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Executive Insight Brief

October 6, 2023

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Notable Headlines

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- [US will transfer weapons seized from Iran to Ukraine](#)
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View From The Hill



It was an unprecedented week in Washington, as a small faction of the House Republican Conference, led by Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL), [joined](#) with Democrats in a vote to remove Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) via a parliamentary maneuver known as the “[Motion to Vacate](#).” The final vote was [216-210](#), with eight Republican Members voting for the motion to remove McCarthy. This is the first time in American history that the House ousted a Speaker on the floor, and it remains unclear who will replace McCarthy atop the raucous House Republican Conference. In the interim, close McCarthy confidant Representative Patrick McHenry (R-NC) is [serving](#) as Speaker Pro Tempore, due to an obscure House rule put in place after September 11th to ensure continuity of government. The rule requires a newly elected speaker to submit a secret list of names to the Clerk of the House of individuals who can temporarily serve as Speaker until another is formally chosen.

So, who might be the next Speaker of the House? The frontrunner currently [appears](#) to be Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-LA), who enjoys broad support across the House GOP’s various ideological factions. However, some Members remain skeptical of the idea of simply promoting Scalise and other current GOP Leadership in the wake of McCarthy’s ouster. Additionally, Leader Scalise is currently [undergoing](#) chemotherapy treatment for multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer, bringing into question his ability to perform the political and legislative rigors that come with being Speaker.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan (R-OH) also formally [announced](#) a bid for the Speaker’s Gavel, potentially setting up a hotly-contested race for the top job. Jordan is a veteran of the rabble-rousing House Freedom Caucus, the source of much of the ongoing contention within the House GOP, though he has formed a much cozier relationship with former Speaker McCarthy and the rest of GOP Leadership in recent years. Jordan is seen as a candidate who can effectively liaise with the House’s far right, populist flank, though it remains to be seen whether more moderate Members will support him. Rumors are [swirling](#) that former Speaker McCarthy’s allies are assisting Jordan’s efforts behind-the-scenes—a believable scenario given the pair’s close relationship, as well as long standing [tension](#) between McCarthy and Scalise. Rep. Kevin Hern (R-OK) has also [indicated](#) interest in running for the job, though he has yet to formally announce. While Hern leads the largest caucus within the House GOP, the Republican Study Committee, his bid is seen as a longshot by most. Though it was speculated that former President Donald Trump could enter the race after a [possible visit](#) to Capitol Hill next week, he has [endorsed](#) Jordan for the speakership.

If neither Scalise or Jordan can get the necessary 218 votes, there is also the option of

running as a “slate;” wherein Scalise takes on the role of Speaker and Jordan becomes Majority Leader. Such a scenario would have implications further down the leadership roster, by foiling Rep. Tom Emmer’s (R-MN) [ambitions](#) for Majority Leader, Rep. Guy Reschenthaler’s (R-PA) [race](#) for Majority Whip (should Emmer move up), as well as Conference Chair Elise Stefanik’s (R-NY) desire to move up to, frankly, [anything else](#). New candidates could also emerge, such as the current Speaker Pro Tempore, Patrick McHenry, or another McCarthy ally, Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA).

While an initial attempt to elect a new speaker is currently [planned](#) for next Wednesday, it remains to be seen whether House Republicans will be able to coalesce around a single candidate anytime soon. As such, the House remains in a state of legislative paralysis in the middle of a Continuing Resolution (CR) that runs only through mid-November, meaning that government funding negotiations will continue to languish. With U.S. military aid to Ukraine sure to be a hot-button issue in the Republicans’ debate over who will replace McCarthy, prospects for additional Ukraine funding face uncertain odds.

The Senate was a bastion of peace compared to the House this week. The chamber [welcomed](#) Laphonza Butler (D-CA) as the newly-appointed junior senator from California to replace the late Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). Senator Butler has deep roots in the California labor movement, where she led the powerful Service Employees International Union Local 2015 before her most recent role as the head of Emily’s List, an advocacy group supporting pro-abortion rights candidates. She has not announced whether she intends to join the already-crowded field of candidates vying for the seat in next year’s election. Senator Butler is currently the only Black woman serving in the U.S. Senate and the first openly LGBTQ+ individual to represent California in the Senate.

