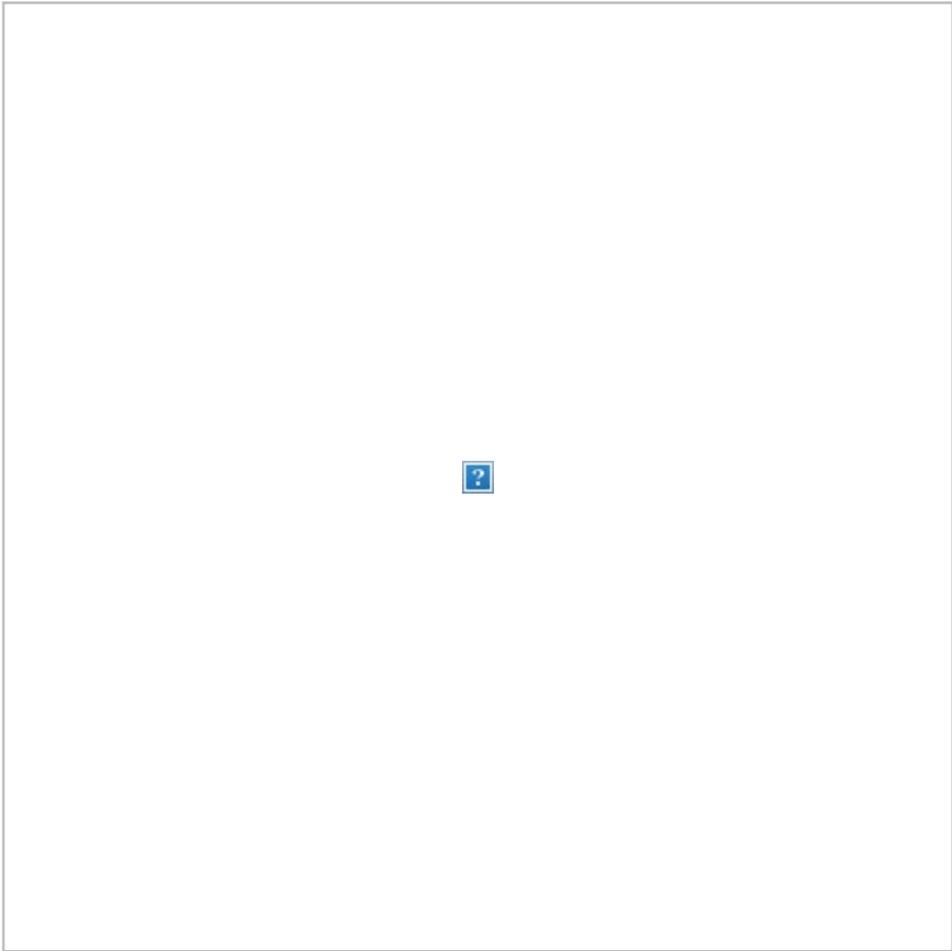
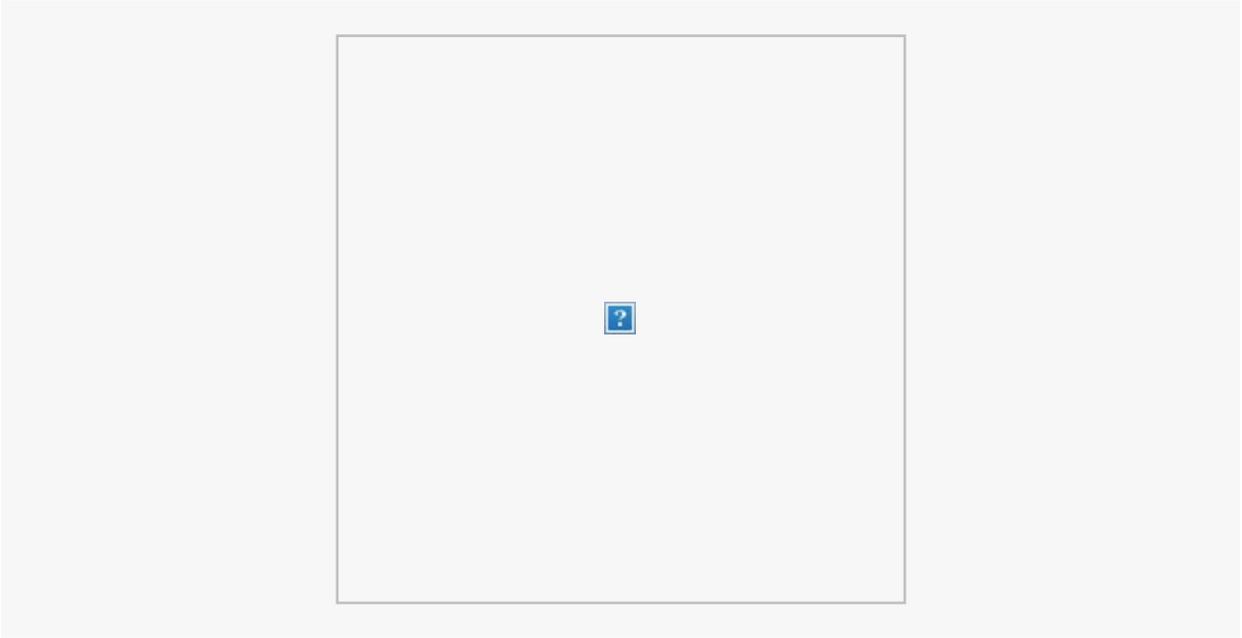


