



7239 Pocahontas Trail, Williamsburg, VA 23185

Contact: Iyanla XO, Marketing and Administrative Specialist

Phone: (757) 790-2506

Email: ixo@gowata.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2023

WATA Appoints New Executive Director

WILLIAMSBURG, Virginia – Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA) Board of Directors is pleased to announce the unanimous appointment of Matthew Scalia as the Executive Director of WATA. This appointment follows a nationwide search for the Executive Director position.

Mr. Scalia has recently retired from the US Army as a Colonel following a 27-year career. He is a graduate of the USMA West Point and received his Master of Strategic Studies from the US Army War College.

In his military career, he has served as the City Manager of Fort Benning, GA, and recently Deputy Senior Executive US Army Installation Command of Fort Eustis, VA.

Mr. Scalia and his family reside in James City County.

When asked about his appointment, he said "I'm excited and fortunate to join the WATA as its Executive Director. My family and I fell in love with the area when we moved here two years ago and I'm looking forward to being part of a team which provides such an important service to the community."

Paul Holt, Chair of the WATA Board of Directors, stated, "This is an exciting time for WATA. With the addition of new technologies for the buses, new investments in facilities, and the development of an updated Strategic Plan, WATA is improving services for both operators and riders throughout the Historic Triangle. The hiring of an Executive Director is an opportunity to continue our commitment to the important work of evolving WATA to better meet the region's goals." Holt continued, "On behalf of my colleagues on the Board of Directors, we want to welcome Matt and look forward to a long and productive working relationship with him."

Mr. Scalia will start his assignment on April 17, 2023.

From: The Roosevelt Group <Jvogl@rooseveltdc.com>
Sent: Friday, March 31, 2023 8:00 AM
To: Schott, Heather
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Executive Insight Brief



Executive Insight Brief

March 31, 2023

Headlines - Aerospace & Defense - Budget & Approps - Advanced Tech - Military Installations & Communities -
Homeland Security - Transportation & Infrastructure - Biotech & Healthcare - Climate & Development

Received this as a forwarded email? [Sign up](#) to be on the official distribution list!

Notable Headlines

- [Grand Jury Votes to Indict Donald Trump](#)
- [House passes GOP-led energy package touted as party's top priority](#)
- [Senate Votes to End Iraq War Authorization](#)
- [Russia Detains Wall Street Journal Reporter](#)
- [US to withhold nuclear data from Russia in escalation of tensions](#)

Worth reading: [Xi Jinping Says He Is Preparing China for War](#)

Aerospace & Defense

[Pentagon Says Only Half of its F-35 Jet Fleet is Mission-Ready \(Bloomberg\)](#)

Only about half of the Pentagon's fleet of F-35 fighter jets are considered mission-capable, well below the target of 65% and a state of readiness the program manager terms "unacceptable." As of February, the monthly average rate of mission-capable jets in the US's fleet of more than 540 F-35s was 53.1%, according to Air Force Lieutenant General Michael Schmidt, the program manager. That means they can fly at least some of their required missions, such as combat, show-of-force flights, training and testing. The percentage of planes capable of flying all their missions — the so-called full mission capable rate — was less than 30%, Schmidt said in written testimony prepared for a Wednesday hearing of the House Armed Service Committee's aviation subcommittee. "This is unacceptable and maximizing readiness is my top priority," Schmidt said in his prepared remarks. Schmidt said his goal is to increase readiness rates by at least 10% in the next 12 months. "Readiness challenges remain, as indicated in multiple Government Accountability Office findings," he said, according to the remarks. The readiness rates marked a drop from 2020, when the fleet's average full mission-capable rate stood at about 39%, according to the GAO. The partial capability rate was 69% in fiscal year 2020. The availability rate for jets assigned to combat missions stood by the end of fiscal 2022 at 65%, according to the Defense Department's operational test office. It's not clear if last month's readiness rates represent temporary dip or the beginning of a long-term trend. Schmidt's statement doesn't spell out the reasons for the drop but past culprits have been a lack of spare parts as well as parts and engine components breaking more frequently than anticipated. Other problems include long depot repair times as well as Pratt & Whitney engine power modules needing repair or replacement faster than expected. Schmidt's plan to fix the problem will focus on addressing unspecified "top degraders" of readiness by gathering program personnel, international users, Lockheed Martin Corp, Pratt & Whitney and their subcontractors every two weeks.

[F-35 upgrades slip to 2024, drawing lawmaker's ire](#)

[Pentagon Woos Silicon Valley to Join Ranks of Arms Makers \(WSJ\)](#)

The Pentagon is seeking to enlist Silicon Valley startups in its effort to fund and develop