Aerospace & Defense

[Army Plans Major Cuts to Special-Operations Forces, Including Green Berets \(WSJ\)](#)

The Pentagon is poised to make controversial cuts to the Army’s storied special-operations forces, amid recruiting struggles and a shift in focus from Middle East counterterrorism operations to a threat from China. The Army is cutting about 3,000 troops, or about 10% from its special-operations ranks, which could include so-called trigger-pullers from the Green Beret commando units who have conducted some of the nation’s most dangerous

and sensitive missions around the world, from the jungles of Vietnam to the back alleys of Baghdad. The reductions would enable the Army to rebalance toward the large conventional ground forces needed in a potential fight in Asia. The trims in the ranks of special forces would also help the Army cope with a recruiting shortfall in a strong labor market. The service plans to brief Capitol Hill in the coming days on the reductions.

[Can the Navy save money by accepting the LCS as a sunk cost?](#)

[Air Force Gives Raytheon \\$39 Million For Air Defense Software Prototype \(Air and Space Forces\)](#)

The Air Force awarded \$39 million to Raytheon, the defense business unit of RTX, on Oct. 3 to develop a prototype software system to command and control air base defenses against aerial threats like cruise missiles and drones. The prototype uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to analyze threat information from sensors such as radar, then recommend to operators the best defense option, which could be missiles or other weapons. The \$39 million award comes about a year after Raytheon and the Norwegian company Kongsberg Defense & Aerospace, in partnership with the Air Force Research Laboratory, tested command and control software on a National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System, a machine that can fire several kinds of missiles to hit targets at short, medium, or long range.

[Biden team weighs using State Department grants to fund weapons for Ukraine](#)

[Air Force eyes thrust range targets for wingman drones, wants engine development to start in FY25 \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Air Force is eyeing a thrust range of 3,000 to 8,000 pounds of force for future drone wingmen, and is setting its sights on launching an engine development program for the uncrewed systems known as Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) in the first quarter of fiscal year 2025. The new details, outlined in a request for information (RFI), suggest the Air Force is looking for a “mid-sized jet engine” that would power a “fairly capable military-

class aircraft". The RFI also indicates the Air Force is trying to move fast. In it, the Air Force tells industry to assume "program initiation" will commence in the first quarter of FY25 and asks for capability in "discrete intervals" of three, five and seven years from the start date. Responses will help the government gather information on metrics like cost and schedule as well as evaluate "off-the-shelf, modified off-the-shelf, derivative, and new engine designs," the RFI says.

Budget & Appropriations

[Some House Republicans demand rule change to prevent another speaker ouster \(Roll Call\)](#)

House Republicans face a decision in the coming days on not only who should be the next speaker but also whether to change House rules to make it easier for that person to stay in the role. Former Speaker Kevin McCarthy only gained the speaker's gavel earlier this year after agreeing to changes demanded by a group of Republican holdouts, who in part insisted on more power to influence legislation, such as through the appropriations process and open amendments on bills. One change became the most consequential: lowering the threshold for bringing a "motion to vacate" the office of the speaker. Any member could file the proposal, instead of it needing to be offered at the direction of a party caucus or conference. The motion-to-vacate rule has already become an issue among Republicans in the race for the next speaker, with some in the conference insisting on strengthening the next speaker's ability to govern.

[House speaker race endorsement live tracker: Who has backed who so far?](#)

[GOP senators: McCarthy's collapse will lead to turmoil, shutdown \(The Hill\)](#)

Republican senators are shocked and unnerved by the sudden collapse of Speaker Kevin McCarthy's career in leadership and fear the turmoil in the House will put Congress on the path to a government shutdown. Senators are worried about who will succeed McCarthy and whether that successor will be beholden to a small group of conservatives that it will be close to impossible to pass spending legislation before government funding runs out

before Thanksgiving. While GOP senators occasionally criticized some of McCarthy's moves, especially his decision to give the green light for an impeachment inquiry into President Biden, they saw him as allied with their desire to keep the government funded and to show voters their party can govern. They're hoping that whoever replaces McCarthy is willing to do what it takes to avoid a government shutdown.

