

**From:** Schott, Heather  
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# Executive Insight Brief

June 9, 2023

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## **Aerospace & Defense**

### [Ukrainian military begins counteroffensive to oust Russian occupiers \(The Washington Post\)](#)

The Ukrainian military has launched a long-anticipated counteroffensive against occupying Russian forces, opening a crucial phase in the war aimed at restoring Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and preserving Western support in its fight against domination by Moscow. Ukrainian troops, including specialized attack units armed with Western weapons and trained in NATO tactics, intensified their strikes on front-line positions in the country's southeast on Wednesday night, according to four people in the country's armed forces, beginning a significant push into Russian-occupied territory. The four military personnel, including officers, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the battlefield developments. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Ukrainian forces tried to break through the lines of the Russian army in the Zaporizhzhia region, using up to 1,500 troops and 150 armored vehicles. Shoigu's claim could not be immediately verified. The Zaporizhzhia region has long been seen as the most strategic and likely location of the new Ukrainian campaign. By cutting south through the region's flat fields, Kyiv's forces could aim to sever the "land bridge" between mainland Russia and occupied Crimea, cutting off crucial Russian supply lines. They could also attempt to liberate the city of Melitopol, which Russia has established as the region's occupied capital, and Enerhodar, where the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is located. The offensive is expected to unfold over the course of months and will serve as a pivotal test of a U.S.-led strategy to prepare Ukrainian forces with the most advanced warfare tactics. The counteroffensive is intensifying as a crisis builds in Ukraine's southern Kherson region, where a breach of the Russian-controlled Kakhovka dam and hydroelectric power plant on Tuesday sent water rushing over the banks of the Dnieper River and into dozens of residential communities in Ukrainian- and Russian-controlled territories.



### [Biden, Stoltenberg to discuss NATO summit, aid to Ukraine](#)

#### [Cuba to Host Secret Chinese Spy Base Focusing on U.S. \(Wall Street Journal\)](#)

China and Cuba have reached a secret agreement for China to establish an electronic eavesdropping facility on the island, in a brash new geopolitical challenge by Beijing to the U.S., according to U.S. officials familiar with highly classified intelligence. An eavesdropping facility in Cuba, roughly 100 miles from Florida, would allow Chinese

intelligence services to scoop up electronic communications throughout the southeastern U.S., where many military bases are located, and monitor U.S. ship traffic. Officials familiar with the matter said that China has agreed to pay cash-strapped Cuba several billion dollars to allow it to build the eavesdropping station, and that the two countries had reached an agreement in principle. The revelation about the planned site has sparked alarm within the Biden administration because of Cuba's proximity to the U.S. mainland. Washington regards Beijing as its most significant economic and military rival. A Chinese base with advanced military and intelligence capabilities in the U.S.'s backyard could be an unprecedented new threat. "While I cannot speak to this specific report, we are well aware of—and have spoken many times to—the People's Republic of China's efforts to invest in infrastructure around the world that may have military purposes, including in this hemisphere," John Kirby, spokesman for the National Security Council, said. "We monitor it closely, take steps to counter it, and remain confident that we are able to meet all our security commitments at home, in the region, and around the world." U.S. officials described the intelligence on the planned Cuba site, apparently gathered in recent weeks, as convincing. They said the base would enable China to conduct signals intelligence, known in the espionage world as sigint, which could include the monitoring of a range of communications, including emails, phone calls and satellite transmissions. The Chinese Embassy in Washington had no comment. Cuba's Embassy didn't respond to a request for comment. Officials declined to provide more details about the proposed location of the listening station or whether construction had begun. It couldn't be determined what, if anything, the Biden administration could do to stop completion of the facility. The U.S. has intervened before to stop foreign powers from extending their influence in the Western Hemisphere, most notably during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. The U.S. and the Soviet Union came to the brink of nuclear war after the Soviets deployed nuclear-capable missiles to Cuba, prompting a U.S. Navy quarantine off the island. The Soviets backed down and removed the missiles. A few months later, the U.S. quietly removed intermediate-range ballistic missiles from Turkey that the Soviets had complained about. The intelligence on the new base comes in the midst of the Biden administration's efforts to improve U.S.-China relations after months of acrimony that followed a Chinese spy balloon's flight over the U.S. earlier this year.

### [Fighting rages at Sudan Military Site Facility](#)

### [NATO allies prepare unprecedented air deployment exercise over Europe in show of force to Russia \(AP News\)](#)

Germany is preparing to host the biggest air deployment exercise in NATO's history, a show of force intended to impress allies and potential adversaries such as Russia, German and American officials said Wednesday. The Air Defender 23 exercise starting next week will see 10,000 participants and 250 aircraft from 25 nations respond to a simulated attack on a NATO member country. The United States alone is sending 2,000 U.S. Air National

Guard personnel and about 100 aircraft to take part in the June 12-23 training maneuvers. “This is an exercise that would be absolutely impressive to anybody who’s watching, and we don’t make anybody watch it,” U.S. Ambassador to Germany Amy Gutmann said. “It will demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt the agility and the swiftness of our allied force in NATO as a first responder,” she told reporters in Berlin. “I would be pretty surprised if any world leader was not taking note of what this shows in terms of the spirit of this alliance, which means the strength of this alliance,” Gutmann said. “And that includes Mr. Putin,” she added, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin. While the drill was planned for several years, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has jolted NATO into preparing in earnest for the possibility of an attack on its territory. Sweden, which is hoping to join the alliance, and Japan are also taking part in the exercise. “We are showing that NATO territory is our red line, that we are prepared to defend every centimeter of this territory,” said Lt. Gen. Ingo Gerhartz of the German air force, which is coordinating the exercise. “But we won’t, for example, conduct any flights toward Kalinigrad. So this is intended to be defensive.” Kalinigrad is a Russian exclave located on the Baltic Sea between Poland and Lithuania. Lt. Gen. Michael A. Loh, director of the U.S. Air National Guard, said the exercise goes beyond deterrence. “It’s about the readiness of our force. It’s about coordination, not just within NATO, but with our other allies and partners outside of NATO,” he said. Loh said the exercise would be an opportunity for younger U.S. airmen, many of whom have mainly gotten experience serving in the Middle East, to build relationships with allies in Europe and prepare for a different military scenario. “So this is about now establishing what it means to go against a great power, in a great power competition,” he said. Authorities have said the drill will cause some disruption to civilian flights in Europe during the period.

