes forced to pay over \$300 for it. It’s flat wrong,” Biden said in a statement on Wednesday. The President also urged other pharmaceutical companies to cut insulin prices. “Last year, I signed a law to cap insulin at \$35 for seniors and I called on pharma companies to bring prices down for everyone on their own. Today, Eli Lilly did that. It’s a big deal, and it’s time for other manufacturers to follow,” Biden said. Eli Lilly says it will cut

the list price of its nonbranded insulin to \$25 a vial as of May 1, making it the lowest list-priced mealtime insulin available. Its current list price is \$82.41 for a vial.

### [More than half of the world will be overweight or obese by 2035](#)

#### [FDA experts recommend RSV vaccines for adults 60 and over. What's next?](#)

A Food and Drug Administration advisory panel said Wednesday an RSV vaccine under the agency's review is safe and effective for older adults, the second of two new vaccines targeted at adults age 60 and older to prevent severe disease. The vaccines from Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline still need final say from the FDA commissioner and recommendations by an advisory panel at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which will require another sign-off from the CDC director. If that happens, the vaccines will likely become available by the next RSV season. The FDA has also granted priority review to Pfizer's maternal vaccine to help protect against severe RSV in infants from birth through the first six months of life. The agency set an action date for August, according to a Pfizer release. Respiratory syncytial virus infects nearly everyone by age 2 and typically causes cold symptoms. It's the leading cause of hospitalizations among newborns and younger children, causing between 58,000 and 80,000 hospitalizations per year among those under 5, the CDC reports. RSV also strikes at the other end of life, causing more than 177,000 hospitalizations and 14,000 deaths among older adults every year. Health experts say RSV cases among older adults are considered re-infections since about 70% of kids contract the virus before their first birthday and 90% by their second.

## Climate & Development

#### [EPA proposal expected to expand sales of high-ethanol gasoline in Midwest states \(The Hill\)](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency is proposing action that's expected to expand the sale of gasoline made with higher concentrations of ethanol in eight states near the Midwest. The move is expected to allow more sales of gasoline with 15 percent concentrations of ethanol, rather than the more common type with 10 percent concentrations of ethanol, in the summer. It comes after a request from the states' governors, and is seen as a win for the biofuels industry. However, it is not expected to

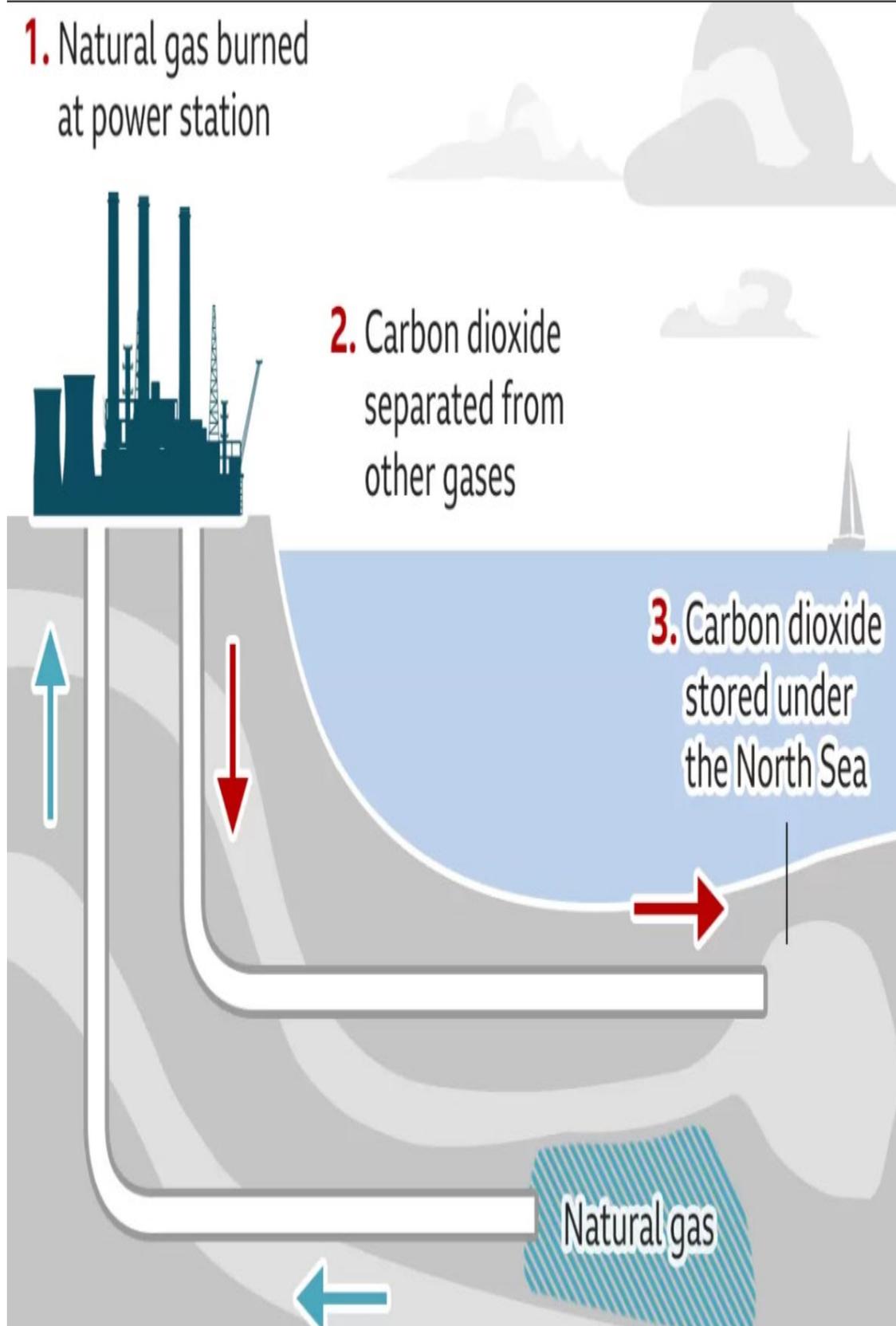
take effect until 2024. Brian Jennings, CEO of the American Coalition for Ethanol, told The Hill that in the long-term, the change would be “enormously important” for the industry. The EPA action is in relation to congressionally-set limits on gasoline’s volatility – a measure of a substance’s ability to evaporate — that include an exemption for some 10 percent ethanol gasoline. The agency revoked on Wednesday that exemption for gasoline sold in the eight states starting in 2024. Jennings said that this puts gasoline with a higher concentration of ethanol on “equal footing” in those states as fuel refiners would now be expected to make gasoline using different methodology that could also include gasoline with more ethanol. Broadly, ethanol issues do not fall neatly along partisan lines, as Republicans in corn-producing states tend to take different stances than those who represent oil-refining states.