[The next GOP speaker will face the same traps that doomed McCarthy](#)

[Lawmakers mull Ukraine plans amid uncertainty after McCarthy ouster \(Defense News\)](#)

Pro-Ukraine lawmakers are strategizing on how to pass another Ukraine aid package through Congress despite an increasingly unfriendly Republican caucus that has plunged into chaos following the ouster of former Speaker Kevin McCarthy. Numerous House Republicans are floating the idea of tying Ukraine aid to more border security funding, if they're open to the idea at all. Meanwhile, the Senate is leaning toward passing a full-year package for Kyiv, a strategy that would insulate Ukraine from next year's U.S. elections but come with a huge up-front price tag. It's also unclear when the House will resume conducting any business, Ukraine-related or otherwise, as the race to replace McCarthy as speaker begins in earnest. And at least two would-be speakers have a staunch record of opposing Ukraine aid.

Advanced Technologies

[CHIPS Act implementation at risk as November shutdown looms: Raimondo \(Nextgov\)](#)

A government shutdown would be "massively disruptive" for the Commerce Department as it continues to disburse critical funding featured in the CHIPS and Science Act to boost semiconductor research and development in the U.S., according to Secretary Gina Raimondo. Raimondo testified before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation on Wednesday that the agency was in the process of "making historically bold and strategic investments that will strengthen national and economic security," and was planning to announce additional CHIPS Act investments this fall. The shutdown, narrowly averted late Saturday night after Congress passed a short-term spending bill,

could have significantly impeded investments and the department's ongoing efforts to implement the CHIPS Act, according to Raimondo.

[Commerce's CHIPS-focused semiconductor tech center expected this fall](#)

[Comtech's Army SATCOM modem win opens door to cross-service sales \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Army award to Comtech of \$48.6 million for a new multi-network satellite communications modem kicks open the door to potential sales of thousands of the software-based systems — replacing the current standard modem for transmitting and receiving SATCOM signals that equips not just Army ground systems, but also those of the Navy and Air Force, according to company and Army documents. Further, Comtech President and CEO Ken Peterman told Breaking Defense that the contract for the Army's Enterprise Digital Intermediate Frequency Multi-Carrier (EDIM) modem paves the way toward helping the Space Force in its struggle to figure out how to integrate ground systems for the myriad military and commercial SATCOM networks to ensure 24/7, worldwide communications.

[SEC Sues Elon Musk in San Francisco Federal Court to Enforce Subpoena](#)

[Alibaba accused of 'possible espionage' at European hub \(Financial Times\)](#)

Belgium's intelligence service has been monitoring Alibaba's main logistics hub in Europe for espionage following suspicions Beijing has been exploiting its growing economic presence in the west. European governments have been increasing scrutiny of the alleged security and economic risks posed by Chinese companies, which has been part of a wider reassessment of the EU's traditional openness to trade with China. In specific reference to Alibaba's logistics arm at the cargo airport in Liège, Belgium's security services told the Financial Times they were working to detect "possible espionage and/or interference activities" carried out by Chinese entities "including Alibaba".

Military Installations & Communities

[Duke Field to get military's first electric aircraft charging station \(Military Times\)](#)

The Air Force has begun building its first station to recharge electric aircraft, marking its latest step in experimenting with non-fuel burning helicopters. The service broke ground on the charging station at Duke Field in Florida Sept. 19, the Air Force Research Laboratory said in a statement, and it will be the first electric aircraft charging station on a military installation. AFWERX, the service's unit that focuses on innovation, and Burlington, Vermont-based electric aerospace firm Beta Technologies are building it. The Duke Field charging station is scheduled to be finished by Oct. 13. Beta is expected to deliver its ALIA eVTOL aircraft to the base for testing in early fall. Duke is 10 miles north of Eglin Air Force Base, and is home to the 413th Flight Test Squadron, which tests rotary wing aircraft for the service.

[Controversial Hawaii fuel facility to begin defueling ahead of closing](#)

[Guard F-15s Arrive in Kadena As Active-Duty Eagles Phase Out \(Air and Space Forces\)](#)

Kadena Air Base, Japan, saw the return of a familiar aircraft type on Oct. 3 when F-15C Eagles from the California Air National Guard's 144th Fighter Wing and the Louisiana Air National Guard's 159th Fighter Wing arrived to help keep up the continuous fighter presence in the region. The new arrivals are the latest in a series of fighters rotating through Kadena as the base's local F-15C/D fleet phases out due to old age. Since the rotational force plan was announced in October, the Kadena-based 18th Wing has hosted F-22 Raptors and F-35s Lightning IIs from Alaska, U.S. F-16s from Germany, and F-15E Strike Eagles from North Carolina and Idaho.