## Budget & Appropriations

### [House Armed Services chair wants China spending bill, less Ukraine aid \(Defense News\)](#)

Washington — The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee wants to pass a supplemental spending bill this year to address threats from China, he told reporters Tuesday, while also suggesting the next Ukraine aid package would come in “at a much smaller level” than before. The proposition from Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., comes amid a flurry of proposals from defense hawks on Capitol Hill to bypass the \$886 billion military spending top line laid out in the debt ceiling deal that President Joe Biden signed into law over the weekend. But House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., appeared to throw cold water on additional defense spending bills on Monday. Rogers said once Congress completes work on the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act and defense appropriations bill, “then it’s time for us to look and see if we actually address China. If we did, fine. If we didn’t, we’ll go ahead and drop more funding. It’s all about China for me.” The House was initially slated to mark up the FY24 defense authorization bill in May, but Republican leaders asked Rogers to postpone it amid the debt ceiling negotiations. That markup is now scheduled for later this month. For his part, McCarthy resisted efforts

to circumvent military spending caps in the debt ceiling bill, which locks in Biden's proposed defense budget — a 3.3% increase over this fiscal year. "What we really need to do, we need to get the efficiencies in the Pentagon," McCarthy said, according to CNN. "Think about it, \$886 billion. You don't think there's waste? They failed the last five audits. I consider myself a hawk, but I don't want to waste money. So I think we've got to find efficiencies." In response, Rogers said McCarthy is "right." "It is premature to be talking about a supplemental right now, but we will need a supplemental later this year — for China specifically," Rogers said. Rogers, who previously hammered the Biden administration for refusing to deliver Ukraine certain weapons like long-range missiles, also struck a less bullish note on aid to the country currently fighting a Russian invasion.

### [Debt limit deal sets off new spending fights](#)

#### [Biden signs bipartisan debt ceiling bill to avert government default \(NBC News\)](#)

President Joe Biden on Saturday signed into law a bill extending the debt ceiling for two years, averting an economically disastrous debt default ahead of Monday's deadline. The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 suspends the public debt limit through January 1, 2025, after the 2024 presidential elections. "If we had failed to reach an agreement on the budget, there were extreme voices threatening to take America, for the first time in our 247 year history, into default on our national debt," Biden said of the deal Friday night in his first televised address from the Oval Office. "Nothing, nothing would have been more irresponsible. Nothing would have been more catastrophic," he added. The Senate passed the bipartisan budget deal in a 63-36 vote Thursday. The House passed the legislation a day earlier by a vote of 314 to 117, with 149 Republicans joining 165 Democrats in favor of the agreement brokered by Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., after months of political warfare over government spending. The legislation caps spending for the next two years and includes conservative measures to claw back about \$28 billion in unspent Covid relief funds, as well as eliminating \$1.4 billion in IRS funding and shifting roughly \$20 billion of the \$80 billion the IRS got through the Inflation Reduction Act to nondefense funding. It also restarts federal student loan payments after a lengthy pause that began at the start of the pandemic, and adds work requirements for people up to age 55 to get benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, with carve-outs for veterans and homeless people. The current threshold is 50 years old. Biden initially refused to negotiate with McCarthy over the debt ceiling, insisting that the House needed to pass a so-called clean bill without any spending cuts or policy provisions. "I will not let anyone use the full faith and credit of the United States as a bargaining chip," Biden said in January. But the new Republican House speaker said the House wouldn't vote to raise the debt limit without significant budget cuts. Despite split factions in the GOP, with hardline Republicans demanding deeper spending cuts and policy changes, McCarthy was able to wrangle his narrow majority to pass a partisan bill in late April that would impose budget cuts in exchange for raising the debt

ceiling. House passage of that bill helped force Biden to the bargaining table, setting off weeks of frenzied talks that culminated in a deal late last month. It came together just days before a June 5 deadline. The Treasury Department hit its statutory borrowing limit in January but was able to use “extraordinary measures” to pay the country’s bills — up to a point. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had warned that the country was at risk of breaching the debt ceiling on Monday. In a May 26 letter to McCarthy, Yellen warned that “we now estimate that Treasury will have insufficient resources to satisfy the government’s obligations if Congress has not raised or suspended the debt limit by June 5.” Failure to do so, she warned, “would cause severe hardship to American families, harm our global leadership position, and raise questions about our ability to defend our national security interests.”

### [U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen says U.S. inflation easing as some sectors slow, labor market strong](#)

#### [Treasury yields dip after jobless claims jump to nearly two-year high \(Market Watch\)](#)

U.S. Treasury yields edged lower Thursday morning after new jobless claims showed the number of people who applied for unemployment benefits in early June jumped to a nearly two-year high, while investors reassessed Federal Reserve policy trajectory following unexpected interest-rate rises by central banks in Australia and Canada. Two-year Treasury yields were lower on Thursday morning after hovering near their highest in three months amid renewed concerns that the Federal Reserve may keep interest rates higher for longer. The shift up in short-term yields follows a surprise increase in borrowing costs on Wednesday by the Bank of Canada as it continues to battle stubbornly high inflation. The BoC move has reminded investors that even if the Fed pauses its tightening cycle after its policy meeting next week, it may still need to resume raising interest rates should inflation not decline quick enough from the current 4.9% to its 2% target. “With less than a week to go until the Fed’s next decision, [Wednesday] offered another hawkish surprise for markets after the Bank of Canada delivered an unexpected 25bp rate hike. Now that might be just one central bank, but it comes on the back of a similar surprise hike from the Reserve Bank of Australia the previous day, so investors are starting to see a pattern emerging here and there was a significant bond selloff as a result,” said Henry Allen, strategist at Deutsche Bank. “The latest developments have also run against the prevailing narrative that central banks are on the verge of pausing their rate hikes, particularly given Canada was one of the first to formally signal a pause back in January. The big question now is whether the Fed might follow up with a hike of their own next Wednesday, or whether they’ll finally keep rates on hold after 10 consecutive increases,” Allen added.

## Advanced Technologies

### [Spectrum Allocation for a Contest with China \(Center for Strategic and International Studies\)](#)

The United States is in competition with China over technology and global influence. Success in this competition depends on the United States staying at the cutting edge of technology and innovation. This can only be done by taking advantage of fifth-generation (5G) technologies. But the United States lags far behind the rest of the world in allocations of the spectrum needed for 5G. This undercuts its advantages in the competition for technology leadership, global influence, and national security. A decision to modernize spectrum allocations by shifting away from incumbent uses will be complicated and must be done in a balanced way, but not doing so would mean that China will gain real advantages in economic growth, innovation, and influence. Economic strength is the foundation of national security. Economic strength now requires staying at the technological edge. Staying on the technological edge creates the income and innovations needed for a strong economy and for national security. While many new technologies will be important for the future economy—artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, cloud computing, Open Radio Access Networks (ORAN), and biotechnology will create the future economy, all of these will depend on digitalization, beginning with 5G wireless networks. This makes progress in 5G networks a strategic issue for the United States. Some say the world is in a “fourth industrial revolution,” moving to a digital, networked world. Whether it is the fourth one or merely the latest phase of a process that began in the eighteenth century, the analogy is useful. The industrial revolution led to major shifts in power among nations as some fell behind in innovation and investment and lost technological leadership to new powers. Economic decline and reduced innovation damaged some countries’ ability to build and buy new weapons and weakened their international influence. The significance of 5G lies in its industrial and commercial applications that will provide new efficiencies and new services to spur economic growth. Not prioritizing 5G would be like deciding in the nineteenth century not to build railroads and telegraph networks. Competition with China has raised contentious issues regarding 5G. Fears that China’s national champion, Huawei, would dominate 5G technology were fortunately exaggerated. While Huawei remains dominant in much of the developing world’s older telecom infrastructure, it depends on Western technology to provide 5G services. For now, the United States leads China in certain key 5G metrics. But misguided policy decisions could surrender any U.S. lead in 5G and future generations of network technology. U.S. success depends on the outcome of decisions on another contentious issue: spectrum allocation. Unfortunately, the United States is not competitive in how it has allocated the spectrum needed for 5G.