new weapons technology and more-nimble suppliers, as the U.S. races to keep pace with China's military advances. The push to tap private capital comes in the midst of concern that U.S. defense-industry consolidation has led to dependence on a few large companies that rely on government funding for research and is hampering innovation. Meanwhile, China has pulled ahead in some key technologies, ranging from small drones to hypersonic missiles, helped by Beijing's use of external public-private guidance funds, according to current and former Pentagon officials. Steve Blank, co-founder of the Gordian Knot Center for National Security Innovation at Stanford University, said some estimates place Beijing's capital infusion into the tech sector at more than \$1 trillion. The Biden administration recently requested \$115 million to fund a new Pentagon unit called the Office of Strategic Capital, which is designed to attract more investment, particularly venture capital, into companies producing technology and products viewed as critical to the military. It is the latest in a variety of Pentagon-backed efforts to harvest ideas from outside the traditional defense sector. These efforts coincide with rising interest by venture-capital investors in the military business, spurred by Washington's focus on China, and the success of such companies as Elon Musk's SpaceX in winning Pentagon business. Roughly \$6 billion annually is now flowing from private capital into the U.S. defense and aerospace market, up from around \$1 billion in 2017, according to PitchBook Data Inc., which tracks private funding. The Defense Department has for years signaled an interest in working with nontraditional suppliers in the tech industry, but there were few successes. That changed in 2016, when the software startup Palantir Technologies Inc. sued to compete on a Pentagon contract, said Mr. Stephens, a Palantir executive at the time. The startup, which designed a system to allow users to sift through large intelligence data sets, argued that it had an existing product the Pentagon should consider rather than developing a bespoke system. Palantir prevailed. "This was the turning point for private companies," said Mr. Stephens, who co-founded Anduril Industries Inc., a startup that makes drone and surveillance systems. More recently, Anduril has secured U.S. military business without the need for a legal battle. Those companies have demonstrated that the Pentagon is a market now open to startups, said Gilman Louie, chief executive and co-founder of America's Frontier Fund, which invests in technologies to address national and economic security problems. "It's the younger, innovative companies that are dominating the cyber, AI, software spaces," said Mr. Louie, who ran In-Q-Tel, the Central Intelligence Agency's venture-capital arm.

[Pentagon Prepares for Space Warfare as Potential Threats From China, Russia Grow](#)

[Milley: US has long way to go to build munitions stockpile \(AP News\)](#)

The U.S. military "has a long ways to go" to beef up its munitions stockpiles and ensure the country is ready for any large-scale war, the top U.S. military officer told Congress on

Wednesday. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the war in Ukraine has underscored the heavy use of munitions that is required during any major conflict. He and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin faced repeated questioning from members of Congress this week about the impact the war is having on the Pentagon, as it supplies Ukraine with much of the ammunition it needs to fend off the Russian forces. They, and senior Army leaders, said the conflict has pushed the U.S. to increase production rates and re-evaluate how much of a stockpile is really needed as tensions with China and Russia continue to rise. "If there was a war on the Korean peninsula or great power war between the United States and Russia or the United States and China, the consumption rates would be off the charts," Milley said in testimony to the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday. "So I'm concerned. I know the secretary is ... we've got a ways to go to make sure our stockpiles are prepared for the real contingencies." He said Austin directed the military to conduct a complete review of all its war plans and assess the munitions estimates, which can then form the basis for future budget requests. The Pentagon is requesting \$30 million in the 2024 fiscal year budget to invest in the industrial base and to "buy the maximum number of munitions that American industry can produce," Austin said during the same hearing. In testimony earlier this week, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth told lawmakers that right now the Army is "comfortable that the amount of lethal assistance we've been providing is not eroding our readiness, but we keep a close eye on that." A key concern is the 155 mm ammunition. The U.S. has sent Ukraine 160 howitzers and more than 1 million of the 155 mm howitzer rounds. The munitions have been put to heavy use with as many as 3,000 rounds fired a day, according to the Pentagon. Wormuth, who visited the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant in Pennsylvania where the shell casings for the rounds are made, said the service asked for \$1.5 billion in the budget to be able to shore up that production. She said the U.S. would like to increase production from about 20,000 shells a month to 75,000 a month by 2025. Austin and Wormuth also said the Pentagon is hoping that Congress will allow it to do multi-year procurement plans in order to save money and provide stability for the industry.

Budget & Appropriations

[Republican Budget Still Months Away, Complicating Debt-Ceiling Talks \(WSJ\)](#)

President Biden said he needs to see House Republicans' budget proposal to start negotiations related to raising the nation's borrowing limit. House Republicans' response: Not going to happen. The chairman of the House Budget Committee, Texas Rep. Jodey Arrington, said in an interview that the GOP budget process could take months to play out, pushing it past the deadline for Congress to act on raising the debt ceiling and avoid a U.S. default on debt payments and other government obligations. Instead, he and other top Republicans want to start talks immediately on a shorter list of demands for this year, without a formal budget in hand. "The more urgent matter is to address the debt ceiling and negotiate spending limitations and broader fiscal reforms in the process," Mr. Arrington

said. On when Republicans could produce a budget, the Texas lawmaker said he would be disappointed if the House didn't pass a budget resolution before the end of the fiscal year in September. Republicans remain locked in a stalemate with the White House over the debt ceiling. GOP lawmakers want spending reductions and policy changes as a condition for raising the limit. Mr. Biden has said the debt ceiling should be raised with no conditions attached, while saying he is open to a separate debate over fiscal policy once Republicans produce a budget. The Treasury Department ran up against the roughly \$31.4 trillion debt limit in January. It is now deploying special accounting maneuvers to keep paying the government's obligations to bondholders, Social Security recipients and others. The U.S. could become unable to pay all of its bills as soon as this summer. Mr. Arrington pointed to a list of priorities presented by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.) as the opening bid for Republicans in their negotiations with the White House. The list, referenced in a letter Mr. McCarthy sent Tuesday to Mr. Biden, includes rolling back top-line spending to fiscal 2022 levels and locking in small annual increases from there, as well as clawing back unspent Covid-19 funds, strengthening work requirements for government programs and making changes to energy policy. In his letter, Mr. McCarthy said that talks should begin immediately. The White House released its own budget proposal earlier this month, which includes tax increases designed to narrow the budget deficit. Mr. Biden said Tuesday that he wanted to see Mr. McCarthy's budget plan before Easter recess—which starts Friday—before beginning talks. While neither budget would have a chance of becoming law, they serve to outline the parties' policy intentions. Republicans have set a goal of balancing the budget over 10 years while extending expiring tax cuts, an effort that would require deep reductions across the government, particularly if Social Security, Medicare and defense are off the table, as lawmakers have indicated. Mr. Arrington said the broader overhaul of federal taxes and spending would have to wait until later this year, because of its complexities as well as the need to build GOP consensus in the closely divided House. Delaying a fuller budget, he said, would also put off anticipated political attacks that could derail talks over the debt ceiling with Mr. Biden.