[VCPA claim for 'reprehensibly poor' military housing survives](#)

[Army Plans Boost in Barracks Spending as Military Grapples with Squalid Living Conditions \(Military.com\)](#)

The Army is crafting a new plan to improve barracks following mold and health issues, as well as a damning report from a government watchdog last month that found squalid base housing across the services -- including bad plumbing, brown water and insect infestations. The plan, which has not yet been approved by Army Secretary Christine Wormuth, aims to pump \$4 billion into barracks construction and renovations, and fund barracks sustainment to 100% of what's authorized by Congress. On average in recent years, the Army has funded barracks sustainment at only 85% of what's authorized, using the rest of the money for unrelated projects. Part of that increase would go to fully funding repairs and other sustainment, amounting to \$342 million through the rest of the decade.

Homeland Security

[U.S. and Mexico Leaders Meet as Migration and Fentanyl Pose Major Challenge \(NYT\)](#)

President Biden's top cabinet officials and their Mexican counterparts met Thursday as both countries sought a united front on drug and gun trafficking and managing record levels of migration. The U.S. officials — Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Attorney General Merrick B. Garland — are particularly focused on bolstering efforts with Mexico to curtail the stream of deadly fentanyl wreaking havoc in communities throughout the United States. But officials made a point to elevate the significance of the current global migration movement that has strained resources on both sides of the border.

[New CISA, NSA guidance highlights pain points in identity and security management](#)

[DHS to release AI guidance for critical infrastructure \(Nextgov\)](#)

The Department of Homeland Security's efforts to codify the best cybersecurity practices to help protect U.S. critical infrastructure have expanded to cover emerging technology with upcoming guidance on how to leverage artificial intelligence technologies. Robert Silvers,

the Department of Homeland Security Office of Policy undersecretary, discussed the benefits AI and machine learning systems can offer to national security and acknowledged the accompanying risks for an emerging technology with limited guardrails at the Institute for Critical Infrastructure Technology's AI DC 2023 briefing Wednesday.

[Report: Maritime Infrastructure Security Breaches from Drones
'Becoming a Common Occurrence'](#)

[Federal CISO looks ahead to conversation around new contractor cyber rules \(Federal News Network\)](#)

A top White House cybersecurity official says the "conversation is being started" around sweeping new cyber requirements for federal IT contractors. One rule published in the Federal Register this week includes a provision that would mandate some key contractors report cyber incidents to the government within eight hours. Another aims to standardize cybersecurity requirements for unclassified information systems across government. The proposals stem from President Joe Biden's May 2021 cybersecurity executive order. The EO included a major goal to ensure information technology and operational technology contractors share more cybersecurity information with agencies.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Key Republican backs Biden nominee to head FAA \(Reuters\)](#)

A key Senate Republican said Thursday he plans to support the White House nominee to head the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as the agency addresses a series of near-miss incidents and air traffic controller staffing shortages. Last month, President Joe Biden nominated Michael Whitaker, chief commercial officer for Supernal, a Hyundai company developing an electric air taxi, who served as a deputy FAA administrator under President Barack Obama, to head the agency that has been without a permanent head for 18 months after the prior nominee withdrew. Senator Ted Cruz, the top Republican on the Senate Commerce Committee, said Whitaker "has expressly committed to focus on the FAA's primary responsibility, which is ensuring the safety of our national aerospace."

[US carriers accelerate to bigger planes to overcome operating constraints](#)

[Boom Supersonic Begins Overture FAA Certification Process \(Aviation Week\)](#)

Boom Supersonic has received its FAA G-1 stage 1 issue paper from the FAA, marking a key step in the multi-stage process toward clearing the Mach 1.7 Overture airliner for commercial service by the end of the decade. The G-1 certification basis spells out the specific airworthiness standards and environmental standards—including special conditions—required for FAA Type Certification. While the requirements are established, Boom will work in parallel on finalizing its G-2 issue paper with the FAA, which will set forth the means of compliance to meet the requirements laid out in the G-1 issue paper.

