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Executive Insight Brief

August 11, 2023

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Worth reading: [Facing Down an Arsenal: Considering Agile Combat Employment in Korea](#)

View From The Hill



Despite being in the doldrums of August, it was still a newsy week across Capitol Hill, as the White House formally [requested](#) an additional \$25 billion in funding for disaster relief and defense-related support for Ukraine and Taiwan. This becomes just one more challenge in what is sure to be a highly contentious government funding debate in the fall, where all eyes will be on whether Speaker McCarthy is forced to make a [deal](#) with Democrats to advance funding bills given difficult internal GOP conference dynamics.

Another brewing headache for House GOP Leadership is how to get conservative hardliners on board with this year's [farm bill](#), which is expected to provide north of \$1 trillion in funding to the country's agricultural programs as well as food assistance to low-income Americans. Conservatives want cuts to such programs, despite securing new work requirements earlier this year in the debt-ceiling fight, and are threatening to derail the bill. Leadership and key committee operatives are working to curtail the angst with listening sessions ahead of lawmakers' return to the Capitol in September.

After recent concerns around her health and ability to withstand the rigors of office, ninety-year-old Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), was briefly [hospitalized this week](#) after falling at her San Francisco home. California's senior senator has been facing calls to step down in recent months, mostly from progressives, but has so far refused. This latest episode

comes amidst a larger national conversation about the [rising](#) average age of Members of Congress and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) recent [incident](#) at a press gaggle.

Aerospace & Defense

[DARPA, White House launch \\$20M AI, cybersecurity challenge \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the White House have teamed up to announce a new two-year competition to use artificial intelligence to help protect critical software and create new cybersecurity tools in what's essentially a cutting-edge, high-stakes bug bounty program. Dubbed the "AI Cyber Challenge," or AlxCC, the effort aims to "challenge competitors across the United States, to identify and fix software vulnerabilities using AI," the White House announced on Wednesday. Google, Microsoft, OpenAI and Anthropic will lend expertise and technologies for the challenge. DARPA will host an open competition for AlxCC where up to 20 teams will advance to the semifinals next August at the DEF CON 2024 conference, followed by up to five teams advancing to the finals, according to the agency's website. In August 2025, three winners will be chosen at DEF CON 2025. AlxCC will feature almost \$20 million in prizes, according to the White House.

[Navy extends service lives of four more destroyers](#)

[First flight test for Guam missile defense planned for end of 2024 \(Defense News\)](#)

The U.S. Missile Defense Agency is planning a first flight test of some elements that will make up the air and missile defense architecture of Guam in December 2024, said Rear Admiral Doug Williams, the agency's acting director, on Aug. 9 at the Space and Missile Defense Symposium. The test will involve the Navy's Aegis weapon system deployed to Guam and the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor. The first wave of defenses designed to counter complex missile threats against Guam will include radars, launchers, interceptors, and a command-and-control system to be placed on the island next year, according to previous agency lead Vice Adm. Jon Hill. The Missile Defense Agency asked for more than \$800 million in its fiscal 2024 budget request to develop and begin constructing its architecture to defend Guam against a range of threats including ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missiles. Nearly half of that money will continue the design and development of the architecture. Another \$38.5 million would upgrade the agency's Command and Control, Battle Management, and Communications program to support Guam's defense.

[Army aims to make 1 million artillery shells a year, starting in fiscal 2025](#)

[Race for new F-35 cooling system heats up, as DoD won't rule out competition \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Defense Department is considering “all” options as it seeks upgrades to the F-35’s cooling system, Breaking Defense has learned, with the F-35 Joint Program Office not ruling out the potential for a new competition to upgrade the system currently provided by incumbent producer Honeywell Aerospace. Honeywell makes the F-35’s Power and Thermal Management System, or PTMS, which combines an auxiliary power unit, environmental control and emergency power into a single apparatus that, among other capabilities, cools off the aircrafts subsystems. The F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) wants to upgrade the PTMS in order to enable future capabilities on the fifth-generation aircraft. The JPO statement is the closest yet the office has come to stating that a full-on re-compete for the PTMS is on the table. And it comes as Honeywell is crying foul that its primary challenger may have an unfair advantage in a potential competition — with the Pentagon wary of providing a remedy the company seeks.