## [TikTok: ByteDance accused of helping China spy on Hong Kong activists](#)

### [They Fled San Francisco. The A.I. Boom Pulled Them Back \(The New York Times\)](#)

Tech entrepreneurs who left the Bay Area during the pandemic say they can't afford to miss out on the funding, hackathons and networking of the artificial intelligence frenzy. Doug Fulop's and Jessie Fischer's lives in Bend, Ore., were idyllic. The couple moved there last year, working remotely in a 2,400-square-foot house surrounded by trees, with easy access to skiing, mountain biking and breweries. It was an upgrade from their former apartments in San Francisco, where a stranger once entered Mr. Fulop's home after his lock didn't properly latch. But the pair of tech entrepreneurs are now on their way back to the Bay Area, driven by a key development: the artificial intelligence boom. Mr. Fulop and Ms. Fischer are both starting companies that use A.I. technology and are looking for co-founders. They tried to make it work in Bend, but after too many eight-hour drives to San Francisco for hackathons, networking events and meetings, they decided to move back when their lease ends in August. "The A.I. boom has brought the energy back into the Bay that was lost during Covid," said Mr. Fulop, 34. The couple are part of a growing group of boomerang entrepreneurs who see opportunity in San Francisco's predicted demise. The tech industry is more than a year into its worst slump in a decade, with layoffs and a glut of empty offices. The pandemic also spurred a wave of migration to places with lower taxes, fewer Covid restrictions, safer streets and more space. And tech workers have been among the most vocal groups to criticize the city for its worsening problems with drugs, housing and crime. But such busts are almost always followed by another boom. And with the latest wave of A.I. technology — known as generative A.I., which produces text, images and video in response to prompts — there's too much at stake to miss out. Investors have already announced \$10.7 billion in funding for generative A.I. start-ups within the first three months of this year, a thirteenfold increase from a year earlier, according to PitchBook, which tracks start-ups. Tens of thousands of tech workers recently laid off by big tech companies are now eager to join the next big thing. On top of that, much of the A.I. technology is open source, meaning companies share their work and allow anyone to build on it, which encourages a sense of community. "Hacker houses," where people create start-ups, are springing up in San Francisco's Hayes Valley neighborhood, known as "Cerebral Valley" because it is the center of the A.I. scene. And every night someone is hosting a hackathon, meet-up or demo focused on the technology. In March, days after the prominent start-up OpenAI unveiled a new version of its A.I. technology, an "emergency hackathon" organized by a pair of entrepreneurs drew 200 participants, with almost as many on the waiting list. That same month, a networking event hastily organized over Twitter by Clement Delangue, the chief executive of the A.I. start-up Hugging Face, attracted more than 5,000 people and two alpacas to San Francisco's Exploratorium museum, earning it the nickname "Woodstock of A.I."

## [Google Reveals AI updates as it vies with Microsoft](#)

### [The Coming Fight Over American Surveillance \(Foreign Affairs\)](#)

Americans are living in an era of unprecedented government surveillance, made possible by seismic changes in both technology and the law. Never have people generated such volumes of personal information—and never has the U.S. government possessed such powerful means to capture, store, and analyze it. At the same time, the 9/11 attacks prompted Congress to relax many of the legal constraints on surveillance. For the better part of two decades, Americans acquiesced in these developments. In 2013, Edward Snowden, a National Security Agency contractor, disclosed that the NSA was secretly collecting Americans' phone records in bulk—a revelation that briefly rattled the public's trust and led to some legislative reforms in 2015. But Americans were soon occupied with matters that seemed more pressing than the abstract risk of surveillance abuse. As with so many other things, that blithe status quo was dramatically upended by the presidency of Donald Trump. Many Republicans became convinced that the FBI had abused the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to spy on Trump's campaign. Democrats, for their part, gained a new appreciation for the dangers of insufficiently constrained executive power. Their concerns were reinforced when it emerged that intelligence and law enforcement agencies had been spying on activists taking part in a newly reinvigorated racial justice movement. The country is now headed for a reckoning over government surveillance, and the first testing ground will likely be a part of FISA known as Section 702. This authority, which permits the government to conduct warrantless surveillance of foreigners abroad, is scheduled to expire in December unless reauthorized by Congress. The government had little difficulty persuading lawmakers to renew the law in 2012 and 2018, despite growing evidence that it was being used to spy on Americans. But that evidence is now overwhelming, and the politics of surveillance have radically shifted. Section 702 is unlikely to be reauthorized this time without reforms. What remains unclear is just how far Congress will go. The Biden administration and intelligence hawks in Congress will likely support minor tweaks at most, whereas other lawmakers will embrace far-reaching changes to the law. But Section 702 is just one part of a vast ecosystem of overlapping surveillance authorities, and addressing it in isolation would have limited effect. The government could evade any new restrictions by using other, more permissive authorities—or, in some cases, by simply purchasing the information from data brokers. If Congress intends to rein in warrantless spying on Americans, it will need to rethink surveillance more broadly.

## **Military Installations & Communities**

### [Cherry Point receives its first F-35 jet \(Marine Corps Times\)](#)

A Marine base in North Carolina recently welcomed its first F-35B fighter jet. Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 542, located at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, received its first F-35B Lightning II jet May 31, according to a press release from the air station. A second F-35B aircraft was scheduled to arrive on June 1 to the squadron, a part of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing. The arrival of the fifth-generation fighter jet marks the start of F-35 deliveries to Cherry Point. VMFA-542 is one of the Marine Corps' first East Coast operational F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter squadrons. "As we replace our legacy aircraft the Hornet and the Harrier we're [bringing] capable and more capable aircraft to the front lines," Maj. David Faerber, an F-35 pilot, told WITN. "The Marine Corps is evolving a lot from our legacy platforms to our fifth-generation platforms," Cherry Point Commanding Officer Col. Brendan Burks told WNCT. "What that does is allow us to take that competition and near-peer competitors and go into places we were not able to go before." He added the goal is to have six full squadrons of the F-35s with 10 planes per squadron, though the total number of planes could possibly expand. "It's a great impact to the local area here. This is 15 years in the making to bring F-35s to Cherry Point," Burks told the outlet.

