

From: The Roosevelt Group <Jvogl@rooseveltdc.com>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 8:00 AM
To: Ingram, Diane
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Executive Insight Brief



Executive Insight Brief

March 17, 2023

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Aerospace & Defense

[U.S. Reaches Deep Into Its Global Ammunition Stockpiles to Help Ukraine \(WSJ\)](#)

Ukraine's insatiable demand for artillery has for months outpaced Western forecasts, setting off a global hunt for more ammunition and forcing the U.S. to raid its stocks abroad to help Kyiv prepare for its counteroffensive later in the spring. With some U.S. allies unwilling or unable to supply enough ammunition for Ukraine, the U.S. military is pulling

from its munition supplies in a number of locations, including in Israel, South Korea, Germany and Kuwait. These sites, known as prepositioned stocks, are where the U.S. stores everything from trucks to bandages to support American forces around the world. The first drawdown of munitions from these sites was late last year, U.S. and congressional officials said. The pressure on the U.S. to take more ammunition from its overseas stocks comes as some of Washington's allies with the biggest stores of artillery rounds have shied away from supplying Ukraine for fear of being seen by Russia as a party to the fight in Ukraine. The U.S. has provided Kyiv with about 160 howitzers, which use 155-millimeter artillery ammunition. The howitzer artillery round—a roughly 2-foot cylinder weighing about 100 pounds—has been critical for Ukraine in pushing back Russian forces. The U.S. has sent Ukraine more than one million rounds of 155mm ammunition, and allies have contributed more on top of that. The conflict has largely been an artillery war consuming large amounts of ammunition at a rate that has surprised even the most seasoned gunner. Ukrainian troops are using more than 90,000 rounds a month of 155mm ammunition, Defense Department officials say. The U.S. is now scrambling to ensure Ukraine has enough in stock for the next phase of the war, since artillery rounds will help Kyiv's forces take back territory from Russia in what many see as a make-or-break moment in the conflict. To date, much of the ammunition has come from U.S. military stocks, pushing inventories to levels that were too low, according to some military planners. The U.S. also has sought to increase domestic production, but ramping up that effort is a monthslong process as factory lines have to be opened and prepared, and in some cases workers hired. Before the war started, the U.S. could produce roughly 13,000 rounds a month of 155mm ammunition, according to the U.S. Army. That monthly figure has jumped to about 20,000 rounds this year, and the U.S. hopes to increase it to 50,000 rounds by next year. Apart from its own production and stockpiles, the U.S. is seeking more artillery rounds for Ukraine from countries that possess large stockpiles, or are capable of producing large volumes of the ammunition.

[Russia Makes a Habit of Harassing U.S. Planes, Pentagon Says](#)

[Aukus defense pact's political pay-off will be a jobs bonanza \(Financial Times\)](#)

The Aukus defense pact draws some of the world's top defense contractors into a global industrial alliance that will have its home in two far-flung shipyards: Osborne, near Adelaide, and Barrow-in-Furness in north-west England. While the negotiations centered on how to share some of America's most guarded military technologies, the political pay-off has come in a deal that will create tens of thousands of jobs over decades of work across the US, UK and Australia. Canberra has described the deal as the "biggest procurement" in Australia's history, with estimates suggesting it could cost 0.15 per cent of gross domestic product between now and the mid-2050s. It will see Australia embark on a joint programme to develop a new class of submarine with the UK, while buying existing boats from the US to cover its needs over the next three decades. Both require a massive investment in submarine bases in the US and UK to overcome production constraints, from space to skilled manpower, that have hobbled the building of submarines in both countries.

Australia has not disclosed its planned investment but US officials said the figure would be substantial. "It's a small proportion [but] it's a large number," said one senior US official. The trade-offs between operational need, industrial capability and tech pragmatism have shaped a programme that has benefits for all three partners, with a ripple of orders for their respective industries. Among the biggest potential corporate winners is Britain's BAE Systems, which owns the yard at Barrow and builds all the submarines for the Royal Navy, including the Astute class of nuclear-powered attack boats. The Aukus submarines will be based on a British design for the next generation of attack boats. Australia and the UK will both operate the so-called SSN-Aukus. The UK is aiming to deliver its first Aukus submarines in the late 2030s. Australia hopes to deliver the first of its eight boats in the early 2040s. Defense officials said the final number of submarines could yet rise. America's General Dynamics, the lead contractor for all US submarines, including the Virginia-class boats of which up to five will be sold to Australia as an interim measure, is also one of the biggest potential beneficiaries. Huntington Ingalls Industries, which owns Newport News, GD's partner on submarines, will also benefit. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the Australian investment would also help the US speed up the delivery of its own submarines — a critical factor given how many existing boats are stuck in maintenance. Sullivan added that the US would be able to accelerate plans to expand its attack submarine fleet because of the investment, suggesting Aukus would also create more jobs at US shipyards. The senior US official said the SSN-Aukus submarines would include a lot of technology that is deployed on Virginia-class boats. The US is also investing an additional \$4.4bn in its own submarine industrial base over the next five years to boost capacity.