Budget & Appropriations

[House GOP weighs shutdown escape hatch: A deal with Dems \(Politico\)](#)

If Speaker Kevin McCarthy has any hope of avoiding a shutdown this fall, he’ll probably need help from Democrats. But he’s not guaranteed to get it — at least not yet. By Sept. 30, House GOP leaders have to pass a major bipartisan spending deal or a short-term patch to keep the government open, with both options requiring cooperation from McCarthy’s hardliners. But those recalcitrant conservatives are signaling they’ll be loath to support either solution, almost certainly putting the onus on House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and his Democrats to help avert disaster. What’s more unusual this time, though, is that Democrats will probably need to do more than simply chip in to pass a bipartisan deal or a deadline extension. They’ll have to vote to help Republicans move any agreement to the House floor. That scenario carries plenty of potential pitfalls for a speaker who’s already on thin ice with his hard-right wing. McCarthy will need to survive the wrath of his conservatives if he calls a vote where large numbers of Democrats help the GOP agree to start debate on a spending plan that those hardliners oppose.

[House GOP moderates' patience with conservative demands wearing thin](#)

[Three ways the proposed NDAA could change the way contractors do business \(Federal News Network\)](#)

When Congress returns from the August recess and tackles the job of reconciling the House and Senate versions of the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, companies doing business with the Defense Department will be watching several issues that could impact how they do business. Several sections of the bill address oversight and accountability, including language limiting how soon government employees can go work for companies that do business with DoD. An amendment in the Senate version of the NDAA would increase the length of time a former Pentagon official would have to wait before working for a company related to what the individual did at the Pentagon. The House version of the NDAA also has language offering more restrictions on industry employment after leaving civilian or uniformed DoD positions. Both versions of the NDAA also seek to put more restrictions on how and when defense contractors do business with foreign countries, specifically China and Russia. Another area where defense contractors could see changes in the way they do business is with protests. A provision in the House NDAA would require any contractor who is denied a protest bid to pay the costs of the protest.

[Inside the House GOP plan to avoid a farm bill floor catastrophe](#)

[Generational shift ushers in new era for Senate earmarks split \(Roll Call\)](#)

Senate appropriators may have kept up the earmarking pace even after several heavyweights retired at the end of the 117th Congress, but a handful of states are feeling the loss. Alabama, Vermont, Oklahoma, Missouri and North Carolina combined would see nearly \$1.4 billion less in “congressionally directed spending,” as senators call earmarks, in the chamber’s fiscal 2024 appropriations bills compared to fiscal 2023 Senate bills. That’s about four-fifths of the \$1.7 billion decline of earmarked funds across 18 states compared with the versions Senate appropriators released last year. Luckily for 21 other states, new Appropriations chair Patty Murray, D-Wash., and ranking member Susan Collins, R-Maine, still had plenty of money to spread around — just \$38 million less than the panel’s former leaders had the previous year, for a total of more than \$7.7 billion. States seeing their earmark totals increase would receive about \$1.7 billion more than the previous year. In the House, the top four earmarking states in the fiscal 2024 bills are, in order, the four largest population-wise — California, Texas, Florida and New York — averaging 27.7

million residents. In the Senate bills, New York is 9th and California 13th, while Texas and Florida get nothing since their states' GOP senators don't seek earmarks.