### [The Army's 82nd Airborne Division has a new battlefield tech unit](#)

### [Forts Cavazos, Barfoot, and Liberty - New Names for Army Bases Honor New Heroes and Lasting Values, Instead of Confederates Who Lost a War \(The Conversation\)](#)

One by one, the names of Confederate generals are being removed from U.S. military bases. On April 27, 2023, Fort Lee, a military base in Virginia named for a Confederate general, was renamed for two African American officers: Lt. Gen. Arthur Gregg, the U.S. Army's first Black three-star general, and Lt. Col. Charity Adams, who oversaw mail delivery to soldiers in Europe during World War II. On May 9, Fort Hood in Texas, originally named for a Confederate general who wrote that it would be better to "die a thousand deaths" than free the South's slaves, was renamed for Gen. Richard Cavazos, who earned more than a dozen medals for valor in Vietnam and Korea and became the first Hispanic American promoted to general. On May 11, Georgia's Fort Benning, named for a Confederate general who said he would rather suffer "pestilence and famine" than give up slavery, became the only base named for a married couple: Lt. Gen. Harold Moore, a Vietnam War hero, and his wife, Julia, an advocate for military families. And on June 2, Fort Bragg, a base in North Carolina named after a slave-owning Southerner considered one of the worst Confederate generals because of his performance on the battlefield, was renamed Fort Liberty – highlighting the value that the fort's commander said defines what "the people, the families, the civilians, the veterans of this area have done." By the end of the year, the U.S. Department of Defense will have removed Confederate names from those and five other Army bases and replaced them with names that exemplify modern-day role models and values. When the idea of purging such names

from the U.S. military gathered steam in 2020, it drew fierce opposition from many conservative politicians, including then-President Donald Trump, who called the Confederate-themed bases “part of a Great American Heritage.” “Therefore, my Administration will not even consider the renaming of these Magnificent and Fabled Military Installations,” Trump tweeted before he vetoed legislation mandating the name changes. Opposition has died down. But after Congress overrode the veto, a federal commission studied the issue for more than a year by holding hearings, inviting public input and sifting through nearly 3,700 names suggested for the nine bases, all in the South. Surprisingly, complaints about shedding the Confederate names have died down. Politicians like Republican Sens. Josh Hawley of Missouri and John Cornyn of Texas had initially equated changing the names with erasing history.

### [U.S. military and JASDF partner-up to clean base fence line](#)

#### [Alabama Senator says Space Command prefers Huntsville for HQ, but command has no comment \(Military News\)](#)

WASHINGTON — Alabama Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville said in a tweet Wednesday that the top general in charge of U.S. Space Command told him during a meeting that Huntsville, not Colorado Springs, Colorado, is the preferred location for its new headquarters. Tuberville's tweet, which his office also issued in a press release, is the latest twist in the ongoing brawl over where U.S. Space Command should be located. The decision that has become entangled in a far larger political fight between Tuberville and the Defense Department over reproductive health care for service members, which is now jeopardizing the promotions of hundreds of military officers. The senator tweeted that Gen. James Dickinson “confirmed Huntsville is the preferred location of Space Command headquarters. Enough is enough, it’s time to bring U.S. Space Command home to Huntsville.” U.S. Space Command had no comment on Tuberville's statement. Tuberville is fighting for a basing decision that could bring hundreds of lucrative jobs to his constituency. The Air Force and Space Force initially recommended that the headquarters be placed in Colorado Springs, but in the final days of his term President Donald Trump decided the new headquarters would be based in Huntsville. Huntsville scored higher than Colorado Springs in a Government Accountability Office assessment of potential locations and has long been a home to some of earliest missiles used in the nation’s space programs, including the Saturn V rocket. It is home to the Army's Space and Missile Defense Command. Colorado Springs is home to the Air Force Academy, which now graduates Space Force guardians, and more than 24 military space missions, including three Space Force bases and the temporary home of U.S. Space Command. Proponents of keeping the command in Colorado argue that moving it to Huntsville and creating a new headquarters would set back its progress at a time it needs to move quickly to be positioned to match China's military space rise. The basing decision, while not directly connected, has become part of a larger political fight. The Biden administration has not moved forward with

assigning the headquarters to Huntsville as the decision went through a series of congressional and inspector general reviews. Meanwhile, Tuberville has used a Senate privilege to essentially stop any military officer nominations or promotions until the Defense Department rescinds a policy that would allow and provide support for service members to seek reproductive care outside their current assignment area. The Biden administration has not said whether it will overturn the previous decision to award the headquarters to Alabama, which has some of the strictest abortion laws in the country. However, the holds are having significant trickle-down effects on military families who would be now getting ready to move to their next base and getting their kids set up in a new school.

## Homeland Security

### [Unlawful southern border entries down 70% from record highs since end of Title 42 \(ABC News\)](#)

Unlawful entries along the southern border have decreased 70% from their record highs since the end of Title 42 on May 11, according to the Department of Homeland Security. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol has averaged 3,400 encounters in between ports of entry per day and fewer than 300 non-CBP One Office of Field Operations (OFO) encounters at ports of entry per day, for a total of approximately 3,700 unscheduled encounters per day, according to statistics released by DHS Tuesday morning. From May 12 to June 2, DHS repatriated over 38,400 noncitizens under Title 8 authorities, including single adults and families, to more than 80 countries. This includes over 1,400 noncitizens from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela who were returned to Mexico under Title 8 authorities -- the first time in our bilateral history that the Mexican government has allowed the repatriation of non-Mexican nationals at the border under Title 8 authorities. The top three nationalities encountered during that time period were Mexican, Honduran and Venezuelan, which collectively accounted for 70% of the encounters per day, according to DHS. The White House applauded the decrease. "Political pundits and Republican lawmakers claimed we were unprepared for the end of Title 42. We proved them wrong," tweeted White House Assistant Press Secretary Abdullah Hasan. The CBP One app, which was rolled out by DHS as a hub offering a variety of CBP services, saw 1,070 noncitizens presented "in a safe and orderly manner at a port of entry each day to be processed during their scheduled appointment time," DHS said. CBP has, as of June 1, expanded the number of appointments available to 1,250 each day. But some Republicans have expressed skepticism of CBP One, saying the app is a vehicle that would allow mass migration. "Abusing the CBP One App is the Biden admin's newest tactic to funnel tens of thousands of illegal aliens into the country every month. House Republicans voted to bar DHS from exploiting the app & restore it back to its original intent," Republicans on the House Committee on Homeland Security tweeted Monday. The decrease comes as two top immigration officials have announced their departure from DHS. Chief of the Border Patrol Raul Ortiz told employees he was leaving at the end of June, and Acting Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement Tae Johnson is also retiring, according to DHS.