[More U.S. Wind Farms Terminate Power Agreements Due to Financial Pressures](#)

[Costs Mount as Migration-Related Delays Stall Trucks at US-Mexico Border \(US News\)](#)

Trucks attempting to enter the United States from Mexico queued for miles on Wednesday amid delays related to record migration at the U.S.-Mexico border, while an industry group said the value of goods stalled in Mexico had surpassed \$1.5 billion. Thousands of trucks have been stranded on the Mexican side of the border after U.S. authorities shut down crossings and imposed extra security checks amid an increase in migration. Local media said the line of trucks extended 12 miles.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[Kaiser strike: Thousands of health care workers walk off job \(AP\)](#)

Tens of thousands of Kaiser Permanente workers took to picket lines in multiple states on Wednesday, launching a massive strike that the company warned could cause delays at its hospitals and clinics that serve nearly 13 million Americans. The Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions, representing about 85,000 of the health system's employees

nationally, approved a strike for three days in California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington. Some 75,000 people were expected to participate in the pickets. That includes about 180 workers from facilities in Virginia and Washington, D.C., who planned to picket only one day since many had to travel long distances to converge in Springfield, Virginia, on Wednesday.

[Tensions high as Medicare drug negotiations advance](#)

[Conservative judge rejects pharma argument against Medicare negotiations \(Axios\)](#)

In refusing to freeze Medicare drug price negotiations, a federal judge in Ohio appeared to throw cold water on one of the pharmaceutical industry's main arguments against the Inflation Reduction Act. U.S. District Court Judge Michael Newman, a Trump appointee, turned away the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's request for the negotiations to be paused while legal challenges to the IRA play out, writing that "participation in Medicare, no matter how vital it may be to a business model, is a completely voluntary choice." The decision preserves the Biden administration's timeline for drug price talks, including a requirement that manufacturers of the first 10 selected drugs by Monday submit data to consider in the negotiation of maximum fair price.

[US mental health startup Headway raises \\$125 million at \\$1 billion valuation](#)

[Key Senate panel eyes action on drug shortages \(Stat News\)](#)

One of the top health care committees in the Senate is assembling ideas for bipartisan legislation to address drug shortages, three Senate aides and three lobbyists told STAT. The talks, led by Senate Finance Chair Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and ranking member Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) are in the early days, but they could move the debate over drug shortage reforms into a new phase. The committee has jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid payment policies for hospitals. Other committees that have tried tackling the issue have jurisdiction mostly over the Food and Drug Administration. The panel is tentatively aiming

to hold a hearing on the issue in November, the sources said. The panel has also started accepting input from outside stakeholders, one lobbyist said.

Climate & Development

[Interior insiders brace for Beaudreau's exit \(E&E News\)](#)

Deputy Interior Secretary Tommy Beaudreau took on some of the toughest jobs during his two-plus years as the department's second in command. With Interior Secretary Deb Haaland most visible on conservation and tribal matters, it's often been Beaudreau spotted in the middle of minerals, oil and gas strategy, drought policy, and other bottom-line matters. Those issues have seemed a natural fit for the former Latham & Watkins attorney whose clients while in private practice included the likes of Dominion Resources and Vineyard Wind. The Interior Department veteran — he spent almost seven years at the agency during the Obama administration — has appeared equally comfortable on Capitol Hill, even amid constant political crossfire.

[New speaker could take House GOP backward on climate](#)

[U.S., UK and partners working on 15 critical minerals projects \(Reuters\)](#)

The United States and partners are working on 15 projects to secure supplies of critical minerals needed for electric vehicles and the energy transition, a senior U.S. official said on Thursday. The Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) formed last year by 14 governments aims to ensure adequate supplies of minerals such as lithium and rare earths to meet zero-carbon goals. The MSP, co-hosted by Britain, will meet next week during the London Metal Exchange (LME) Week industry gathering. The MSP aims to facilitate deals among private companies and help with financing, including by trade banks such as the U.S. government's Export-Import Bank (EXIM).

[GAO urges EPA to make a plan for its 'difficult' and 'outdated' air quality IT systems](#)

[Phillips remains 'acting' chair of FERC, White House says \(E&E News\)](#)

Willie Phillips is still acting chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, a White House official said Wednesday, despite the release of a document signed by the president that lists him as chair. Phillips began leading the commission in January following the departure of former FERC Chair Richard Glick. At the time, a White House official said that Phillips, a Democrat, would be FERC's acting chair until the Biden administration could nominate and confirm a "permanent" chair. Then this week, the Institute for Energy Research released a document signed by President Joe Biden dated Jan. 3 that designated Phillips as "Chair" of FERC. According to the White House, however, nothing has changed.

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



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