Advanced Technologies

[Pentagon memo aims to leverage \\$9B JWCC 'to greatest extent possible' \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Pentagon's latest memorandum on its Joint Warfighting Cloud Capability (JWCC) aims to "lay out the conditions" for how the entire department and military services can leverage the contract "to the greatest extent possible," according to an official from the Defense Department's chief information office (CIO). The \$9 billion JWCC contract is a multi-vendor, multi-cloud follow-up to the infamous single-source failed Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure (JEDI) contract, which was canceled in 2021. The new venture is envisioned as DoD's premier computing contract and is meant to provide the department "with enterprise-wide, globally available cloud services across all security domains and classification levels, from the strategic level to the tactical edge." Last December, the Pentagon awarded Google, Amazon Web Services, Microsoft and Oracle all spots on the JWCC contract to build out its key military cloud computing backbone. And then this March, all four vendors won their first task orders under the contract.

[Emerging tech-focused firms could reshape the Top 100](#)

[CHIPS law's first 5G grants will go to wireless energy efficiency, AI \(Politico\)](#)

The Commerce Department will fund experiments in energy efficiency, artificial intelligence and spectrum in the first round of open radio access grants from last year's CHIPS and Science Act, it announced on Tuesday. These inaugural grants to improve 5G technology, announced at Northeastern University in Boston, are part of an initial \$140.5 million tranche of money to develop open radio access networks, or open RAN — a wireless technology that the U.S. sees as important to compete with rivals like China. This tranche is the first round of several set to roll out over the coming decade from a greater \$1.5 billion pot known as the Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund, appropriated in last year's CHIPS and Science Act. The NTIA will continue announcing grants from this first round going forward. The department has suggested plans to soon proceed to a second funding notice, leading to a larger tranche of money for open RAN development.

[AI Influencers Pound Capitol Hill Hallways to Shape Legislation](#)

[Space agencies are reforming acquisition to accelerate commercial tech integration \(Nextgov\)](#)

U.S. space agencies are developing a set of new acquisition programs and policies to speed up the purchasing of critical emerging technologies while reducing barriers to entry for the commercial space industry, officials said on Tuesday. Frank Avila, acting director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, said his organization is increasingly leveraging procurement vehicles known as bailment agreements, which can be established in a matter of weeks and allow the agency to temporarily own and test commercial satellite systems and other technology solutions. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency began using the unconventional procurement method in 2019, issuing three bailment agreements that year. The agency issued more than 20 additional bailment agreements by 2021, while increasingly adopting Other Transaction Authority agreements to boost its research and development initiatives. The National Reconnaissance Office, tasked with developing, launching and overseeing U.S. intelligence satellites, is also increasingly leveraging commercial innovation and hybrid government-commercial digital architectures to meet mission needs.

Military Installations & Communities

[VA extends PACT Act deadline to Aug. 14 for backdated benefits after website issues \(Federal News Network\)](#)

The Department of Veterans Affairs is extending the deadline for veterans and their survivors to receive the maximum benefit they qualify for under the toxic-exposure PACT Act. The VA is now giving veterans and their survivors until 11:59 p.m. ET Monday, August 14, to submit a benefits claim — or an intent to file a claim — and be eligible to have their benefits backdated to August 10, 2022, the day that President Biden signed the PACT Act into law. VA spokesperson Terrence Hayes said Wednesday that the department is extending the deadline “out of an abundance of caution after experiencing technical difficulties” with [VA.gov](#). The VA faced an eleventh-hour surge of online applications from veterans and their survivors trying to meet the original Aug. 9 deadline for backdated benefits, which led to some applicants receiving an error message. The VA is contacting applicants who received an error message, to confirm the department received their intent to file.

[Inside the Air Force's massive mobility war game in the Pacific](#)

[Most Alabama voters want Tuberville to drop military hold: poll \(The Hill\)](#)

A majority of likely Alabama voters want Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.) to drop his hold on military promotions, according to a new poll. The poll, conducted by Public Policy Polling and commissioned by VoteVets, found that 58 percent of Alabama voters think Tuberville has “made his point” with his hold and that he should “now allow senior military promotions to move forward.” Tuberville’s block stems from his disagreement with the Pentagon over its abortion policy — which reimburses service members that travel across state lines for the procedure. The poll also found that despite Alabamans’ opposition to Tuberville continuing the hold, a majority — 54 percent — do think the Pentagon policy is “wrong and should be reversed.” Despite this, 55 percent of voters said the blocking is hurting “national security,” according to survey results.