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. Total CBP enforcement actions for fiscal year 2023 are 1,246,371 year-to-date, according to CBP.

### [Lawmaker files articles of impeachment against head of Homeland Security over border crisis](#)

#### [Trump informed that he is target of special counsel investigation over classified documents \(ABC News\)](#)

Former President Donald Trump received a letter from special counsel Jack Smith's office in recent weeks informing him that he is the target of an ongoing investigation related to his handling of classified information while out of office, sources familiar with the matter confirmed to ABC News. The point of a target letter is to put the subject on notice that they are facing the prospect of indictment. Department of Justice guidelines state that "the prosecutor, in appropriate cases, is encouraged to notify such person a reasonable time before seeking an indictment in order to afford him or her an opportunity to testify before the grand jury." Trump has repeatedly denied wrongdoing and argues he is being singled out by enemies. "I've done NOTHING wrong, but I have assumed for years that I am a Target of the WEAPONIZED DOJ & FBI," he wrote on social media this week. Lawyers for Trump on Monday met with officials at the DOJ, sources previously said. That meeting included Smith and a career justice official but neither Attorney General Merrick Garland nor Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, sources said. Last month, Trump's lawyers requested a meeting with Garland amid fears that the coming weeks could bring a possible indictment regarding Trump's alleged efforts to retain materials after leaving office and obstruct the government's attempts to retrieve them. The lawyers said they had questions surrounding the integrity of the grand juries investigating the former president. Smith, the special counsel, was named by Garland in November after Trump launched his third White House bid. Smith is also investigating Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election. Trump is separately charged in New York City with 34 counts of falsifying business records related to hush money paid made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels in the final days of the 2016 presidential race. He pleaded not guilty in that case.

### [US, Japanese, Philippine Coast Guard ships stage drills](#)

#### [China rejects U.S. request for a meeting of the defense chiefs \(NBC News\)](#)

China has declined a request from the U.S. for a meeting between the countries' defense chiefs, the Defense Department said late Monday as the world's two largest

economies struggle to mend ties. The Pentagon had suggested a meeting between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue, an annual security forum being held in Singapore from Friday to Sunday. Washington has been seeking to restore high-level communications with Beijing as both sides signal a willingness to ease tensions stoked by clashes over Taiwan, a Chinese spy balloon and Russia's war in Ukraine. But China has outlined limits to that conciliation over its issues with U.S. sanctions and what it sees as a broader effort to contain its rise. "Overnight, the PRC informed the U.S. that they have declined our early May invitation," the Pentagon said in a statement, using an abbreviation for China's formal name, the People's Republic of China. "The Department believes strongly in the importance of maintaining open lines of military-to-military communication between Washington and Beijing to ensure that competition does not veer into conflict. Responding Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning reiterated Beijing's opposition to the U.S. sanctions Li has been under since 2018. Li, an aerospace engineer and general in the People's Liberation Army, the military wing of the ruling Communist Party, was named defense minister in March. He had been sanctioned by the Trump administration over his role in the acquisition of weapons from Russia as part of China's military modernization drive. The Pentagon says the sanctions on Li do not prevent Austin from meeting with him. This is not the first time China has rejected the Pentagon's overtures, according to a senior U.S. defense official, who said that since 2021, Beijing has declined or failed to respond to more than a dozen requests for meetings at multiple levels." President Joe Biden indicated at a summit of major industrial nations in Japan this month that the sanctions on Li might be lifted, but a State Department spokesperson later said that was not under consideration. Though China's armed forces are commanded by the Central Military Commission and not by Li, whose role is largely ceremonial, he serves as a key point of contact for foreign militaries. U.S.-China relations have been strained since Secretary of State Antony Blinken postponed a trip to Beijing in February after a Chinese surveillance balloon was shot down over U.S. territory by the military. That trip has yet to be rescheduled. China has also objected to U.S. accusations that it is considering providing Russia with lethal military assistance in its war against Ukraine, as well as two stopovers in the U.S. by the president of Taiwan, a self-ruling island that Beijing claims as its territory. Biden, who last spoke with President Xi Jinping at a meeting in Indonesia in November, said at the G7 summit that he expected a "thaw very soon" in the U.S.-China relationship. There have been encouraging signs since then, including the arrival last week of China's new ambassador, Xie Feng, after months of delay. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo met with her Chinese counterpart, Wang Wentao, in Washington last week, the first Cabinet-level exchange between the two countries in months. That followed a meeting in Vienna between national security adviser Jake Sullivan and China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, and a meeting in Beijing between U.S. Ambassador Nicholas Burns and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang. But relations between the two militaries are "obviously the most fraught and sensitive within the bilateral relationship," Neill said. U.S. officials say the breakdown in communication raises the risk of an unintended crisis or conflict between the two countries, whose militaries are both active in the Asia-Pacific region. The Shangri-La Dialogue is known as a forum for defense officials to network informally, and Austin met Li's predecessor, Wei Fenghe, at the same event last year. Though China has rebuffed the idea of a side meeting this year, Austin and Li could

still cross paths.

## Transportation & Infrastructure

### [Congress tees up FAA, pipeline safety, rail, supply chain bills \(Roll Call News\)](#)

Transportation leaders in Congress are queuing up a host of bills over the summer legislative season aimed at overhauling the aviation system, reauthorizing pipeline infrastructure programs, ramping up rail safety and addressing supply chain woes and competition with China. Although there's bipartisan agreement on some pieces of must-pass legislation, like the upcoming Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill, the House and the Senate's differing priorities on topics like consumer protections and energy policy could delay their delivery to President Joe Biden's desk. House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Sam Graves, R-Mo., has said his committee will take on proposals over the next few months to mend the U.S. supply chain and protect domestic energy security, continuing House Republicans' agenda against what Graves in a May op-ed in *The Washington Times* called the Biden administration's "big spending, anti-energy" actions. Senate Commerce, Transportation and Science Chair Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and other Democrats in the chamber have their own agenda, one that includes more funding for green infrastructure projects and directing agencies to consider more safety and industry oversight regulations. The most pressing legislation for both Graves and Cantwell is the reauthorization of the FAA. Current authority is set to expire Sept. 30. Both committee leaders have devoted multiple hearings to the package with a focus on increasing safety, strengthening the aviation workforce and modernizing the agency. Both have said they are working with ranking members Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Wash., and Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, to bring a bipartisan FAA reauthorization package to their chamber floors. Graves said in an interview that he expects the House and Senate FAA packages to be "very different" despite bipartisan support within each chamber. He expects Cantwell's to be much more focused on consumer protections, especially as she and other Democrats have backed bills aimed at eliminating airlines' "junk fees" and ensuring that passengers get fair compensation. The House version, he said, will be more "technical." "There's not going to be nearly as [many] problems between House Republicans and Democrats as I see between the House and Senate versions, and we'll have to conference to try to work that out," Graves said. Cantwell has "laid out a little bit of information ... but it's hard to tell" by how much it will differ. Cantwell has said she intends to include a "passengers' bill of rights" in the FAA reauthorization package, adding that she supports full funding and staffing for the Transportation Department's Office of Aviation Consumer Protection to make the provisions "stick." Cruz, who had expressed concerns with passenger protection provisions, said in an interview last week that he's "quite optimistic" the Senate bill will remain bipartisan, adding that his team is negotiating with Cantwell's "as we speak." Graves said he expects to mark up the House bill this month and bring it to the floor in July. The Senate will have to adopt a similar timeline to pass the legislation before August recess. The Biden administration also has yet to nominate someone to lead the