[Aukus: the industrial challenges of delivering a new defense pact](#)

[New Pentagon office looks to speed up weapons buys \(Politico\)](#)

The Pentagon has established a new office to coordinate industrial production and come up with plans to make weapons quickly. The office is being created amid growing concerns over the Pentagon's ability to ramp up production of bombs and munitions in the event of a shooting war with China or Russia. The new Joint Production Accelerator Cell will try to respond to some of that anxiety rippling through the Pentagon and the defense industry, which has heightened in the 13 months of supplying Ukraine in its battle to repel Moscow. The new office is just getting off the ground, and will be helmed by Erin Simpson, who has been working as the Pentagon's senior adviser for industrial base policy. The effort is part of a larger rethinking of how to produce weapons and armaments both in the U.S. and Europe. Countries are watching their stockpiles dwindle as they send equipment into the industrial-scale conflict in Ukraine. A March 10 memo from William LaPlante, the Pentagon's chief acquisition executive, established the office, saying it will look for "opportunities to optimize production capacity, resiliency, and surge ability. Further, we propose expanding its scope beyond munitions to defense weapons systems and suppliers overall." While NATO members' defense budgets have grown over the past several years, and the Pentagon's topline request hit a record \$842 billion in the fiscal 2024 budget

released last week, obvious gaps in capability have become evident over the past year. NATO officials are discussing ways to integrate their national defense industries to mitigate those production concerns. But coordinating 30 nations is difficult and slow work, even though some progress has been made in forging co-production agreements for artillery shells through the Ukraine Defense Contact Group. The war in Ukraine “has informed the lack of flexibility in our industrial base” Pentagon Comptroller Mike McCord said at the McAleese Defense Programs conference on Wednesday. LaPlante’s memo adds that the cell is tasked with finding new avenues to “revitalize the overall domestic U.S. industrial base and leverage the industrial capabilities of our allies and partners to achieve national security and economic security goals.” The grinding ground war in Ukraine has relied heavily on artillery and precision rockets and missiles, and has chewed through stockpiles faster than anyone had anticipated under peacetime production plans. The circumstances have created some tension between governments and defense firms, as companies are hesitant to invest in new production lines before they have a contract in hand, but governments want industry to prove they can do the work before awarding contracts. The new cell “will bring innovative, new approaches to the production of defense weapons systems and inform targeted investments to expand production capacity,” Jeff Jurgensen, DoD spokesperson, said in a statement.

Budget & Appropriations

[Pentagon takes budget cuts ‘seriously’ ahead of congressional battles \(Defense News\)](#)

The Pentagon does “take seriously” House Republican plans to slash the federal budget for next year by at least \$130 billion and is readying a report to detail the potential impacts on defense, the department’s comptroller said Wednesday. Speaking to reporters, Mike McCord said the Pentagon, which proposed a \$842 billion budget on Thursday, is drafting a letter to explain several examples of how the department would absorb a potential defense cut. Though only a handful of Republicans lawmakers publicly favor the idea of a defense cut, the letter would likely become ammunition in the Capitol Hill budget battles to come. “I don’t rule out the possibility the House will produce a budget resolution that implements that policy and tells the appropriators to go figure it out — [whether to] exempt defense, don’t exempt defense [from cuts],” McCord said on the sidelines of the McAleese and Associates conference. “We do take it seriously. I wouldn’t say it’s a super likely outcome, but that’s not the same as not-worried about it.” The House Appropriations Committee’s top Democrat, Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, sent a letter in January to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and the leaders of all other federal agencies seeking more details on the impact of fiscal cuts by House Republicans. McCord said he hopes to issue a response this week after it was delayed amid the budget rollout and after White House input. However, Republican leaders and the vast majority of the caucus have insisted they will slash discretionary spending without cutting the defense budget — though it’s unclear how they intend to follow through on that pledge. In fact, several lead Republicans in Congress blasted the Biden administration’s proposed 3.3% defense budget increase as “inadequate” last week. Although lead Republicans have been saying defense cuts should

be taken off the table, the idea of lowering nondefense accounts alone is “totally unrealistic,” McCord said.

[Pentagon Refocuses Spending on Weapons to Deter China](#)

[Yellen tells Congress US banking system 'remains sound' \(AP News\)](#)

A week after the second-largest bank collapse in U.S. history, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told the Senate Finance Committee on Thursday that the nation’s banking system “remains sound” and Americans “can feel confident” about their deposits. Her remarks, coming against the backdrop of deepening concerns about the health of the global financial system, were an effort to signal to markets that there would be no broader contagion from the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in California and Signature Bank in New York. Facing fierce questioning by lawmakers on how Federal Reserve interest rates contributed to the bank failures and whether taxpayers would bear the brunt of the commitment to make depositors at the banks whole, Yellen stressed the need for the federal government to act to assure stability in the market. “We certainly need to analyze carefully what happened to trigger these bank failures and examine our rules and supervision” to prevent failures from happening again, Yellen told the committee. Yellen was the first Biden administration official to face lawmakers over the decision to protect uninsured money at two failed regional banks, a move that some have criticized as a bank “bailout.” “The government took decisive and forceful actions to strengthen public confidence” in the U.S. banking system, Yellen testified. “I can reassure the members of the committee that our banking system remains sound, and that Americans can feel confident that their deposits will be there when they need them.” Yellen also defended the government’s argument that taxpayers will not bear the cost of protecting uninsured money at two failed regional banks. The week has been a whirlwind for markets globally on worries about banks that may be bending under the weight of the fastest set of hikes to interest rates in decades. In Europe, troubles at Credit Suisse, Switzerland’s second-largest lender this week prompted the Swiss central bank to agree to loan Credit Suisse up to 50 billion francs (\$54 billion). In less than a week, Silicon Valley Bank, based in Santa Clara, California, failed after depositors rushed to withdraw money amid anxiety over the bank’s health. Then, regulators convened over the weekend and announced that New York-based Signature Bank also failed. They ensured all depositors, including those holding uninsured funds exceeding \$250,000, were protected by federal deposit insurance.