[Fort Knox dining workers sue their former contractor over unpaid wages](#)

[Wounded Warrior head set to retire in early 2024 \(Military Times\)](#)

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Linnington will be retiring in early 2024 as the CEO of the Wounded Warrior Project, the organization confirmed Tuesday. A graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Linnington served in the Army for 35 years before joining the national veterans non-profit. Linnington has led the organization as it continues to grow its membership. Nearly 70 new members are added each day, and the organization boasts financial resources totaling \$300 million. The Wounded Warrior Project was founded in 2003 to serve post-9/11 service members and veterans. Since its founding, the organization has served more than 200,000 veterans and family members, according to the organization.

Homeland Security

[To Battle New Threats, Spy Agencies to Share More Intelligence With Private Sector \(WSJ\)](#)

U.S. spy agencies will share more intelligence with U.S. companies, nongovernmental

organizations and academia under a new strategy released this week that acknowledges concerns over new threats, such as another pandemic and increasing cyberattacks. The National Intelligence Strategy, which sets broad goals for the sprawling U.S. intelligence community, says that spy agencies must reach beyond the traditional walls of secrecy and partner with outside groups to detect and deter supply-chain disruptions, infectious diseases and other growing transnational threats. The intelligence community “must rethink its approach to exchanging information and insights,” the strategy says. The new strategy is meant to guide 18 U.S. intelligence agencies with an annual budget of about \$90 billion. The 16-page document, which contains no budget or program details, also says spy agencies must support the U.S. in its competition with authoritarian governments such as China and Russia, particularly in technological arenas.

[Chris Miller: The West’s de-risking strategy towards China will fail](#)

[Chip Roy threatens to withhold support on appropriations unless Mayorkas is fired \(Washington Examiner\)](#)

Rep. Chip Roy (R-TX) is outlining his latest demands in the fight over appropriations and government spending, issuing an ultimatum to the Biden White House in exchange for his support on the must-pass legislation: the ouster of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. In a Dear Colleague letter sent out to lawmakers on Tuesday, Roy listed a number of demands the Texas Republican said must be met in order for him to support legislation funding the Department of Homeland Security or to vote for a continuing resolution ahead of the looming Sept. 30 deadline. Those demands include measures to tighten security at the southern border, which Roy argues is a “national crisis.” The letter comes after House lawmakers left Washington, D.C., for its six-week recess despite a lengthy to-do list and lingering negotiations over spending legislation. House leaders said they would continue working over the break, although it remains unclear whether lawmakers will meet in person to do so.

[New CISA Cybersecurity Strategic Plan Focuses on Fundamentals to Change the ‘Trajectory of National Cybersecurity Risk’](#)

[Lloyd's of London leads insurers tightening Taiwan cover as conflict risks rise \(Reuters\)](#)

Lloyd's of London underwriters are leading insurers in raising rates and cutting the amount of cover they offer for risks involving Taiwan as concerns grow over possible military action

by China, industry sources with knowledge of the matter say. Insurers are on heightened alert after Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, which took market players by surprise and left jets stuck in Russia and ships marooned in Ukraine. As a result, insurers have generally excluded Russia and Ukraine from policies, or increased rates. Similar action by insurers over Taiwan - the world's largest advanced semiconductor chip maker - would make it more difficult and expensive to do business there, industry sources say. Insurers that cover war risks for aircraft are raising rates and reducing the amount of cover for issues such as confiscation, one Lloyd's market sources said.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Bollinger Shipyard closing operations in New Orleans, shifting work to Mississippi Gulf Coast \(Clarion Ledger\)](#)