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May 31, 2024

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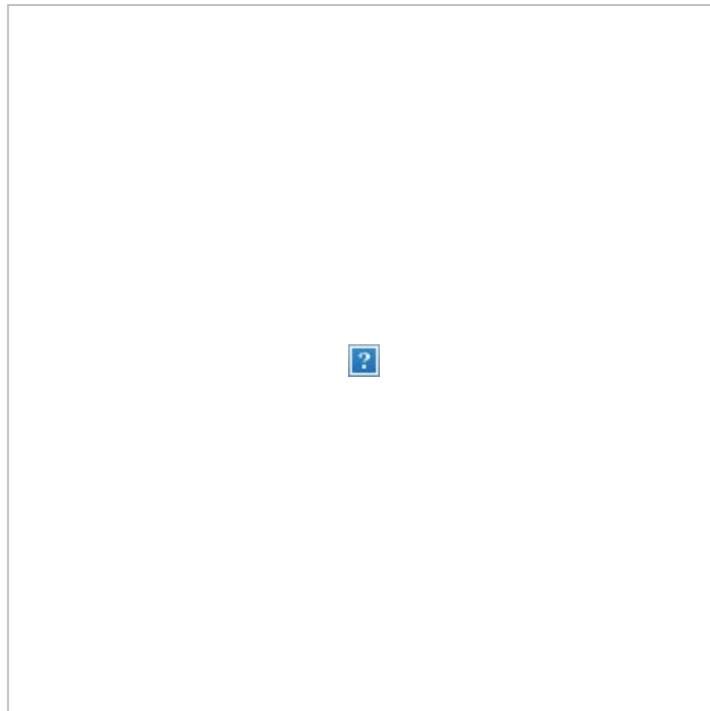
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Notable Headlines

- [Elon Musk to testify in SEC probe over Twitter stock disclosures](#)
- [Third person infected in U.S. bird flu outbreak — but with a new symptom](#)
- [Israel says it's taken control of key area of Gaza's border with Egypt awash in smuggling tunnels](#)
- [Votes being counted in South African election framed as most important since apartheid](#)
- [Supreme Court revives NRA's lawsuit alleging that New York violated its First Amendment rights](#)

Worth reading: [Allies prepare to mark D-Day's 80th anniversary in shadow of Ukraine war](#)

View From The Hill



Capitol Hill was quiet this week as lawmakers spent time in their districts for the Memorial Day Recess. Once they return, activity will ramp back up on the budding fiscal year 2025 process, with markups continuing next week, including subcommittee consideration of funding bills for the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and State. The House Rules Committee also issued a notice to Members that this year's National Defense

Authorization Act (NDAA), which passed the House Armed Services Committee last week with near-unanimous support, may be up for a vote on the House Floor as early as the week of June 10th. It is expected that House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) will allow amendment votes on controversial culture-war issues when the bill comes to the Floor, to placate his right flank and keep his Conference united on the vote. Of course, these provisions are likely to fall out of the final legislation in the face of a Democrat-controlled Senate and White House, a process that played out similarly in last year's bill.

On the ethics front, the House Ethics Committee agreed to form a select subcommittee to investigate accusations of corruption against Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX), who stands accused of taking more than \$600,000 in bribes, along with his wife, from two foreign entities. Meanwhile, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito [penned](#) two response letters to House and Senate Democrats outlining his decision not to recuse himself from upcoming Supreme Court cases involving the January 6th attack on the Capitol and the 2020 election. Alito came under fire after images emerged of an upside-down American flag raised outside his Virginia home in 2021, as well as an "Appeal to Heaven" flag, which dates back to the American Revolution. Both have been associated as symbols of the "Stop the Steal" movement contesting the results of the 2020 election, alternative meanings of which Alito says he was unaware.