FAA after acting Administrator Billy Nolen announced he is stepping down in mid-June. Biden's previous nominee, Phil Washington, withdrew from consideration in March. The Wall Street Journal reported that Deputy Transportation Secretary Polly Trottenberg could take over the agency as an interim leader, although that hadn't been officially announced as of Monday.

### [Travel is still rough, but some costs are easing](#)

#### [No survivors found after plane that flew over DC, led to fighter jet scramble crashes in Virginia \(AP News\)](#)

A wayward and unresponsive business plane that flew over the nation's capital Sunday afternoon caused the military to scramble fighter jets before the plane crashed in Virginia, officials said. The fighter jets caused a loud sonic boom that was heard across the capital region. Hours later, police said rescuers had reached the site of the plane crash in a rural part of the Shenandoah Valley and that no survivors were found. The Federal Aviation Administration says the Cessna Citation took off from Elizabethton, Tennessee, on Sunday and was headed for Long Island's MacArthur Airport. Inexplicably, the plane turned around over New York's Long Island and flew a straight path down over D.C. before it crashed over mountainous terrain near Montebello, Virginia, around 3:30 p.m. It was not immediately clear why the plane and pilot did not respond to radio transmissions, why it crashed or how many people were on board. The plane flew directly over the nation's capital, though it was technically flying above some of the most heavily restricted airspace in the nation. A U.S. official confirmed to The Associated Press that military aircraft had scrambled to respond to the small plane. The official was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the military operation and spoke on condition of anonymity. According to the Pentagon, six F-16 fighter jets were immediately deployed to intercept the plane. Two aircraft from the 113th Fighter Wing, out of Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, were the first to reach the Cessna to begin attempts to contact the pilot. Two F-16 aircraft out of New Jersey and two from South Carolina also responded to the incident. Flight tracking sites showed the plane suffered a rapid spiraling descent, dropping at one point at a rate of more than 30,000 feet per minute before crashing in the St. Mary's Wilderness. The North American Aerospace Defense Command later said in a statement that the military aircraft were authorized to travel at supersonic speeds, which caused a sonic boom that was heard in Washington and parts of Virginia and Maryland. Virginia State Police said officers were notified of the potential crash shortly before 4 p.m. and rescuers reached the crash site by foot around four hours later. No survivors were found, police said. The plane that crashed was registered to Encore Motors of Melbourne Inc, which is based in Florida. John Rumpel, who runs the company, told The New York Times that his daughter, 2-year-old granddaughter, her nanny and the pilot were aboard the plane. They were returning to their home in East Hampton, on Long Island, after visiting his house in North Carolina, he said. Rumpel, a pilot, told the newspaper he didn't have much information from authorities but

suggested the plane could have lost pressurization. "It descended at 20,000 feet a minute, and nobody could survive a crash from that speed," Rumpel told the newspaper. A woman who identified herself as Barbara Rumpel, listed as the president of the company, said she had no comment Sunday when reached by The Associated Press. President Joe Biden was playing golf at Joint Base Andrews around the time the fighter jets took off. Anthony Guglielmi, spokesperson for the U.S. Secret Service, said the incident had no impact on the president's movements Sunday. Biden was playing golf at the Maryland military base with his brother in the afternoon. A White House official said the president had been briefed on the crash and that the sound of the scrambling aircraft was faint at Joint Base Andrews.

### [Air India plane flying to San Francisco lands in Russia's Siberia after engine problem](#)

### [Debt Ceiling Agreement Mostly Spares Biden's Investments in Clean Energy, Infrastructure \(Capital & Main\)](#)

The debt ceiling agreement reached by President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy — and now passed by both the House and Senate — largely preserves Biden's major signature investments and the administration's focus on reinvesting in America through government programs and incentives. That's despite the fact that the deal cuts funding for vulnerable people who rely on government assistance, such as child care and low-income housing; pulls back billions of dollars meant to revamp the Internal Revenue Service; and requires the return of unspent funds appropriated for electric vehicle chargers, scientific research hubs and Pentagon purchases of climate technology, such as heat pumps. While one of the agreement's major elements — speeding the environmental review of infrastructure projects — worries environmentalists, it could accelerate the construction of clean energy projects funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. "The compromise does seem to preserve key elements of the IIJA and the Inflation Reduction Act," said Joseph Schofer, professor emeritus of civil and environmental engineering at Northwestern University. "Concerns have been expressed about weakening of the environmental review provisions of [the National Environmental Protection Act]. It does not appear that much (if any) damage has been done." The deal is an "important down payment on much-needed reforms to improve the efficiency of the permitting process," Jason Grumet, president of the renewable energy lobbying group American Clean Power, told Reuters. The debt ceiling pact helps preserve some of the administration's biggest initiatives, drawing praise from International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers International President Kenneth W. Cooper, who said the bill "maintains the Inflation Reduction Act's climate and clean energy provisions." The agreement also expands an infrastructure bill from 2008 to include energy storage projects that are key to the development of solar, wind and other renewable energy.