[Five Charts Show How SVB and Credit Suisse Shook Markets](#)

[Schumer slams House GOP's energy permitting bid \(Politico\)](#)

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Wednesday dismissed House Republicans’ energy package, calling it “as bad and partisan as it gets” and a “nonstarter” as the basis

for negotiations to ease permitting for clean energy and fossil fuel projects. House Republicans on Tuesday formally introduced their sprawling energy bill, H.R. 1, the Lower Energy Costs Act, in what will be their first big policy agenda push of the year. “H.R.1 will lock America into expensive and volatile dirty sources of energy and will set America back a decade or more in our transition towards clean, affordable energy,” Schumer said in remarks on the Senate floor. “The package is a wish list for Big Oil, gutting important environmental safeguards on fossil fuel projects.” The bill combines measures to streamline permitting reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act for energy projects and mines, which Republicans hope will form a basis to negotiate with Senate Democrats, with longtime partisan priorities like prohibiting a ban on fracking, mandating oil and gas lease sales and disapproving of President Joe Biden’s decision to kill the Keystone XL pipeline. But these provisions are unlikely to gain traction in the upper chamber given Democratic opposition. The bill, which is expected to receive a vote on the floor the last week of March, would also repeal major programs in the Inflation Reduction Act such as the \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and the methane tax. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.V.) introduced a permitting proposal last Congress — backed by Schumer and the White House — that was rejected by most Republicans and failed to pass that would have set targets on the length of environmental reviews under NEPA. It also would have granted more authority to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to site transmission lines needed to connect wind and solar generation to far away demand centers. Despite that failure, House Republicans have insisted they’re serious about negotiating with Democrats on a permitting bill.

Advanced Technologies

[How the U.S. Agreed to Provide Nuclear Sub Technology to Australia \(WSJ\)](#)

In April 2021, Australia’s top intelligence official went to Washington with an extraordinary proposal: the government in Canberra was looking to acquire nuclear-powered submarines. The U.S. had provided nuclear submarine technology to Britain during the Cold War and had kept an iron grip on it ever since. But Andrew Shearer, the director-general of Australia’s office of national intelligence, made the case in a meeting with Kurt Campbell, the White House coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, for sharing the tightly guarded capability. The request, Mr. Shearer made clear, was coming from the prime minister himself, according to people familiar with the exchange. Nearly two years later, President Biden and his Australian and British counterparts have settled on a plan to enable Australia to acquire, operate and eventually develop its own nuclear-powered subs. The three-way alliance called Aukus—an acronym for Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.—has survived a change of government in Canberra, a new prime minister in London and congressional skeptics in Washington who fretted that providing submarine technology to Australia might come at the expense of the U.S. Navy. The agreement is being pursued as a way to cement the West’s advantage in undersea military technology over China and strengthen the U.S. alliance with key Pacific and European partners. But carrying out the plan to provide the subs to Australia, a country with no civil nuclear capability, will be the hard part.

To expedite the plan, Australia is to take possession of a U.S. Virginia-class attack submarine by 2032 with at least two more to be provided by the end of that decade. As at least some of the subs are to be pulled from those in service with the U.S. Navy, Congress will need to pass legislation authorizing their transfer to Australia. To ensure that the plan doesn't preclude the U.S. Navy from expanding its own attack submarine fleet, the Pentagon is planning to funnel \$4.6 billion into the U.S. defense industrial base over six years to boost sub production. Australia is expected to invest several billion in the U.S. defense industrial base, including \$2 billion by 2025, U.S. officials say. Those hefty sums, however, are just a portion of what will eventually need to be spent to expand the U.S. ability to build subs and reduce a maintenance backlog. The U.S. Navy had 50 attack subs in its fleet in November, a Navy official said at the time, 18 of which have been either waiting for, or undergoing, maintenance. The goal is to deploy 66 attack subs. Fresh challenges will also come in the 2040s when the production of submarines for Canberra is supposed to shift to Britain and Australia. Those follow-on subs will be based on a British design but will also include American technology, including the S9G nuclear power plant that is used on Virginia-class subs and a U.S. fire control system, which is used to operate the sub's weapons, U.S. officials say.

[Richard Branson's Virgin Orbit in talks about potential buyout](#)

[Delivery drone operator Zipline launches short-range service \(Financial Times\)](#)

Zipline, the world's largest drone logistics service, announced a short-route delivery system on Wednesday designed to let customers in multiple US cities receive prescriptions, lab tests or even custom-made salads within minutes. The California-based start-up, which has completed more than a half million deliveries since its founding in 2014, said it has partnered with three US hospitals in three states — plus Sweetgreen, a salad restaurant chain — to launch a home delivery service that can make a 10-mile trip in 10 minutes. The promise of rapid drone delivery goes back years but has a spotty record. Jeff Bezos predicted a decade ago that the sky would be filled with Amazon drones within five years, but technical challenges have prevented that from happening. Most other projects are in a beta stage, although Wing, a unit of Google parent Alphabet, recently claimed it can now deliver up to 1,000 packages a day in the select areas where it is operating, and has ambitions of increasing that into the millions over the next 18 months. Since 2016 Zipline has been delivering packages to destinations more than 100km away, with the bulk of its operations in Ghana, Nigeria and Rwanda, where doctors can order medical supplies via text message and dispatch emergency blood deliveries at 100km per hour. The private start-up, worth nearly \$3bn, launched emergency operations in the US in 2020 to supply medical supplies for healthcare workers. It also worked with Pfizer to deliver Covid-19 vaccines. Zipline, which is backed by Baillie Gifford, Temasek and Fidelity, among others, plans to do more than 10,000 test flights before deploying the new service early next year for its first partners in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Tacoma, Washington; and Salt Lake City, Utah. The new service is based on its P2 Zip drone, an autonomous winged aircraft that has the ability to hover in the sky above its destination. It sends the package down in a

self-propelled droid capable of pinpointing its landing to an area as small as a patio table.