[McHenry: 'I've never been more pessimistic' about the debt ceiling](#)

[Fed's Susan Collins says she expects one more quarter-point rate increase \(Financial Times\)](#)

A top Federal Reserve official has said she expects the US central bank to implement one more quarter-point rate rise in its battle against high inflation, despite lingering concerns about the stability of the banking system. Susan Collins, president of the Boston Fed, on Thursday said inflation across the country remains too high, arguing there is "more work to do" to get it back to the central bank's 2 per cent target. "I currently anticipate some modest additional policy tightening, and then holding through the end of this year," she said as she endorsed this month's projections from the Fed, which showed most officials

backing the federal funds rate rising to 5 per cent to 5.25 percent this year. The benchmark rate currently hovers at 4.75 percent to 5 percent, following the central bank's decision to plough ahead with a quarter-point rate increase last week despite the recent turmoil that has engulfed the regional bank sector. Speaking at a conference hosted by the National Association for Business Economics, Collins described the Fed's latest forecast as "reasonably balancing the risk of monetary policy not being restrictive enough to bring inflation down, and the risk that activity slows by more than needed to address elevated price pressures". In the press conference that followed the latest rate decision, Fed chair Jay Powell warned of a potential credit crunch as lenders pull back — a view Collins echoed on Thursday. She said it was "likely" banks would now take a somewhat more conservative outlook and tighten lending standards, thus contributing to slowing the economy and reducing inflationary pressures". "These developments may partially offset the need for additional rate increases," Collins added. Powell has said the recent tightening of financial conditions could be the equivalent of a "rate hike or perhaps more than that". In a discussion that followed her remarks, Collins said she had planned to raise her forecast for the fed funds rate this year before the implosion of Silicon Valley Bank. Collins on Thursday reiterated her belief that the Fed can pull off a so-called "soft landing", avoiding a recession as it damps demand through higher borrowing costs.

[How US Industrial Policy Is Changing the World Economy](#)

[Congress appropriated \\$500M for workers. Democrats can't agree on whether to spend it \(Politico\)](#)

Congress appropriated nearly \$500 million last year to help American workers whose jobs have been sent overseas. But two powerful Democrats disagree over whether that money can or should be spent, leaving relief for tens of thousands of workers in limbo. The disagreement between Senate Finance Chair Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (D-Wash.) is just the latest symptom of congressional gridlock on trade policy that has allowed multiple programs — from worker relief funds to tariff exemption programs for manufacturers and developing nations — to expire in recent years. Ending the relief payments would deal a blow to President Joe Biden's trade policy that has sought to make international commerce easier on middle- and low-income Americans. The dispute over the funding for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) — a Department of Labor program that provides income support, job retraining and other relief for victims of outsourcing — centers on language in the omnibus spending package that Congress passed last December. The bill included new funding for TAA, but did not explicitly reauthorize the program, which expired earlier in the year. According to two Appropriations Committee aides involved in the talks, \$500 million in funding was included in the draft in hopes Democrats and Republicans could reach a deal to extend the TAA program, but they failed to do so. In the rush to pass the final bill, the appropriations provision was not

altered, and aides felt it was not necessary to do so because the program was not authorized. The aides were granted anonymity to discuss confidential policy negotiations. While stressing that the senator supports TAA in principle, Murray's office believes the program remains expired and the money cannot be spent without authorizing language. After the bill was signed and Murray became chair of the Appropriations Committee, she called DOL to relay that information and request the agency not restart processing applications for TAA aid. "The appropriations bill that passed at the end of the year said the program ended, that's the way it was written," Murray said in a brief Capitol Hill interview on Monday. She declined to comment on the language from her own committee allocating nearly \$500 million to the program, reiterating that the bill "specifically said that the program was ended" and that "is all I'm going to say." Wyden, one of Murray's senior Democratic colleagues whose committee oversees the TAA program, is challenging that interpretation. Wyden and House Democrats tried for months to get an agreement with Republicans to authorize the program for another year. Republicans insisted throughout negotiations that the Biden administration would need to commit to new trade talks overseas to get the TAA payments restarted — a demand the White House dismissed. Though they never reached a deal on that language, Wyden says that having money appropriated for the program is enough for DOL to reopen TAA again.