Bollinger Shipyards is closing its operations in New Orleans and plans to shift the work to its larger facilities on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, officials said. The Bollinger company confirmed the move Tuesday, saying the decision to close its Algiers Point facility was driven by a desire to consolidate its repair and maintenance operations, and was not a reflection of a downturn in business or any negative aspect of New Orleans. The company is the largest privately owned shipbuilder in the United States. Last year, it acquired Halter Marine in Mississippi, which considerably expanded its shipbuilding order book for Coast Guard and Navy vessels and added a large repair yard. Bollinger said the larger of the two dry docks at Algiers — “Mrs. Jody,” which weighs in at 4,000 tons — sailed off to the newly acquired shipyard in Mississippi. The smaller dock — “Miss Darby,” about half the size of its counterpart — went to Port Fourchon to be reconditioned, and could later be moved to the company's shipyard in Harvey.

[World's Strangest Research Vessel Heads for Scrapyard After 60 Years](#)

[Boeing says Brazil could be top sustainable aviation fuel player \(Reuters\)](#)

Brazil has the potential to become one of the major global players in sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), a Boeing executive said on Tuesday, as the sector attempts to meet its ambitious goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The target agreed within the International Air Transport Association (IATA) representing airlines will largely depend on the development and increased production of SAF, which is made from renewable resources such as vegetable oils or waste. While radical technological change is deemed key to cutting aviation emissions, the sector's main focus has been on fuels that can be

used in existing jet engines, such as plant or waste-based SAF and synthetic alternatives. Securing enough SAF supply is the industry's biggest challenge in its push for net-zero emissions, amid high costs and slow production growth.

[Infrastructure 'Boot Camps' Help Small Cities Get Grants](#)

[Amtrak, Texas Central explore bullet train partnership \(Axios\)](#)

Amtrak and Texas Central, the lead entity on building a high-speed rail network between Houston and Dallas, announced Wednesday that they are looking into a new collaboration. The new partnership being evaluated could open up more opportunities for the future of the route, which has garnered some pushback from communities between the two cities over eminent domain issues since it was first proposed in 2014. The proposed route would shave hours off the time it normally takes to get between the two cities by car or bus. The two entities have already submitted joint applications for federal grants to fund studies and design work on the route. Those grant applications are for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure Safety and Improvements, the Corridor Identification and Development, and the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail programs.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[DHA faces legal challenges to how it conducted \\$2.5B procurement \(Nextgov\)](#)

The Defense Health Agency's attempt to open a \$2.5 billion multiple-award contract for business has been mired in protests that have now moved to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. The Military Health System Enterprise IT Services Geographic Service Provider vehicle is a 10-year program that DHA is using to standardize how it buys IT services as it modernizes how it provides health services across the military. In early July, DHA awarded six companies spots on the contract out of the 39 total bidders. Several protests immediately followed, but the Government Accountability Office has since dismissed those now that AccelGov has gone to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims on July 13 with its protest. The court has a higher level of authority than GAO regarding bid protest rulings. AccelGov is asking for an injunction to stop DHA from competing task orders under the contract until the court has ruled on the protest.

[How To Find Your TRICARE Referrals](#)

[US FDA approves Johnson & Johnson's blood cancer therapy \(Reuters\)](#)

Johnson & Johnson (JNJ.N) said on Thursday the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had approved its antibody-based therapy for patients with a difficult-to-treat type of blood cancer. The therapy, Talvey, belongs to a class of treatments called bispecific antibodies designed to bring a cancer cell and an immune cell together so the body's immune system can kill the cancer. Talvey will be sold at a list price of \$45,000 per month, the company told Reuters, adding the price could vary based on a patient's weight, prescribed dosing and treatment duration. J&J estimates a pricing range of \$270,000 to \$360,000 for an average treatment duration of six to eight months. The company expects to make the therapy available to patients within three weeks. Talvey was approved as a weekly or biweekly injection given under-the-skin to treat patients with relapsed multiple myeloma who have received at least four prior lines of treatment. While the FDA approved J&J's Tecvayli, another bispecific antibody, last year, Talvey is the first of its kind to target a protein known as GPRC5D, which is mainly present in cancerous plasma cells.