[TikTok Ramps Up Lobbying in Washington to Try to Avoid U.S. Ban](#)

[Project Blackjack: DARPA's test of satellite laser links delayed \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Pentagon's far-future research organization's plans to demonstrate cross-satellite laser links under its Blackjack program has been delayed, in part due to the lack of an available launch window, according to industry and government officials. "We are in the process of test integration at this point, awaiting delivery of government-furnished equipment. And because we're beholden to DARPA [the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency] for rideshare on a SpaceX Falcon 9, I think the last I heard was that they've pushed us to January of next year for launch," Rich Pang, Telesat Government Solutions vice president for corporate development, said Tuesday during a panel at the Satellite 2023 show. Telesat Government Solutions is the US subsidiary of telecoms behemoth Telesat, which is headquartered in Canada, and is providing a pair of satellites for the test. A DARPA official couldn't confirm an exact launch date for the Telesat birds, but explained in an email today that the agency is awaiting a launch slot as well as the availability of an integration facility. Telesat in October 2021 won a \$18.3 million Blackjack contract to build the two satellites, with options to build a total of 20, using a bus provided by Airbus. At the time, DARPA was predicting the first launch in 2022. The goal of Blackjack's effort is to test optical inter-satellite links (OISLs), each developed by a different vendor, between satellites in low Earth orbit (LEO). OISLs are critical to the Space Development Agency's planned Transport Layer, a mesh network of hundreds of data relay satellites in LEO. The Transport Layer, in turn, will serve as a foundation for the Defense Department's high-priority Joint All Domain Command and Control network.

Military Installations & Communities

[US Air Force secretary wants 'another shot' at adaptive F-35 engine \(Defense News\)](#)

U.S. Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall is having second thoughts about the Pentagon's decision to upgrade the F-35 fighter jet's current engines instead of developing a next-generation replacement. In a discussion at the McAleese & Associates conference in Washington, Kendall said the decision to upgrade the fighters' current Pratt & Whitney-made F135 engines instead of developing a new adaptive engine "was the right decision, given the constraints that we have, but [a choice] that I worry about a little bit." "If we had the opportunity to reconsider that, I think that would be something I'd like to have another shot at," Kendall said. "Right now, it's unaffordable. The only service that wants the new technology is the Air Force right now, and we can't afford it by ourselves." The F-35 is scheduled to receive a series of significant upgrades in the coming years known as the block 4 modernization effort, which will include the ability to carry more weapons, better

recognize targets and conduct advanced electronic warfare. But to handle those upgrades — which F-35 manufacturer Lockheed Martin said will introduce about 518 capabilities — the military says the fighter will need much greater power and cooling abilities. Since 2016, the Air Force has allocated nearly \$2.7 billion for the Adaptive Engine Transition Program, which sought to fund research, development, prototyping and testing of a new kind of engine intended to provide greater thrust, power and cooling abilities. The adaptive engine model uses three streams of air for greater cooling, and has an adaptive cycle that would allow it to switch to the most efficient configuration for any given situation.

[Marine littoral regiment fends off traditional regiment in exercise](#)

[Military Moves to Cut Suicides, But Defers Action on Guns \(Military.com\)](#)

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered a number of improvements in access to mental health care on Thursday to reduce suicides in the military, but held off on endorsing more controversial recommendations to restrict gun and ammunition purchases by young troops, sending them to another panel for study. An independent committee in late February recommended that the Defense Department implement a series of gun safety measures, including waiting periods for the purchase of firearms and ammunition by service members on military property and raising the minimum age for service members to buy guns and ammunition to 25. In a memo released Thursday, Austin called for the establishment of a suicide prevention working group to “assess the advisability and feasibility” of recommendations made by the initial study committee — which would include the gun measures. He also asked for cost estimates and a description of any “barriers” to implementing other changes, and set a deadline of June 2 for that report. At no point did he specifically refer to the gun proposals or mention gun safety. His orders reflect increasing concerns about suicides in the military, despite more than a decade of programs and other efforts to prevent them and spur greater intervention by commanders, friends and family members. But his omission of any gun safety and control measures underscores the likelihood that they would face staunch resistance, particularly in Congress, where such legislation has struggled in recent years. The more immediate changes address broader access to care.