Advanced Technologies

[For Chip Makers, a Choice Between the U.S. and China Looms \(WSJ\)](#)

Semiconductor companies seeking federal grants under the Chips Act could face a tough decision: take Washington's help to expand in the U.S., or preserve their ability to expand in China. The Biden administration last week proposed new rules detailing restrictions chip companies would face on operations in China and other countries of concern if the companies accept taxpayer funding. Some of the proposed restrictions, known as the China guardrails, were tougher than industry executives, lawyers and national-security analysts say they had expected—both for leading-edge semiconductor plants needed for advanced military weapons systems as well as factories making so-called legacy chips used in consumer electronics. "It's going to make a good number of companies question whether they want to accept the Chips funding," said Angela Styles, an Akin Gump lawyer who advises semiconductor-industry companies. The restrictions would be particularly onerous for East Asian companies with significant operations in China, where they have already invested billions of dollars. These include Samsung Electronics Co. and SK Hynix Inc. of South Korea, the world's top two memory-chip makers, and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. or TSMC, the world's largest contract chip maker. U.S. restrictions placed on exports of advanced chips and chip-making equipment to China would make it more difficult for South Korean companies to continue investing in China, Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun said in Seoul recently, before the U.S. Commerce Department's detailed proposals on the Chips Act's guardrails. It would be up to the companies to make those

decisions, he said. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said the Biden administration isn't seeking to decouple economically from China. "We want American businesses to continue to do business in and with China. And vice versa," she said in an interview with The Wall Street Journal. "But we do have to be eyes wide open about the risks presented to the United States." She added that China has made it clear it wants access to the most advanced U.S. technology to incorporate it into its military capability. "We just can't allow that to happen," she said. Ms. Raimondo said she might visit China this fall to keep communication open with Beijing and to make sure U.S. businesses can operate on a level playing field. Big companies viewed as candidates for Chips Act funding are largely withholding public comment for now.

[TSMC: double taxation puts US expansion at risk](#)

[SES, Intelsat Near Deal to Create \\$10 Billion Europe Satellite Giant \(Bloomberg\)](#)

SES SA is in talks to combine with rival Intelsat SA to create a satellite giant that can better compete with billionaire Elon Musk. Luxembourg-based SES said in a statement Wednesday it's "engaged in discussions regarding a possible combination with Intelsat," confirming an earlier Bloomberg News report. SES said its board remains "fully committed" to acting in the best interest of SES shareholders, and there's no certainty a transaction will materialize. The companies are in advanced negotiations and aim to reach an agreement as soon as the next few weeks, people with knowledge of the matter said. A transaction could value the combined business at more than \$10 billion including debt, according to the people, who asked not to be identified because the information is private. A representative for Intelsat declined to comment. A combination would help SES bulk up at a time when it's facing fresh competition. Plans by Musk and fellow tycoon Jeff Bezos to launch thousands of spacecraft into lower orbits and blanket the earth in fast broadband have pushed the traditional satellite industry into mergers. "The market is highly fragmented in a sector where scale is critical," Credit Suisse Group AG analysts including Pilar Vico wrote in a research note Wednesday, noting there are still about 55 operators globally. "The synergies could be considerable." SES and Intelsat hold a combined 40% share of the fixed satellite services market, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc. Any merger would help SES better position itself against an evolving backdrop, with new players and new technologies set to bring disruption, Goldman analysts including Andrew Lee wrote in a research report. A deal would need the blessing of the Luxembourg government, which is SES's largest shareholder.

[The Vulkan Files: Secret trove offers rare look into Russian cyberwar](#)

ambitions

[Elon Musk and other tech leaders call for pause in 'out of control' AI race \(CNN\)](#)

Some of the biggest names in tech are calling for artificial intelligence labs to stop the training of the most powerful AI systems for at least six months, citing “profound risks to society and humanity.” Elon Musk was among the dozens of tech leaders, professors and researchers who signed the letter, which was published by the Future of Life Institute, a nonprofit backed by Musk. The letter comes just two weeks after OpenAI announced GPT-4, an even more powerful version of the technology that underpins the viral AI chatbot tool, ChatGPT. In early tests and a company demo, the technology was shown drafting lawsuits, passing standardized exams and building a working website from a hand-drawn sketch. The letter said the pause should apply to AI systems “more powerful than GPT-4.” It also said independent experts should use the proposed pause to jointly develop and implement a set of shared protocols for AI tools that are safe “beyond a reasonable doubt.” “Advanced AI could represent a profound change in the history of life on Earth, and should be planned for and managed with commensurate care and resources,” the letter said. “Unfortunately, this level of planning and management is not happening, even though recent months have seen AI labs locked in an out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no one – not even their creators – can understand, predict, or reliably control.” If a pause is not put in place soon, the letter said governments should step in and create a moratorium. The wave of attention around ChatGPT late last year helped renew an arms race among tech companies to develop and deploy similar AI tools in their products. OpenAI, Microsoft and Google are at the forefront of this trend, but IBM, Amazon, Baidu and Tencent are working on similar technologies. A long list of startups are also developing AI writing assistants and image generators. Artificial intelligence experts have become increasingly concerned about AI tools’ potential for biased responses, the ability to spread misinformation and the impact on consumer privacy. These tools have also sparked questions around how AI can upend professions, enable students to cheat, and shift our relationship with technology. The letter hints at the broader discomfort inside and outside the industry with the rapid pace of advancement in AI. Some governing agencies in China, the EU and Singapore have previously introduced early versions of AI governance frameworks.