## Biotechnology & Healthcare

### [How Biotech Companies are Reshaping the Mental Health Landscape \(News Medical\)](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the global burden of mental health disorders. In the US, rates of anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder have all risen following the pandemic. The need to prioritize mental health is more obvious than ever, and large and small companies have responded by accelerating innovation in this area. The growing field of biotechnology is one of the most important driving forces in developing novel treatments for mental health disorders. While breakthroughs in the biotechnology industry over the past two decades have rarely focussed on mental illness, times are changing. The biotechnology market, which was valued at \$1.37 trillion in 2022 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 13.96% from 2023 until 2030, is poised to fill the gap where the largest pharmaceutical companies have tended to drop their efforts in developing treatments for mental health conditions. Now, biotechnology companies are beginning to focus their efforts on research that may develop novel and effective therapies for well-known disorders such as anxiety and depression and less-common disorders, including schizophrenia and psychosis. While drugs developed to treat mental health illnesses have a statistically lower chance of progressing from clinical trials to approval, biotechnology companies have not been put off. According to a recent report by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), 163 medicines targeting mental illness are currently in the clinic or awaiting FDA review. Biotech companies are poised to make a difference in this sector, with many existing to tackle mental health illnesses. Alzheimer's disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disease for which there is currently no cure, has been a recent focus for pharmaceutical companies across the globe. There is an urgent need for effective therapeutic options that can slow the progression of the disease, known as disease-modifying drugs, as current treatments are mostly limited to those that only offer symptomatic relief. In 2021, the FDA approved aducanumab (brand name: Aduhelm) for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. The drug doesn't aim to tackle symptoms, rather, it targets what is believed by many experts to be the underlying cause of Alzheimer's. Swiss biotech company Neurimmune originally developed the drug, a high-affinity, fully human IgG1 monoclonal antibody, which was then developed by Biogen and Eisai to reduce levels of amyloid beta in the brain. Clinical trials have shown that the drug can slow down disease progression, meaning that it is a disease-modifying drug.

### [Lifesaving fentanyl test strips still illegal in some states under '70s-era war on drugs law](#)

### [How to Protect Yourself From Wildfire Smoke if You're at High Risk of Health Effects \(The](#)

[New York Times](#)

As wildfire smoke blankets large swaths of the eastern United States, many people are experiencing physical symptoms, like prickling, stinging eyes; a scratchy throat; a runny nose; and some coughing. For those without underlying conditions, this will largely be a passing source of irritation. “You’ll be miserable a little bit, but you’ll be able to brush it off,” said Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos, a pulmonary and critical care medicine physician at Johns Hopkins Medicine. But for those who are most vulnerable, even brief exposures can have immediate ramifications, as exposure to toxins in the smoke can trigger inflammation and exacerbate existing health issues. This group includes children and adults with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions. “For vulnerable populations, the brevity of exposure may be enough to flare up underlying lung issues, or conditions overall,” Dr. Galiatsatos said. Babies, young children, older adults and pregnant women are also at higher risk of serious health effects. Everyone may want to take precautions, but doing so is particularly critical if you are vulnerable. Here’s what health experts advise to minimize your risk: Monitor air quality. “Don’t let your eyes be the sole deciding factor” to determine the air quality, Dr. Galiatsatos said. Monitor the local Air Quality Index, which can be found at [AirNow.gov](#) If the air quality is poor, stay inside as much as you can, said Dr. Samantha Green, a family physician at Unity Health Toronto. If the air quality is moderate and you have underlying conditions, you may want to continue to take precautions and minimize your time outside. Air Quality Index values above 100 mean that the air is unhealthy, and values between 51 and 100 are considered moderate. “These toxins — if you can avoid them, avoid them,” Dr. Galiatsatos said. “Staying at home, windows closed, that would be the most ideal situation.” Don’t exercise or perform strenuous activity outdoors, said Laura Corlin, an assistant professor at Tufts University School of Medicine. If you need to go outside, wear a tightfitting mask, like an N95. When you return home, change your clothes, Dr. Galiatsatos said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that dust masks, surgical masks and bandannas are not sufficient to protect children from smoke, and that N95 masks are typically not fitted for kids and may not provide adequate coverage. (Another well-fitting mask, like a KF94, can help.) The agency also said that breathing through a wet cloth would most likely not protect children from smoke. Make your indoor space as safe as possible. Experts advised keeping your windows closed. An air purifier like a HEPA filter can help, especially if it is in the room you spend the most time in. Dr. Corlin recommended minimizing activities that could interfere with indoor air quality: Don’t burn candles or use a fireplace, and don’t fry or broil meat. Limit time with large groups. Our immune systems work less effectively after we’ve been exposed to high levels of fine particulate matter in the air, said Dr. Francesca Dominici, a professor of biostatistics, population and data science at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. If you are immunocompromised, you may want to limit unmasked indoor time with large groups of people, since you may be less able to fight off a virus someone passes to you. Monitor your health. Exposure to toxic air pollutants can raise the risk of heart attacks. If you are experiencing chest pain or shortness of breath, seek emergency attention. For people with underlying respiratory conditions, like asthma or chronic bronchitis, watch out for exacerbated symptoms, like difficulty breathing or more intense coughing, Dr. Dominici said. If you are experiencing heightened symptoms, contact your doctor, who might suggest increasing medication. Watch babies and young children to make sure that they are not struggling to breathe or excessively coughing, Dr. Dominici said. Parents may want

to contact their children's doctor if a child has asthma to see if they should alter their medication.

### [Sucralose Found in Common Sweeteners damages DNA, may cause cancer](#)

#### [U.S. doctors forced to ration as cancer drug shortages hit nationwide \(BBC News\)](#)

Experts say the US is currently suffering one of the most severe shortages of chemotherapy drugs it's seen for three decades. Ms Dezomits is one of as many as 100,000 patients who may have been affected over the past several months, according to Dr Julie Gralow, the chief medical officer at the American Society of Clinical Oncology. As of this week, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said over 130 drugs were in short supply, 14 of which are cancer treatments. Experts say a myriad of factors have contributed to the shortages, which this time have heavily affected two front-line therapies - carboplatin and cisplatin - used to treat a host of cancers, including head and neck, gynaecologic and gastrointestinal cancers. The most recent shortage came after a plant in India - which supplied cisplatin materials for all US manufacturers - shut down due to quality concerns. This drove up demand for a substitute drug, carboplatin, said Dr Gralow. As a result, some providers have been forced to extend the time period between patients' chemotherapy sessions, while some patients have had to drive several hours to get treatment at different cancer centres. When her local oncologist could not provide her carboplatin, Ms Dezomits tried a larger cancer centre in Texas where she had been before. But they told her they could not give her the drug because they were prioritising giving it to patients with better odds of being cured "It's like triage on the battlefield," said Ms Dezomits, who was a soldier in the Persian Gulf war. "This country should be a little better than that. We should be able to get life-saving drugs that cost about \$9 or \$10 a dose." The low cost of generic front-line cancer drugs has actually played a role in recurrent chemotherapy drug shortages, experts say. While the medications are cheap to manufacture, pharmaceutical companies are not incentivised to do so because they don't bring in large profits, said Dr Karen Knudsen, CEO of the American Cancer Society. The drug shortage issue has also worsened as US life expectancy has increased, meaning more people are becoming ill with cancer. To help ease the supply chain crunches, the FDA began working with a Chinese manufacturer this week to import one of the chemotherapy drugs.