Aerospace & Defense

[France could announce sending military trainers to Ukraine soon, diplomats say \(Reuters\)](#)
France could soon be sending military trainers to Ukraine "despite the concerns of some allies and criticism by Russia" and could announce their decision soon. The French hope to lead a coalition of countries offering assistance to Ukraine's war effort. However, there is the concern among other European nations that sending military trainers to Ukraine could create a "direct conflict with Russia." According to two diplomats France would send a limited number of personnel for assessment before sending several hundred trainers. The training the French would provide would center around "demining, keeping equipment operational and technical expertise for warplanes to be provided by the West." France would also finance, arm, and train a Ukrainian motorized brigade. Ukraine's top commander signed paperwork allowing French military instructors to visit Ukrainian training centers. President Zelensky will be in France to celebrate the 80th anniversary of D-Day and it is possible the announcement will come when he is in the country.

[Boeing, FAA hold three hours of talks on quality plan](#)

[Think tank close to Kremlin says Russia should consider a 'demonstrative' nuclear explosion \(Reuters\)](#)

A Senior member of a Russian think tank, whose ideas have become government policy suggested that Moscow "consider a demonstrative nuclear explosion to cow the West into refusing to allow Ukraine to use its arms against targets inside Russia." The proposal was created by Dmitry Suslov, who is a member of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy and was issued a day after President Vladimir Putin "warned the West that NATO members in Europe were playing with fire by proposing to let Kyiv use Western weapons to strike deep inside Russia." Putin also alluded that utilizing western weapons to strike deep

inside Russia could trigger a global conflict. Ukrainian leadership said it needs to be able to strike forces and targets in Russia with long-range western missiles to defend itself and prevent air, missile and drone attacks. While some western nations are aligned with that view, the United States has not come around to the same conclusion.

Budget & Economy

[US economic growth last quarter is revised down from 1.6% rate to 1.3%, but consumers kept spending \(ABC\)](#)

From January to March the US economy grew at a poor 1.3% annual pace, which is the weakest quarterly rate since the Spring of 2022. The government downgraded its previous estimate from the original 1.6%. While consumer spending rose, it did so at a slower pace than previously thought. Core inflation rose at 3.6% which was up from 2% in each of the previous two quarters. While the economy is still in rough shape it has shown resilience amidst high interest rates that many thought would trigger a recession. In recent months, hiring has slowed with companies instituting layoffs ranging from hundreds to thousands. Businesses like Target, Burger King, and McDonalds are highlighting price cuts or cheaper deals to “try to attract financially squeezed consumers.” Polls continue to show that rent, grocery, and gasoline prices are angering voters as the presidential campaign heats up. Many economists and financial experts were expecting a rate cut earlier this year, but now many expect the cut to come late in 2024 or even in early 2025.

[The Congressional Budget Office's Alternative Scenarios Forecast a Dire Economic Picture](#)

[37% of Americans paid a late fee in the last 12 months, report finds \(CNBC\)](#)

American consumers are finding it difficult to keep up with their bills indicated by 37% of them paying a late fee in the last 12 months. Credit card fees were the most common making up 21% of survey respondents. Other late fees were related to utility bills and rent. The survey was conducted by NerdWallet and had 2,061 US adults. Late fees generally don't become a black mark until you're 30 days late. This means consumers can recover, but if they let things go too long it can hurt their credit score. With rising costs and wages that aren't keeping up with inflation it is no surprise that consumers are falling behind on their bills. Combine the economic environment with layoffs stretching every industry and it is a recipe for missed payments. Until costs begin to come down, it can be expected that consumers will continue to be behind on payments.

Advanced Technologies

[Why technology has not transformed building \(BBC\)](#)

If a worker from the 1920s was brought to modern day they would not be too surprised by what they saw. The building industry has not innovated much over the past 100 years. In 2017, the McKinsey Global Institute concluded that the construction industry could improve

productivity by “50 to 60% and boost the industry’s global value by \$1.6 trillion.” Since that initial report the industry has improved via software and apps, but not to the extent many have hoped for. There have been new technologies like 3D printing which involves extruding concrete or other materials to build up the walls of a house. The University of Maine has worked on developing the biggest printer to date. Using a mix of wood fibers and plant-based resin, the printer formed a 600 square foot house. The prototype home has performed well through two Maine winters and the executive director of Uni. of Maine’s Advanced Structures and Composites Center said they are looking to print a neighborhood consisting of nine homes.