Military Installations & Communities

[BAE begins major reshuffle of Army, Marine Corps vehicle work sites \(Defense News\)](#)

BAE Systems is moving most of its production of howitzers and recovery vehicles to other

locations in order to make room at its York, Pennsylvania, facility to build new Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicles and Amphibious Combat Vehicles, according to a company executive. "Our biggest program is kind of AMPV right now," Jim Miller, vice president of business development for combat mission systems, said at the Association of the U.S. Army's Global Force Symposium, taking place March 28-30 in Huntsville, Alabama. The Army is not only likely days from reaching a full-rate production decision for the AMPV, the service is also planning on ordering more vehicles from BAE so it can more rapidly replace aging M113 armored personnel carriers sent to Ukraine with the more modern vehicle. The Army plans to buy 197 AMPVs in fiscal 2024, which results in BAE ramping up production from 12 AMPVs a month to 16. Additionally, the company is busy building ACVs for the U.S. Marine Corps. "As we look at our industrial network, we've got to be able to flex and grow that and be pretty agile about that given the demands we see in front of us," Miller said. "We're going to focus [York] to be our AMPV and our ACV center of excellence." The company already moved M88A2 Hercules recovery vehicle work to Anniston Army Depot, Alabama. "We've done that pretty successfully. We're actually delivering our first vehicles from Anniston ... already," Miller said. The company has continued to perform some work on M88 hulls at York, but now that will be moved to a partner facility. Miller said he was not able to disclose the partner yet. That company will deliver hulls to Anniston, where assembly is performed. But the move that will "grab your attention," Miller said, is the plan to move assembly of the M109A7 Paladin Integrated Management System 155mm tracked, self-propelled howitzer and ammunition carrier hulls to Anniston. The company plans to keep fabrication of the PIM hull at York because that will remain the site of major welding work. BAE will also retain final assembly and test work at its Elgin, Oklahoma, facility. Bradley Fighting Vehicle builds will take place at Anniston with some work still at York. The plan at York is to build a total of 430 vehicles a year, with over 190 of those AMPVs. The company plans to begin moving things around this summer.

[US Army to 'overhaul' recruiting school amid personnel shortage](#)

[VA Reviewing Contract for Troubled Medical Records System, Secretary Says \(Military.com\)](#)

The Department of Veterans Affairs is reviewing the \$16 billion contract for its electronic health records system, an oversight that could halt the troubled rollout of the system to VA facilities, Secretary Denis McDonough said Wednesday. At issue is the VA's Millennium Electronic Health Records program, built by Oracle Cerner. The system has been introduced at several sites, but continued expansion has been paused as the company works to solve ongoing problems with it that include stoppages, user difficulties and harm to patients. During a hearing on the VA budget before a House Appropriations subcommittee, McDonough said the next system deployment, expected this summer in Saginaw, Michigan, will largely depend on the contract review. "Depending on what

happens in the contract, we will be able to deploy to the next site," McDonough said. "Increasingly, my question is I want to see what's in this contract because this contract may not be what we need." The VA signed a \$10 billion deal with Cerner in May 2018 to develop and oversee adoption of an electronic health records system that would be compatible with the Department of Defense, providing a single digital medical record for service members from the moment they are sworn in until death. The DoD has introduced its version, called MHS Genesis, to more than 60% of military health facilities. About 10,000 employees use the system in five VA medical centers. McDonough said that a review of the Oracle Cerner contract was built into its original terms. "Inherent in the idea that there is a five-year review; you are not just reviewing it to continue it," McDonough said. "We would be in a position to sustain what we have and see if there's another technology." Officials with Oracle testified before Congress earlier this month that improvements have been made and the system is ready.

[Air Force allows airmen to keep \\$2.3 million in overpayments](#)

[US Navy deploys more chaplains for suicide prevention \(AP News\)](#)

On Navy ships docked at this vast base, hundreds of sailors in below-deck mazes of windowless passageways perform intense, often monotonous manual labor. It's necessary work before a ship deploys, but hard to adjust to for many already challenged by the stresses plaguing young adults nationwide. Growing mental health distress in the ranks carries such grave implications that the U.S. chief of naval operations, Adm. Michael Gilday, answered "suicides" when asked earlier this year what in the security environment kept him up at night. One recently embraced prevention strategy is to deploy chaplains as regular members of the crew on more ships. The goal is for the clergy to connect with sailors, believers and non-believers alike, in complete confidentiality. "That makes us accessible as a relief valve," said earlier this month Capt. David Thames, an Episcopal priest who's responsible for chaplains for the Navy's surface fleet in the Atlantic, covering dozens of ships from the East Coast to Bahrain. The families of two young men who killed themselves in Norfolk said chaplains could be effective to facilitate access to mental health care. But they also insist on accountability and a chain of command committed to eliminating bullying and engaging younger generations. Mental health problems, especially among enlisted men under 29, mirror concerns in schools and colleges, exacerbated by the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic. But chaplains, civilian counselors, families of suicide victims, and sailors from commodores to the newly enlisted say these struggles pose unique challenges and security implications in the military, where suicides took the lives of 519 service members in 2021, per the latest Department of Defense data.

Homeland Security

['New Threats' to National Security Are Created by Emerging Tech, DHS Chief Says \(Nextgov\)](#)

Emerging technologies play a role in both exacerbating and alleviating threats to U.S. security, according to Department of Homeland Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, who spoke at a Senate Committee on the Judiciary hearing Tuesday. He cited his agency's efforts to better police threats on the country's digital frontiers, highlighting the existing efforts like Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's Shields Up program and public-private partnerships, such as the Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative to "harden" digital networks within critical infrastructures and businesses alike. "Emerging technology is creating new threats," he said. Mayorkas also highlighted the ongoing security issue unnamed aircraft systems—or drones—present. "Unmanned aircraft systems can be used to conduct attacks, and increasingly violate temporary flight restrictions that protect high ranking officials, disrupt airport operations, surveil outdoor mass gatherings and attempt to transport illegal narcotics across borders," he said. Mayorkas explained to Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., that the national security concern stems from technological advancement within the drone industry: they are able to fly at greater speeds over greater distances, with greater visibility and carry larger physical loads. Mayorkas then advocated for Congress to continue its oversight and regulatory efforts, notably to grant DHS more authority in monitoring UAs. "It is vital that Congress act to extend and expand the department's counter UAS authorities to protect against malicious drone activity," he said. The issue of drone regulation has been popular within Congress, with several senators asking CISA to conduct an analysis for more information on Chinese-made drones retailed in North America. Proposed legislation would also implement more rules for UAs in the shared airspace. Other emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, were also noted as having both a positive and negative impact on national security. Mayorkas acknowledged AI's potential as a helpful software capability, but also commented on its destructive potential. "In the wrong hands, it can be a weapon...of harm, and we have to build the defenses that are ready to secure the homeland with respect to the potential that AI presents," he said.

[Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas' Testimony to the Senate Committee on Appropriations on the President's FY 2024 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security](#)

[Fentanyl is 'single greatest challenge' U.S. faces, DHS secretary says \(WP\)](#)

The record number of Americans dying of fentanyl overdoses is now the “single greatest challenge we face as a country,” Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told a Senate panel Wednesday. The statement appeared to be the first time Mayorkas or any other Cabinet-level member of the Biden administration has described the deadly synthetic opioid in those terms. Appearing before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, Mayorkas cited the deaths of more than 70,000 Americans in 2021 tied to fentanyl overdoses. Homeland Security officials did not immediately respond to questions about whether Mayorkas has previously described the fentanyl crisis as the country’s greatest challenge. The department includes Customs and Border Protection, the agency responsible for stopping illegal fentanyl and other narcotics from entering the United States. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), the committee chairman, opened the panel’s budget review hearing, telling Mayorkas he wanted the fentanyl problem to be a top priority for the department in 2024. “This budget better do everything humanly possible to stop the import of deadly fentanyl into the United States,” Murphy said. “This is a red-alert moment.” Republican lawmakers have blamed the Biden administration’s immigration policies for the increase in fentanyl smuggling and overdose deaths, saying U.S. agents and officers are too distracted by a record level of illegal migration. Mayorkas told senators that fentanyl was a years-long scourge that has been building, and he said the Biden administration was working with Mexico to “bring the fight to the cartels.”

[U.S. and Canada Expand Safe Third Country Agreement for Asylum Claimants](#)

[Too Much U.S. Government Information Is Classified, Report Finds \(WSJ\)](#)

U.S. officials classify information that should either be public or more widely shared within the government, hobbling national defense objectives and jeopardizing congressional oversight of the executive branch, a Washington research organization found in a new report. The findings, published Tuesday by the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, stem from a nearly two-year review of the U.S. classification system and are based on interviews with dozens of current and former officials from the Pentagon, intelligence agencies, the State Department and elsewhere, as well as congressional staffers. The review comes as efforts are underway in Congress and the White House to reduce the vast quantities of classified records housed within executive branch agencies. Meanwhile, senior officials have said the White House’s decision to reveal intelligence on Russia’s planned invasion of Ukraine last year demonstrated tangible value in sharing secrets within government, with allies and with the public. The White House is currently working on an executive order intended to overhaul the classification system, The Wall Street Journal has reported. Generally every recent presidential administration other than Donald Trump’s has issued some kind of executive order adjusting classification policies, but those past efforts

have done little to curtail the growing problem of overclassification, according to government transparency experts. The review identified examples in which overclassification appeared to harm U.S. national security, including by slowing rates of military innovation, complicating military space missions, and hindering cooperation from the private sector to improve defense against cyberattacks. The U.S. government's protection of sensitive information has attracted renewed interest in recent months following the discovery of classified documents at the residences and offices of President Biden, former President Trump and former Vice President Mike Pence. The cases concerning Messrs. Biden and Trump are both being investigated by Justice Department special counsels.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of Nearly \\$8.9 Million for Tribal Transit Projects Nationwide \(DOT\)](#)

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) today announced the availability of nearly \$8.9 million to support American Indian Tribes across the country and Alaska Native villages. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, signed into law by President Biden in November 2021, increased competitive funding for the Tribal Transit Program by nearly 83% per year for five years. This is the second consecutive year of increased funding for the program through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. "We are investing in transit serving Indian Lands and Alaskan Native villages, which means that Tribal communities will be better connected to schools, jobs, food, health care, and other essentials," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. Tribal Transit systems transport Americans more than 13 million vehicle miles each year, providing critical access to communities that often have few other travel options. In FY 2022, FTA awarded funds to 25 American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native communities to help them meet the needs of their citizens, including elders, people with disabilities, and youth in Indian Country. Last year, the Coeur D'Alene Tribe in Northern Idaho received funding from this program to buy new vehicles to provide more, quicker, and safer rides. The new vehicles will ensure a continuity of service for its members to buy groceries, visit loved ones, and go to the doctor. "Last year, I was pleased to meet with representatives from the Nez Perce and Coeur D'Alene Tribes to hear about the significance of this support for their transit systems," said FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez. "The stories they told echo across our nation. Everyone in our country wants an easier trip to the store, a quicker ride to work, or a more comfortable way to go visit their elders. Thanks to President Biden and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we're going to provide better journeys to more people on Tribal lands."