[ACLU sues DC Guard over actions during George Floyd protests](#)

[Saltzman: Space Force investing \\$340 million in FY24 to test and train Guardians \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Space Force is asking Congress to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in fiscal 2024 on new infrastructure that will be used to train Guardians for conflict in space, according to the service’s top uniformed official. “We are developing an operational test and training

infrastructure that will be the backbone of Space Force readiness as Guardians prepare for a high-intensity fight,” Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee Tuesday, adding that the service would be requesting \$340 million to fund the effort. Saltzman, who previewed the launch of the operational test and training infrastructure, or OTTI, during a roundtable with reporters at the Pentagon in January, explained that the funding would buy equipment like new simulators and test ranges to prepare soldiers for how to react if a space-based conflict breaks out. The new OTTI will enable Guardians to “validate” tactics against a realistic peer adversary, he said, pointing to the service’s recent Black Skies training exercise that included “live fire” events like satellite jamming. Officials have said other training missions will drill down into topics like orbital and cyber warfare. Saltzman said he thinks the \$340 million request is “sufficient” for this year because officials “have a lot of studies to do to make sure we’re building the right kind of ranges and the right kind of simulators, and we’re learning as we go a little bit.” The Space Force is still sorting out how to structure many of its priorities, including a plan to field a proliferated constellation of missile warning and tracking satellites across orbits. Saltzman said ongoing analysis prompted the service to cut plans for one Next Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared (Next-Gen OPIR) satellite, reasoning that the service settled on a “two-by-two” plan, meaning two satellites in geosynchronous orbit and two in polar orbit as opposed to an original goal for three in GEO.

Homeland Security

[U.S. Pushes for TikTok Sale to Resolve National Security Concerns \(NYT\)](#)

The Biden administration wants TikTok’s Chinese ownership to sell the app or face a possible ban, TikTok said on Wednesday, as the White House hardens its stance toward resolving national security concerns about the popular video service. The new demand to sell the app was delivered to TikTok in recent weeks, two people with knowledge of the matter said. TikTok is owned by the Chinese internet company ByteDance. The move is a significant shift in the Biden administration’s position toward TikTok, which has been under scrutiny over fears that Beijing could request Americans’ data from the app. The White House had been trying to negotiate an agreement with TikTok that would apply new safeguards to its data and eliminate a need for ByteDance to sell its shares in the app. But the demand for a sale — coupled with the White House’s support for legislation that would allow it to ban TikTok in the United States — hardens the administration’s approach. It harks back to the position of former President Donald J. Trump, who threatened to ban TikTok unless it was sold to an American company. TikTok said it was weighing its options and was disappointed by the decision. The company said its security proposal, which involves storing Americans’ data in the United States, offered the best protection for users.

[Biden’s Budget Request: DHS Would See CISA Funding Increase, \\$4.7 Billion Southwest Border Contingency Fund](#)

[Russia says it will try to retrieve drone after warning U.S. to stop 'hostile' flights near its borders \(NBC News\)](#)

The Kremlin has warned the United States to cease "hostile" activity near its borders and said it would seek to retrieve the wreckage of the American drone that crashed into the Black Sea after a dramatic encounter with Russian fighter jets. Kyiv said Wednesday that the incident — the first known direct confrontation between the two superpowers since Russia invaded Ukraine last year — illustrated the Kremlin's desire to expand the conflict. The U.S. military said a Russian fighter jet harassed and then collided with the propeller of the MQ-9 Reaper on Tuesday, forcing the U.S. to bring the drone down in international waters. Washington said it was a "brazen violation of international law" and summoned Moscow's envoy to lodge a protest. But Russia denied its planes came "into contact" with the drone and said the U.S. was to blame, accusing it of a provocation by conducting surveillance near Russian airspace to help Ukraine. Russian authorities said Wednesday they hoped to recover the remains of the drone. "I don't know if we will be able to get it or not," said Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's National Security Council, according to the state-run news agency Tass. But, he added, "we will definitely" work to do it. Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, also noted that his country has the capability to recover the drone's fragments.

[Border Patrol chief says agency does not have complete operational control of border](#)

[Two Arrested for Trying To Send Over 90 Firearms to Drug Cartel Members in Mexico \(HST\)](#)

United States Attorney Roger B. Handberg announces the arrests of Yuendry Rodriguez Hilario (28, Cleveland, OH) and Saleh Yusuf Saleh (24, Cleveland, OH) on a criminal complaint charging conspiracy to transfer firearms to commit a felony and/or drug trafficking crime; possession of firearms in furtherance of drug trafficking, illegal transfer of firearms, unlicensed firearm dealing, and conspiracy to violate federal gun laws. If convicted on all counts, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. The defendants were arrested in Cleveland, Ohio on March 2, 2023, and both were recently ordered detained pending the outcomes of their cases. According to the complaint, since 2021 undercover agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), posing as Mexican cartel members, were introduced to Rodriguez Hilario as a trafficker of firearms that could be smuggled into Mexico. Undercover communications with Rodriguez Hilario and others discussed the purchase of AR-15s and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. One of the coconspirators described that he sold AR-15s and AK-47s to El Salvadorans and had cocaine available for distribution. Rodriguez Hilario further offered fentanyl to one of the agents to make pills.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[First round of \\$2.5B EV charging network funding open to applications \(Transportation Today\)](#)

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced it is accepting applications for a new multi-billion program to fund electric vehicle (EV) and alternative fueling infrastructure Tuesday. The \$2.5 billion program, called the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Program, would fund EV charging and alternative vehicle-fueling infrastructure projects by cities, counties, local governments, and Tribes across the country over the next five years. This initial round of funding makes \$700 million in allocations from fiscal years 2022 and 2023 available to deploy charging and fueling infrastructure in publicly accessible locations in urban and rural communities, as well as along the Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs) being established across the country. “By helping bring EV charging to communities across the country, this Administration is modernizing our infrastructure and creating good jobs in the process,” U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said. “With today’s announcement, we are taking another big step forward in creating an EV future that is convenient, affordable, reliable, and accessible to all Americans.” The announcement is a major step in creating a national network of 500,000 public EV charging stations and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52 percent by 2030, officials said. Established as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CFI Discretionary Grant Program would require EV chargers to adhere to National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program standards published by the Federal Highway Administration that support a consistent charging experience for users and ensures the national charging network is accessible and equitable, regardless of where consumers live.