[Carbon capture: What is it and how does it fight climate change?](#)

1. Natural gas burned  
at power station

2. Carbon dioxide  
separated from  
other gases

3. Carbon dioxide  
stored under  
the North Sea



### [In big power producer Norway, plans for greener industry meet resistance \(Reuters\)](#)

At Heroeya in southern Norway, the country's biggest onshore industrial site is planning to go fully electric by replacing its use of natural gas with power from the grid, part of a nationwide push to cut the country's CO2 emissions. But Oslo's plan to electrify big industrial sites to comply with the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is clashing with voters' concerns their power bills will increase, as higher demand puts heavy pressure on limited supply. It's an illustration of a conflict at the heart of environmentalism, between the desire to electrify everything from transport to industry, and an equally strong interest in protecting nature from the negative impact from new power plant construction. Higher power costs are particularly galling for consumers in Norway, given that its natural energy reserves in the form of hydropower have historically meant its electricity was cheap. Norwegian voters, for whom higher power bills are the main issue of concern currently, are already paying more due to the European energy crisis, which could lead to the postponement of some electrification projects. "Everyone is fighting about the little power we have," Gunnar Tveit, 75, in the town of Porsgrunn, where Heroeya is set. "This is going to be very hard." Until now a power exporter, Norway is expected to have a power deficit from 2027, according to the country's national grid operator, partly due to its plans to electrify big polluting sites.

### [Global energy-related CO2 emissions edged up to record high in 2022 -](#)

[IEA](#)

### [US 'Stands with Caribbean' in Climate Change Fight, Navy Secretary Says \(VOA News\)](#)

U.S. Navy Secretary Carlos del Toro on Wednesday reaffirmed the United States' commitment to Caribbean nations in their fight against what he called the "existential threat" of climate change. "The United States stands by you, with you, combatting this threat," Del Toro said during a meeting with officials, students, and professors at Nassau's University of the Bahamas. "Time is not on our side. We are in a critical decade to make meaningful progress so we can avoid the worst climate scenarios. We must act now. We view the climate crisis the same way we view damage control on a sinking ship: All hands on deck." The second Hispanic to head of the U.S. Department of the Navy, Del Toro said he traveled to the Bahamas to listen to the region's climate emergency "challenges and stories," acknowledging that "the increasing severity of those consequences are already being felt in the Caribbean and also in the United States" as he pointed to the dozen

devastating storms that have pummeled the region in the last decade. In the Caribbean, climate change has caused sea levels to rise, islands to be devastated by flooding and extreme temperatures while the salinization of farmland endangers ecosystems and makes it harder for residents to make a living in an area mainly sustained by tourism. The Navy secretary said the U.S. is cooperating on several projects with universities and governments in the region, including a multimillion-dollar fund for disaster relief infrastructure, as well as aid to cope with health emergencies and epidemic outbreaks.

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## Next Week's Hearings

### Armed Service Committees

House: None Listed

Senate:

Tuesday, February 28, 2023, 9:30 AM EST: Full committee hearing: "[Hearings to examine the conflict in Ukraine](#)"

### Appropriations Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: None Listed

### Homeland Security Committees

House: None Listed

Senate:

Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 10:00 AM EST: Full committee hearing: "[Artificial Intelligence: Risks and Opportunities](#)"



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