## **Climate & Development**

### [Solar panels - an eco-disaster waiting to happen? \(BBC News\)](#)

While they are being promoted around the world as a crucial weapon in reducing carbon emissions, solar panels have an average lifespan of 25-30 years. Experts say billions of panels will eventually all need to be disposed of and replaced. "The world has installed more than one terawatt of solar capacity. Ordinary solar panels have a capacity of about 400W, so if you count both rooftops and solar farms, there could be as many as 2.5 billion solar panels.," says Dr Rong Deng, an expert in solar panel recycling at the University of New South Wales in Australia. According to the British government, there are tens of millions of solar panels in the UK. But the specialist infrastructure to scrap and recycle them is lacking. Energy experts are calling for urgent government action to prevent a looming global environmental disaster. "It's going to be a waste mountain by 2050, unless we get recycling chains going now," says Ute Collier, deputy director of the International Renewable Energy Agency.

### [What are El Niño and La Niña, and how do they change the weather?](#)

### [Saudi Arabia plans to reduce how much oil it sends to global economy, meaning US oil prices may rise \(Fox News\)](#)

Saudi Arabia will reduce how much oil it sends to the global economy, taking a unilateral step to prop up the sagging price of crude after two previous cuts to supply by major producing countries in the OPEC+ alliance failed to push oil higher. The Saudi cut of 1 million barrels per day, to start in July, comes as the other OPEC+ producers agreed in a meeting in Vienna to extend earlier production cuts through next year. Calling the reduction a "lollipop," Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman said at a news conference that "we wanted to ice the cake." He said the cut could be extended and that the group "will do whatever is necessary to bring stability to this market." The new cut would likely push up oil prices in the short term, but the impact after that would depend on whether Saudi Arabia decides to extend it, said Jorge Leon, senior vice president of oil markets research at Rystad Energy. The move provides "a price floor because the Saudis can play with the voluntary cut as much as they like," he said. The slump in oil prices has helped U.S. drivers fill their tanks more cheaply and gave consumers worldwide some relief from inflation. "Gas is not going to become cheaper," Leon said. "If anything, it will become marginally more expensive." That the Saudis felt another cut was necessary underlines the uncertain outlook for demand for fuel in the months ahead. There are concerns about economic weakness in the U.S. and Europe, while China's rebound from COVID-19 restrictions has been less robust than many had hoped. Saudi Arabia, the dominant producer in the OPEC oil cartel, was one of several members that agreed on a surprise cut of 1.6 million barrels per day in April. The kingdom's share was 500,000. That followed OPEC+ announcing in October that it would slash 2 million barrels per day, angering U.S. President Joe Biden by threatening higher gasoline prices a month before the midterm elections.

## [Record Pollution and Heat Herald a Season of Climate Extremes](#)

### [How Ford, GM auto dealers are thinking about Detroit's EV transition and their future \(CNBC\)](#)

After a home, buying a car is the most expensive purchase most consumers will ever make during their lifetime. The transition to electric vehicles by major auto makers is likely to make the process a little more stressful, at least in the early days of the EV era when many consumers are still under-informed on EV basics. If consumers are to be sold on the mass adoption of battery-powered electric vehicles, car dealers are going to be essential to the pitch. It's the network of franchise auto dealers who provide education, service, and face-to-face sales, so companies like GM and Ford are working closely with them. But it's a daunting moment for both sides of the car business. "We haven't had a shift of this magnitude in the auto industry ever," said Robb Hernandez, president of Monterey Park, Calif.-based Camino Real Chevrolet. "The ground is still moving beneath dealers making decisions. The automakers are doing their best making this shift, but the regulation is more of the driving force of how we will all have to pivot." That includes his home state of California, where 100% of new car sales are mandated to be EVs by 2035. "I can only speak for GM," Hernandez said. "They are listening as we make these changes but the landscape is ever-changing at this point," he said. But he added, "Most auto dealers are optimistic and excited for the changing landscape." As of late last year, 65% of Ford's dealers had opted into the EV certification program (a little under 2,000, according to data shared by Ford), as it has started to make the role of car dealers central to the EV transition process. Many consumers want a streamlined process and virtually every transaction today has some online component, according to Brian Maas, president of the California New Car Dealers Association. But with the complicated nature of a vehicle purchase transaction (trade-ins, financing, purchase of extended warranties and other products), a fully online experience will only work for a percentage of car buyers. "The rest will still want to 'kick the tires' and take a test drive before investing \$50,000+ in the average new car," he said. This preference is expected to hold true for EVs. A recent report from the California Air Resources Board (CARB) cites "customer choice," "vehicle availability," and "affordability" as keys to mass adoption, all of which require a critical role to be played by dealers. "I think CARB understands that dealers are essential to the adoption of EVs," Maas said. He pointed to several factors. First, and most obvious, outside of Tesla it is franchised dealers who have to explain and sell this new technology to the mass market. Second, all the incentives adopted federally and in states such as California are administered by or through dealers. And finally, EVs won't approach affordability in the short term without dealers making these funds available to consumers and explaining how these programs work at the point of purchase. Kerrigan Advisors, which works with dealership groups on sales and acquisitions, noted that Ford, relative to some top global competitors, has a relatively large dealership network to manage through the EV transition. "To some, Ford's approach is a way to weed out the smaller dealers who are

unwilling to make the EV investment,” said Erin Kerrigan, founder and managing director. “Keep in mind Ford has over 3,000 franchises in the U.S.,” Kerrigan said. “By contrast, Toyota has only 1,482 and sells more vehicles than Ford.” But she expects more Ford dealers will opt in at a future date, once they observe a meaningful consumer shift to EVs.

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## Next Week's Hearings

### Armed Services Committees

House: Tuesday, June 13th, 10:00am ET: [FY24 NDAA Subcommittee on Strategic Forces Markup](#)

Tuesday, June 13th, 11:00am ET: [FY24 NDAA Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies, and Innovation Markup](#)

Tuesday, June 13th, 12:00pm ET: [FY24 NDAA Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces Markup](#)

Tuesday, June 13th, 1:00pm ET: [FY24 NDAA Subcommittee on Military Personnel Markup](#)

Tuesday, June 13th, 2:30pm ET: [FY24 NDAA Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces Markup](#)

Tuesday, June 13th, 3:30pm ET: [FY24 NDAA Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations Markup](#)

Wednesday, June 14th, 10:00am ET: [FY24 NDAA Subcommittee on Readiness Markup](#)

Senate: None listed

### Appropriations Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: Tuesday, June 13th, 10:00am ET: [Closed: Briefing: "The Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request for Space Capabilities of the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community"](#)

Wednesday, June 14th, 10:00am ET: [Subcommittee Hearing: Enhancing American Competitiveness Through the U.S International Development Finance Corporation](#)

### Homeland Security Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: Wednesday, June 14th, 10:30am ET: ["Business Meeting"](#)

Wednesday, June 14th, 2:30pm ET: [Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight: "Examining the Findings and Recommendations of GAO's 2023 Report on Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication and Achieve Financial Benefits"](#)

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