[U.S. Approves \\$31 Billion Merger of Two Big Railroads](#)

[Schumer asks for expanded investigation into Norfolk Southern, other railroads \(The Hill\)](#)

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) is urging the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to expand its investigation into Norfolk Southern to include other major railroads to determine ways to improve rail safety in the aftermath of the derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, last month. Schumer said in a letter to NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy, first reported by Politico Playbook, that the agency should expand its investigation to include all Class I freight railroads, which are those that have the largest operating revenues in the country. The railroads include BNSF Railway, CSX, Union Pacific, Canadian National, Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern. Schumer said a “troubling and fatal” combination of regulations being rolled back, more than 26,500 rail accidents and incidents happening nationwide in the past five years and more than 30,000 employees losing their jobs necessitates a “full and comprehensive investigation.” “As we have seen firsthand, the freight rail industry has time and time again dangerously played fast and loose with the regulations while endangering millions of Americans throughout the country,” he said. Schumer’s call comes in the aftermath of the Norfolk Southern derailment early in February that allowed toxic chemicals to escape into the atmosphere. Thousands of residents of East Palestine, not far from Ohio’s border with Pennsylvania,

were forced to evacuate for about five days.

[Transportation Department includes \\$4.45B for rail, bus rapid transit projects in budget request](#)

[Budget Request Includes \\$951 Million for FMCSA \(Transportation Topics\)](#)

Federal commercial transportation operations would receive nearly \$1 billion under a fiscal 2024 budget request the White House unveiled this month. President Joe Biden's budget for the U.S. Department of Transportation would dedicate \$951.3 million for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. The agency is tasked with regulating commercial vehicles, such as heavy-duty trucks and buses. FMCSA's proposed budget allocation includes \$435 million for its safety operations division and \$516.3 million for its motor carrier safety grants unit. Specific to the operations division, the funding would back programs related to information technology upgrades, research and technology initiatives and outreach projects central to promoting highway safety. "FMCSA's primary goal is to improve roadway safety to reduce large-truck and bus fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. In carrying out its safety mandate, FMCSA embraces and plays a vital role in DOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy. The NRSS sets a vision of zero fatalities on our nation's roadways, outlines steps DOT will take to advance toward this goal and lays out a number of priority actions for FMCSA," per USDOT background accompanying the budget proposal. The safety grants portfolio consists of high-priority activities programs, a commercial driver license implementation initiative and commercial motor vehicle enforcement training and support. "FMCSA's grants represent an ongoing investment into motor carrier, driver and [commercial motor vehicle] safety through the consistent nationwide application, education and enforcement of laws.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

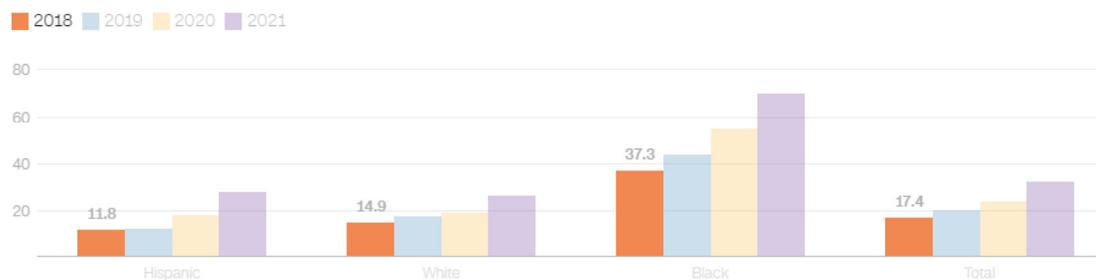
[The U.S. Program That Brought H.I.V. Treatment to 20 Million People \(NYT\)](#)

In the 20 years since its inception, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief has delivered lifesaving treatment to more than 20 million people in 54 countries, the most successful global health campaign of its kind, according to a report released on Tuesday. The \$7.5 billion program, housed in the State Department, is due for reauthorization by Congress this year. In the past, it has received strong bipartisan support. President George W. Bush announced the establishment of PEPFAR in January 2003, when treatment for H.I.V. was unavailable in many parts of the world. In 2004, the program began providing antiretroviral drugs to people in Africa. The initial goal was to treat two million people with H.I.V. over five years. Now, PEPFAR is estimated to have saved as many as 25 million lives. "I knew it was going to be big, but I think it turned out to be even bigger and better than we thought," Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the program's architect, said in an interview. "It should serve as a model of what can be done when you make a major commitment." About

38 million people were living with H.I.V. in 2021, and about 29 million of them were receiving treatment. About 650,000 people died from an H.I.V.-related cause that year, and about 1.5 million people became newly infected with the virus. Antiretroviral drugs can suppress H.I.V. levels, prevent transmission of the virus to sexual partners and cut the risk of transmission from infected pregnant women to their babies. Pefar “was trying to do something that had never been done before, to provide treatment to millions of persons with H.I.V. in Africa where there was no care infrastructure,” said Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious-disease expert at Emory University in Atlanta and chair of Pefar’s scientific advisory board.

[US maternal death rate rose sharply in 2021, CDC data shows, and experts worry the problem is getting worse](#)

The rate of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births continued to rise across all races from 2018 to 2021, but especially for Black women.