[How hospitals are using A.I. to fight doctor burnout](#)

[Drug shortages causing hospitals to skip, delay or ration care, survey finds \(NBC News\)](#)

Many U.S. hospitals are struggling to find chemotherapy drugs, antibiotics and other lifesaving treatments amid an escalating nationwide drug shortage crisis, as experts increasingly call for federal government action. About 1 in 3 hospitals say they've either skipped, delayed or prescribed less medication to patients than was needed because of the supply gaps, according to a survey published Thursday by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, a group that tracks U.S. drug shortages. Almost all hospitals in the survey say patient care is affected in some way. The survey's findings were based on responses from more than 1,100 hospital and health-system pharmacists in the U.S. from June 23 through July 14. Among the hospitals, 41% had 500 beds or more. All of them, aside from three respondents, said they were experiencing drug shortages, according to the survey.

Climate & Development

[Insurers rack up \\$50bn in losses from natural catastrophes this year \(Financial Times\)](#)

The global insurance industry has racked up \$50bn in losses from natural catastrophes in the worst start to a year since 2011, highlighting the challenge the sector faces from global warming. As well as climate change leading to more extreme weather events, the first-half losses were driven by the expansion of urban areas and the rising cost of insuring them, according to a study by reinsurance group Swiss Re published on Wednesday. So-called convective storms, characterised by heavy rain, strong winds and sharp temperature changes, accounted for more than two-thirds of the losses in the first half of the year and have become “one of the dominant global drivers” of insurance claims, Swiss Re said. The \$35bn in losses from such events in the six months to the end of June compared with an annual average of \$18bn over the past decade.

[What's driving Maui's devastating wildfires](#)

[Utilities say EPA power plant rule isn't ready \(E&E News\)](#)

U.S. electric utilities told EPA on Tuesday that a proposed rule to shrink power plant carbon emissions shouldn't be implemented yet because key emerging technologies aren't ready, offering the latest pushback to the Biden administration's plan. The Edison Electric Institute, which represents investor-owned utilities, pointed to technical shortcomings with the potential use of clean hydrogen and carbon capture to slash greenhouse gasses in the power sector. EPA's proposed timetable, EEI said, could leave grid operators short of fossil-fuel-based generation that may be essential to prevent power outages in emergency situations, particularly during extreme weather when wind and solar power supplies can be low. The electric utility trade group has touted efforts by its members to lower carbon emissions in recent years — while warning of a need to move at a pace that preserves reliability.

[Closure of 3 Southern California power plants likely to be postponed](#)

[Oil hits new highs on US fuel demand, tighter supply \(Reuters\)](#)

Oil prices hit new peaks on Wednesday with the global Brent benchmark touching its highest since January after a steep drawdown in U.S. fuel stockpiles and Saudi and Russian output cuts offset concerns about slow demand from China. U.S. gasoline stocks fell by 2.7 million barrels last week, while distillate inventories, which include diesel and heating oil, dropped by 1.7 million barrels, government data showed, compared with

analysts' expectations in a Reuters poll for both to hold mostly steady. The U.S. fuel stock drawdown helped offset some demand concerns after Chinese data on Tuesday showed crude oil imports in July fell 18.8% from the previous month to their lowest daily rate since January. Supporting prices, however, were top exporter Saudi Arabia's plans to extend its voluntary production cut of 1 million barrels per day for another month to include September. Russia also said it would cut oil exports by 300,000 bpd in September.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: None Listed

Appropriations Committees

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

Homeland Security Committees

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

The Senate and House are still in August recess. The Senate will reconvene on September 6th, and the House will reconvene on September 12th.

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