[Big Tech develops AI networking standard but without chip leader Nvidia](#)

['I was misidentified as shoplifter by facial recognition tech' \(BBC\)](#)

As AI continues its march taking over industries there have been plenty of positives and negatives along the way. AI has begun assisting stores in detecting shoplifters. However, this hasn't gone too well. A woman named Sara was wrongly accused after being flagged by a facial-recognition system called Facewatch. She said “within less than a minute, I'm approached by a store worker who comes up to me and says, ‘you're a thief, you need to leave the store’.” Her bag was searched and was led out of the shop being told she was to be banned from all stores using the technology. Facewatch later wrote to the woman in question and acknowledged it made an error. It should be noted that this case occurred in the United Kingdom there is always a possibility the technology could be used in the US. However the use of facial recognition technology in this way would pose questions among civil liberties and could draw comparison to how countries like China use this technology.

Military Installations & Communities

[F-35 crashes outside of Albuquerque Airport: Pilot in serious condition \(Military.com\)](#)

An Air Force test pilot was sent to the hospital in serious condition earlier this week after the F-35B Lightning II they were flying crashed near Albuquerque, New Mexico. The pilot was able to eject before the crash occurred. Several fire departments responded to the crash around 2 PM local time on Tuesday. The F-35 in question was en route to Edwards Air Force Base in California from Fort Worth, Texas. The jet crashed after a refueling stop at Kirtland Air Force Base. A spokesperson for Lockheed Martin who makes the F-35 said “safety is our priority, and we will follow appropriate investigation protocol.” The jet had been transferring to Edwards “for additional test equipment modifications after it had been worked on in Fort Worth.” A defense official said the F-35 was the Marine Corps variant of the aircraft, but was being flown by an Air Force pilot. This is the latest in a string of incidents with the F-35 after another ejection that occurred in September of last year. During the NDAA markup in the House Armed Services Committee some members had a discussion surrounding an amendment for the government to seize F-35 intellectual property from Lockheed Martin, although the amendment was ultimately withdrawn.

[China's defense ministry condemns US missile deployment in Philippines](#)

[Veterans get 3 mental health visits a year for free with VA's new copay exemption \(Military.com\)](#)

Department of Veterans Affairs beneficiaries won't have to pay copays for their first three mental health appointments of each year thanks to a new exemption. For those who paid copays starting in the back end of 2023 will receive automatic refunds. The VA announced the exemption on Wednesday backdated to June 27, 2023 and will run to December 29, 2027. According to the VA announcement, the copay exemption "applies to outpatient visits for mental health care and substance use disorder." The goal of the exemption is to expand access to mental health services and lower veterans' costs. Although the exemption does not cover medication copays. Lawmakers included the exemption in the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and Robert Joseph Dole Memorial Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2022.

Homeland Security

[Biden administration tries to plug loophole that released migrant linked to terrorism into the US \(NBC\)](#)

As immigration judges do their work to determine which migrants might have ties to terrorism or pose a threat to public safety, the Biden administration is giving them access to classified information to help them do that job. The change in policy follows an April 11 NBC story that revealed "an Afghan migrant on the terrorist watch list was released on bond by an immigration judge in Texas after prosecutors from Immigration and Customs Enforcement withheld information about a possible connection to terrorism because the evidence was classified." Mohammad Kharwin, was caught crossing the border in 2023 but was released because Border Patrol lacked the information connecting him to the terror watch list. He lived in the US for more than a year before he was arrested by ICE earlier this year. When evidence of his potential ties was not presented he was released again waiting for a hearing in 2025. Very soon after the original NBC report, Kharwin was arrested again in San Antonio, Texas. Prior to the policy change, prosecutors presenting a case for deportation in immigration court had to get approval from the DHS secretary to share classified information.

[Inside the DHS's AI security guidelines for critical infrastructure](#)

[Military hid attempted Quantico Base breach by Jordanians from Marines for two weeks \(Homeland Security Today\)](#)

Leadership at Marine Corps Base Quantico did not alert rank-and-file personnel of an attempted breach by two Jordanian nationals in a box truck until two weeks after it happened. The incident occurred on May 3 when "two men approached Fuller Road Gate of the Marine base, were stopped for screening, and attempted to ram their way in but were stopped by military sentries." Notification to other Marines did not go out until May 16. Both men who were apprehended at Quantico are currently in ICE custody and will remain there until they are deported. A spokesman for Quantico said in a statement, "The unauthorized access attempt was reported immediately to required military officials...In any case determined to be an immediate threat to the base or its population, mass notification and other means are always used to notify all who work and live on Marine

Corps Base Quantico.”