[FTA announces \\$212.3M in grants for transit agencies recovering from recent major declared disasters](#)

[Solar Roofs Are Being Used to Power EVs \(Transport Topics\)](#)

Every two years, engineering students from across the U.S. compete in the American Solar Challenge, where around 10 schools cobble together a car designed to go as far as possible, powered exclusively by the sun. In 2022, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology took the top prize with a car that looks sort of like a ping-pong table sprouted wheels. On its best day, the Nimbus made it an impressive 869 miles, roughly the distance from New York to Milwaukee. Of course, there are just a few impracticalities to contend with: The Nimbus can't carry a passenger, for one, let alone a haul of groceries. The quest to develop a solar-powered car that is at once functional, useful and practical has stumped more than the young wizards at MIT. In February, Sono Group NV said it would abandon its Sion solar-electric car after failing to raise enough money for the project. A month earlier, Dutch startup Lightyear suspended production of its \$264,450 solar car and filed for bankruptcy. (Both declined interviews for this piece.) California's Aptera Motors, while happy with its three-wheeled solar-powered machine, has struggled to complete a crowdfunding campaign to get it into production. For about 40 years, car companies, startups and DIY enthusiasts have been pursuing the plugless electric car, one that could wirelessly recharge via photons. But as logistical and economic hurdles continue to stymie those projects, the more immediate future of solar-powered vehicles is becoming clear: smaller, lighter, cheaper systems built to subtly augment electric driving, rather than power it in full. The Hyundai Sonata isn't particularly fast or large; it's not even entirely electric. But the Sonata's roof is veined with a sheet of photovoltaic cells that casually, and very slowly, trickle about two miles of extra range a day into the car's hybrid system, depending on cloud cover.

[Electric Truck Market Considers Infrastructure Reality](#)

[Transit Is Great — But It's Not a Public Good \(Bloomberg\)](#)

In December, the District of Columbia's city council made headlines when it approved \$128 million per year to make bus trips free to all riders, regardless of income. DC Councilmember Charles Allen, who was the lead force behind the proposal, explained his rationale at a press conference: "Public transit is a public good," he said. "I'm not going to means test your sidewalk or your roadway; if we believe transit is a public good, then it is a public good." (While the bill passed, its future is now in doubt due to budgetary concerns.)

The declaration “public transit is a public good” has been in the news a lot lately — unsurprisingly, considering transit’s role transporting essential workers during the pandemic. Those six words were tweeted by US Representative Ayanna Pressley to announce a congressional resolution supporting transit funding in December 2020, posted on Facebook by Boston’s free-transit-loving Mayor Michelle Wu, and deployed as a headline in Mother Jones. “Mass transit is a public good,” reads a blog post from the World Resources Institute. “Everyone — not just riders — should pay for it.” There’s just one problem: Public goods have a well-established definition in economics — and transit service doesn’t meet it. Despite frequent assertions to the contrary, mass transportation is not a public good, and declaring it to be one does not justify dropping fares, as advocates in places like Los Angeles, San Francisco and Boston are demanding. This isn’t just about semantics: Mistaken assumptions about public goods pose a growing risk to sound transit policy.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[As weight-loss drugs hit the U.S. market, doctors debate how to use them \(Reuters\)](#)

As powerful new obesity drugs enter the U.S. market, medical associations are keen to advise their members on how to best use them for patients. That is where the debate begins. Some specialists advocate for broad use of drugs like Novo Nordisk’s Wegovy, alongside a healthy diet and exercise. Others recommend prioritizing them for high-risk patients, who have other conditions that are exacerbated by excess weight. And some are considering more complex, patient-specific assessments to determine the best course of action, according to a Reuters review of existing guidelines and interviews with doctors and executives from six medical associations as they contemplate updating their own guidance. Their recommendations will influence treatment and coverage for nearly 115 million U.S. adults and children who are obese, as well as a significant percentage of overweight Americans who have other health risks such as heart disease or diabetes. U.S. health insurance companies take into account specialist medical guidelines, among other data, in deciding whether to pay for a treatment. Wegovy, which costs nearly \$1,350 a month, has yet to receive wide coverage from private health plans. Wegovy is approved for use in the United States and Europe, while a similar drug from Eli Lilly and Co (LLY.N) known as Mounjaro is expected to receive U.S. approval later this year. The medications helped patients shed up to 15% and 20% of their weight, respectively, in large clinical trials, more than previously-approved weight-loss treatments.

[Top 10 pharma R&D budgets in 2022](#)

[FDA approves first over-the-counter version of opioid overdose antidote Narcan \(CNN\)](#)

With drug overdose deaths continuing to hover near record levels, the US Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday approved for the first time an over-the-counter version of the opioid overdose antidote Narcan. “The FDA remains committed to addressing the evolving complexities of the overdose crisis. As part of this work, the agency has used its regulatory authority to facilitate greater access to naloxone by encouraging the development of and approving an over-the-counter naloxone product to address the dire public health need,” FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf said in a statement. “Today’s approval of OTC naloxone nasal spray will help improve access to naloxone, increase the number of locations where it’s available and help reduce opioid overdose deaths throughout the country. We encourage the manufacturer to make accessibility to the product a priority by making it available as soon as possible and at an affordable price.” Dr. Rahul Gupta, director of the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy, said accessibility is key to ensuring that the Narcan nasal spray saves lives. “It’s really important that we continue to do everything possible in our power to make this life-saving drug available to anyone and everyone across the country,” Gupta said. The White House drug czar said businesses, such as restaurants and banks, and schools will be encouraged to purchase over-the-counter naloxone. “We will encourage businesses, restaurants, banks, construction sites, schools, others to think about this – think about it as a smoke alarm or a defibrillator, to make it as easily accessible, because it’s not just you. It could be your neighbor, it could be your family, your friend, a person at work or school who might need it,” Gupta said.