[New double lung transplant technique is successful in two late-stage cancer patients \(NBC News\)](#)

A novel treatment for certain late-stage lung cancers has succeeded in the first two patients to undergo the operation. Using knowledge learned during the Covid pandemic, surgeons at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago successfully performed double lung transplantations in two patients with stage 4 cancer. Both patients are alive and well. When the cancer spreads from one lung to the other, and doesn’t respond to standard treatments, including radiation and chemotherapy, patients are typically left with no options. That was the case for Albert Khoury, 55, of Chicago, who was diagnosed with lung cancer in early 2020. Initially, his tumors were concentrated in just one lung. But despite two rounds of chemotherapy, the cancer had spread to the other lung. It was stage 4. “They told me, ‘Just spend time with your siblings. You have a few months to live,’” he said. But in September 2021, Khoury became the first person with stage 4 lung cancer to receive a double lung transplantation. The novel treatment has since been performed on a second patient whose cancer had also spread to both the lungs, a woman named Tannaz Ameli, 65. The approach was the last resort for both Khoury and Ameli. “If all the options have been exhausted, only then are we going to consider this,” said Dr. Ankit Bharat, the chief of thoracic surgery and the director of the Northwestern Medicine Canning Thoracic

Institute. Lung transplants for cancer patients have historically involved replacing one lung at a time. The technique comes with some pretty hefty risks: The remaining cancerous lung can contaminate the new lung with cancer and the incisions can cause cancer cells to leak into the bloodstream.

[Biden administration names first round of drugs to face Medicare rebate penalties](#)

[3 Years On, Why Don't We Know the Extent of Long COVID? \(WebMD\)](#)

More than 3 years into the pandemic, finding out how many Americans have long COVID – and what to do about it – has proved to be far harder than identifying those infected with the virus who have recovered or died from it. How best to simply define, diagnose, measure, and treat it have remained elusive, putting patients and doctors in an impossible situation. But what is clear is that even at the lowest estimates, the CDC says 1 in 13 Americans (7.5%, or nearly 26 million) have had or still have long COVID. But some research suggests that figure underestimates the actual number of Americans who are affected. The World Health Organization estimates between 10% and 20% of people infected with COVID-19 end up with symptoms lasting 3 months or longer. The U.S. Census Bureau's most recent Household Pulse Survey puts the current figure at close to 11% – down from nearly 19% last summer, but up from 7% in October. More than a quarter of those had symptoms that made them less able to do day-to-day activities by “a lot.” And research published in January by the Scripps Research Translational Institute in San Diego estimated at least 1 in 10 Americans with COVID continue to have long-term symptoms. But some experts believe the World Health Organization, Census Bureau, and Scripps estimates are in fact conservative, even as others say the true number is likely closer to 5%. One reason for the disparity: There is still no standard definition for long COVID.

Climate & Development

[Klobuchar, Fischer introduce bill to make higher-ethanol fuel available year-round \(The Hill\)](#)

Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) on Tuesday introduced legislation that would make higher-ethanol fuel blends available year-round, a top priority among Midwestern lawmakers in particular. The sale of so-called E15, which is 15 percent rather than 10 percent ethanol, is restricted during the summer. Last year, as already-climbing gas prices spiraled following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, President Biden suspended the restrictions. The Environmental Protection Agency has since announced a proposed rule that would authorize its sale year-round, but it would not take effect until 2024. “By ensuring consumers can access E15 gasoline throughout the year, our bipartisan legislation will benefit our economy, decrease prices at the pump, and reduce

our dependence on foreign oil,” Klobuchar said in a statement. “It’s critical that we diversify our fuel supply and invest in affordable energy solutions. I look forward to working with Senator Fischer to pass this bipartisan bill.” “Our bipartisan legislation is the only permanent, nationwide solution to unleashing the power of year-round E15. It’s why we’ve been able to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders from the oil/gas, biofuel, ag, and transportation sectors to support our legislation,” Fischer said in a statement. “Negating the need for a patchwork of regulations will ensure all Americans can enjoy lower costs at the pump. With this unique coalition of support, I’m more optimistic than ever that we can make year-round E15 a reality.” Fischer and Klobuchar previously introduced legislation for year-round ethanol sales in summer 2021, but that move came in the wake of a court ruling that threw out a Trump-era EPA rule allowing year-round sales.

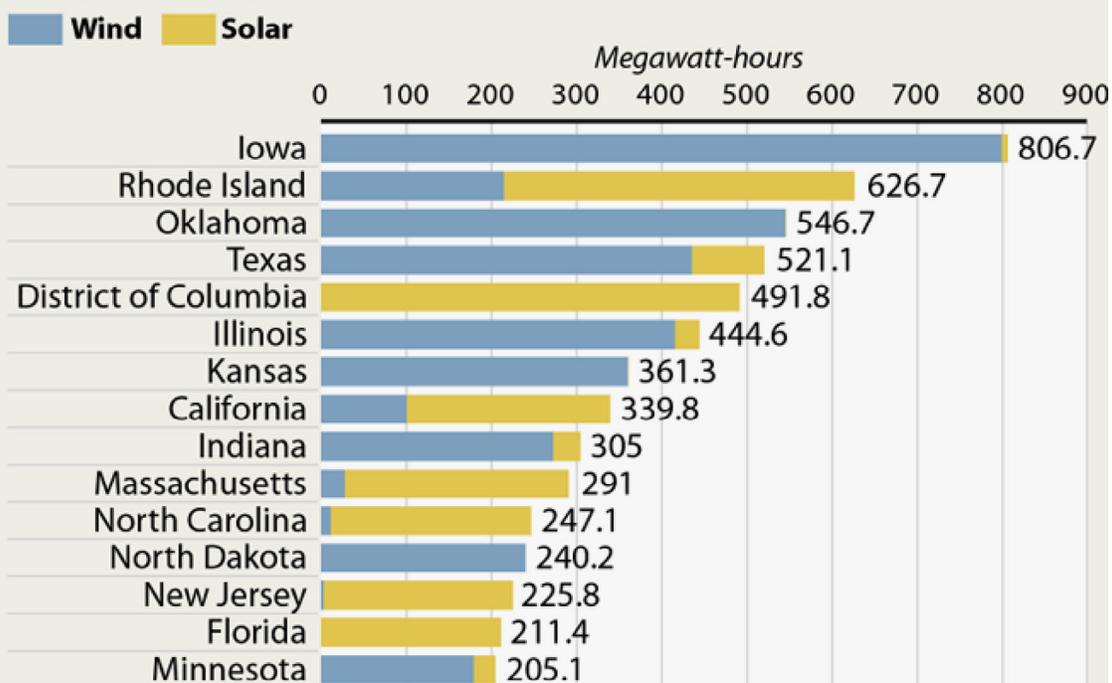
These Small- and Medium-Sized States Punch Above Their Weight in Renewable Energy Generation

Punching Above Their Weight

Iowa leads the country with most wind plus solar generation per square mile of land, followed by Rhode Island.

U.S. WIND AND SOLAR ELECTRICITY GENERATION

In megawatt-hours per square mile of land area, ranked by combined totals, 2022



[Biden approves Willow Project. What to know about the move to allow oil drilling in Alaska \(USA Today\)](#)

The controversial Willow Project is set to move forward after a previously uncertain future under President Joe Biden. The administration approved the project Monday despite fierce opposition from environmental groups. Here are some things to know about the Willow project, Biden approves massive oil project in Alaska, moves to bar future drilling in Arctic Ocean. The project is currently the largest proposed oil project on U.S. federal land as ConocoPhillips, a Houston-based petroleum company, looks to drill within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. ConocoPhillips predicts it could produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day, which would account for 1.5% of total U.S. oil production. The administration greenlit the project Monday. However, Biden approved a scaled-back version of the plan after the Interior Department only approved three of the five drilling sites proposed by ConocoPhillips. The exclusion of those additional sites reduced the size of the 200-well project by about 40% and eliminated the need for 11 miles of road, 20 miles of pipelines and 133 acres of gravel. The company also agreed to forfeit 68,000 acres of existing leases in the National Petroleum reserve-Alaska to reduce its footprint on the land by one-third. The Biden administration was limited by legal restraints in reviewing the Willow oil project, according to a White House official who said the company had valid rights on the land because of decades-old leases. The administration was convinced the courts would have blocked an outright rejection of the Willow project and potentially imposed fines on the government, said the official, who spoke about the White House's considerations on the condition of anonymity.

[E.P.A. Tells Dozens of States to Clean Up Their Smokestacks](#)

[Louisiana's request to oversee carbon storage projects moving ahead, EPA says \(Reuters\)](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by May should complete a review of Louisiana's request to take on oversight of carbon capture projects, according to a letter to the state, which wants to speed up approvals. Louisiana is seeking to permit and monitor so-called Class VI wells, which bury carbon dioxide and other climate-warming gases underground. EPA now decides most requests and permitting has taken years in some cases, critics say. The state is responsible for about 16% of oil output and ranks third in natural gas and reserves, according to the Energy Information Administration. It is home to the most number of liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminals, which plan to bury emissions as a way to mitigate their climate impact. After the EPA reviews Louisiana's application, there will be a 60-day public comment period, EPA Administrator Michael Regan said in the letter to Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards dated March 13. Edwards this year wrote to the EPA's administrator to request an update on the application process, citing concerns about a lack of communication by the federal agency. Carbon capture recently got a shot in the arm through the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act, which provides incentives for carbon projects to make them economically attractive. Occidental Petroleum (OXY.N), Talos Energy (TALO.N) and Verde CO2 are firms eyeing carbon capture and storage projects in Louisiana.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committees

House: None Listed

Senate:

Wednesday, March 22nd, 2023, 9:30 AM EST: ["To Receive Testimony on the Recruiting Challenges Facing the United States Military."](#)

Wednesday, March 22nd, 2023, 2:30 PM EST: ["To Receive Testimony on the DOD Small Business Tools for Enhancing the Industrial Base"](#)

Appropriations Committees

House:

Thursday, March 23rd, 2023, 10:00 AM EST: ["Fiscal Year 2024 Request for the Department of Defense"](#)

Thursday, March 23rd, 2023, 10:30 AM EST: ["Fiscal Year 2024 Request for the Department of Energy"](#)

Thursday, March 23rd, 2023, 2:00 PM EST: ["Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Army Military Construction and Family Housing"](#)

Senate:

Wednesday, March 22nd, 2023, 10:00 AM EST: ["A Review of the Fiscal Year 2024 President's Budget for the U.S. Forest Service"](#)

Homeland Security Committees

House: None Listed

Senate:

Wednesday, March 22nd, 2023, 10:00 AM EST: ["Drug Shortage Health and National Security Risks: Underlying Causes and Needed Reforms"](#)

Thursday, March 23rd, 2023, 10:00 AM EST: ["Modernizing the Government's"](#)

[Classification System"](#)

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