[Study Suggests the Least Exercise People Can Do for Health](#)

[A Progress Check on Hospital Price Transparency \(Kaiser Health News\)](#)

For decades, U.S. hospitals have generally stonewalled patients who wanted to know ahead of time how much their care would cost. Now that’s changing — but there’s a vigorous debate over what hospitals are disclosing. Under a federal rule in effect since 2021, hospitals nationwide have been laboring to post a mountain of data online that spells out their prices for every service, drug, and item they provide, including the actual prices they’ve negotiated with insurers and the amounts that cash-paying patients would be charged. They’ve done so begrudgingly and only after losing a lawsuit that challenged the federal rule. How well they’re doing depends on whom you ask. The rule aims to pull back the curtain on opaque hospital prices that may vary widely by hospital for the same service or even within the same hospital. The expectation is that price transparency will boost competition, giving consumers and employers a way to compare prices and make informed choices, ultimately driving down the cost of care. Whether that will happen is not yet clear. Insurers and large employers are also required to post their negotiated prices with all their providers, under separate rules that took effect last summer. Hospitals have made

“substantial progress,” according to an analysis by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services of 600 randomly selected hospitals that was published in the journal Health Affairs last month. The agency looked at whether hospitals had met their obligation to post price information online in two key formats: a “shoppable” list of at least 300 services for consumers, and a comprehensive machine-readable file that incorporates all the services for which the hospital has standard charges. This file should be in a format that allows researchers, regulators, and others to analyze the data.

Climate & Development

[United Nations adopts landmark resolution on climate justice \(The Guardian\)](#)

A UN resolution was adopted on Wednesday that should make it easier to hold polluting countries legally accountable for failing to tackle the climate emergency, in a vote which was hailed as a historic victory for climate justice. The UN general assembly adopted by consensus the resolution spearheaded by Vanuatu, a tiny Pacific island nation vulnerable to extreme climate effects, and youth activists to secure a legal opinion from the international court of justice (ICJ) to clarify states’ obligations to tackle the climate crisis – and specify any consequences countries should face for inaction. The UN general assembly adopted by consensus the resolution spearheaded by Vanuatu, a tiny Pacific island nation vulnerable to extreme climate effects, and youth activists to secure a legal opinion from the international court of justice (ICJ) to clarify states’ obligations to tackle the climate crisis – and specify any consequences countries should face for inaction. “We are just ecstatic that the world has listened to the Pacific youth,” said Cynthia Houniuihi, president of Pacific Island students fighting climate change (PISFCC). “Through no fault of our own, we are living with devastating tropical cyclones, flooding, biodiversity loss and sea level rise. We have contributed the least to the global emissions that are drowning our land. “As young people, the world’s failure to stop planet-killing emissions is not a theoretical problem. It is our present and it is our future that is being sold out.”

[New cars sold in EU must be zero-emission from 2035](#)

[Companies bid \\$264M in Gulf oil sale mandated by climate law \(The Hill\)](#)

Oil companies offered a combined \$264 million for drilling rights in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico on Wednesday in a sale mandated by last year’s climate bill compromise. The auction was the first in the Gulf in more than a year and drew strong interest from industry giants including Chevron, BP and ExxonMobil. But it could further test the loyalty

of environmentalists and young voters who backed President Joe Biden in 2020 and were frustrated by this month's approval of a huge drilling project in Alaska. Developing the Gulf leases would produce up to 1.1 billion barrels of oil and more than 4 trillion cubic feet (113 billion cubic meters) of natural gas over 50 years, according to a government analysis. Burning that oil would increase planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions by tens of millions of tons, the analysis found. A legal challenge to the sale from environmental groups is pending in federal court. Bids were up 38% from the last auction and marked the most offered in a sale since 2017. Chevron USA was the top bidder, offering \$108 million for 75 tracts. BP Exploration and Production had \$47 million in high bids and Shell Offshore had \$20 million in high bids. The next Gulf lease sale is scheduled in September. It's unknown how many more the administration could conduct as it faces continued pressure over approval of the ConocoPhillips Willow project in Alaska. The uncertainty means companies could be trying "to lease blocks now in case future auctions are restricted," said Sami Yahya, an analyst with S&P Global.

[Renewable energy growth falls short of climate goal](#)

[U.S. and Japan Reach Deal on Battery Minerals \(NYT\)](#)

The United States and Japan have reached an agreement over supplies of the critical minerals used to make car batteries, a deal that will likely put to rest a contentious issue in the relationship with Japan and could be a model for resolving similar disputes with other trading partners. The agreement provides a potential workaround for the Biden administration in its disagreement not only with Japan, but with the European Union and other allies over the terms of its new climate legislation. The Inflation Reduction Act, which invests \$370 billion to transition the United States to cleaner cars and energy sources, has angered some allies who were excluded from its benefits. While the scope of the agreement is limited, the Biden administration has also promoted the deal as the beginning of a new framework that the United States and its allies hope to build with like-minded countries to develop more stable supply chains for electric vehicles that do not rely as heavily on China. American officials have argued that China's dominance of the global car battery industry, including the processing of the minerals needed to make the batteries, leaves the United States highly vulnerable. According to a fact sheet distributed by the Office of the United States Trade Representative late Monday, the United States and Japan promised to encourage higher labor and environmental standards for minerals that are key to powering electric vehicles, like lithium, cobalt and nickel. The countries said they would also promote more efficient use of resources and confer on how they reviewed investments from foreign entities in the sector, among other pledges.

Next Week's Hearings

The House and Senate are in recess the week of April 6th.

Copyright © 2017-Present The Roosevelt Group LLC, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

200 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Suite 360, Washington DC 20001

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

WARNING: This email originated outside York County's email servers. Please verify the sender's identity, and use caution when clicking any links or opening any attachments.