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Climate change is behind increasing flight turbulence, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg says \(CNBC\)](#)

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg says that climate change is one of the culprits behind an increase in flight turbulence. “The reality is, the effects of climate change are already upon us in terms of our transportation,” Buttigieg said on CBS’ “Face the Nation” on Sunday, forecasting that turbulence is something that will continue to “affect American travelers, whether here or abroad.” “We’ve seen that in the form of everything from heat waves that shouldn’t statistically even be possible threatening to melt the cables of transit systems in the Pacific Northwest, to, as you mentioned, hurricane seasons becoming more and more extreme and indications that turbulence is up by about 15%,” he continued. “That means assessing anything and everything that we can do about it.” A study published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters last year found that there have been increases in clear-air turbulence (CAT) between 1979 and 2020, with “severe-or-greater” turbulence – the strongest category of CAT – becoming 55% more frequent over the North Atlantic over the course of that time period.

[Biden-Harris Administration Announces \\$343 Million to Modernize Transit Stations, Improve Accessibility Across the Country](#)

[Senator Promotes Emerging Transportation Technologies \(Transport Topics\)](#)

The adoption of emerging technologies contributes to safety improvements throughout the nation’s transportation network, federal lawmakers and stakeholders said in a renewed push to reduce highway fatalities. Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.) recently sounded the alarm about ongoing safety concerns across freight and commuter corridors. He was joined by groups supporting Congress’ focus on improving safety programs and technological capabilities for surface transportation systems. “Every day, unfortunately, more than 100 Americans lose their lives on our roads. If trends continue, we expect more than 40,000 fatalities this year and hundreds of thousands of serious injuries. That means thousands of families are going to be torn apart by preventable crashes,” Peters said during a Surface Transportation, Maritime, Freight and Ports Subcommittee hearing May 21. “Also, over-represented in these tragedies are black, Hispanic and Native Americans, as well as Americans living in rural areas. We need a strong and comprehensive response, and today we will discuss a holistic safe systems approach to addressing the roadway safety crisis and how we can implement that approach all across our country.”

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[U.S. health secretary sees pandemic treaty deal as close \(Reuters\)](#)

The top U.S. health official said on Wednesday it would be “tragic” for the world to miss out on key reforms to the global pandemic response and that a treaty deal was within reach, with no major differences between negotiators. Health officials are meeting in Geneva this

week to try to wrap up more than two years of negotiations on a pandemic treaty and a series of updates to existing International Health Rules (IHR). However, countries have failed to finalise the treaty at this assembly and countries are considering an extension. However, Becerra played down the differences. "I don't think there's today substantive disagreement about the essential elements – it's more how they are packaged, how they are defined," he said. Asked whether the United States had done enough to ensure the future system would be fair, he said: "There's no one that's put more on the table than the United States to get a deal. Does that meet the definition of equity? I'm not sure but I know we're giving." A U.S. delegate previously said that the IHR regulation reforms should be finalised this week and that Washington supports a one- to two-year extension of the treaty talks.

[Sanders, Wyden scrutinize data firm over 'sky-high medical bills'](#)

[Smart Bandages That Heal Wounds Faster and Talk to Your Doctor Are on the Way \(WSJ\)](#)

A new generation of smart bandages that could allow doctors to remotely monitor wounds, decrease scarring and speed up healing with a zap of light or electricity is on its way. These high-tech bandages could eventually replace today's usually simple constructions of gauze and plastic or latex, which can't detect anything about the wound underneath and don't do much more than apply pressure or hold a cream or ointment in place. "We kind of are practicing medieval medicine in wound care. It's a lot of poultices and salves," says Dr. Geoffrey Gurtner, chairman of the surgery department at the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Tucson, who is among those working to develop a smart bandage. "There hasn't been a lot of innovation." Smart bandages are part of the burgeoning wearable-tech industry, aided by more advanced microsystems and flexible electronics and fueled in part by \$55 million in funding announced in 2019 from Darpa, the research arm of the Defense Department, to develop bioelectronics to help wound healing.

Climate & Development

[Researchers make massive lithium discovery in Pennsylvania \(The Hill\)](#)

Scientists from the University of Pittsburgh have discovered a large amount of lithium located in Pennsylvania, saying it could eventually supply more than a third of America's needs for the mineral. Researcher and study lead author Justin Mackey told CBS Pittsburgh in an article published Wednesday that the wastewaters of the Marcellus Shale gas wells could cover "somewhere between 30 and 40 percent of the current U.S. national demand." "This study estimates that Marcellus Shale related Li yields have potential to make a significant contribution to US domestic consumption with a set of reasonable, conservative assumptions," says the research, published in the Nature Journal last month. "If you can extract value out of materials, and specifically lithium from this, then you reduce the cost of remediating and handling this waste," Mackey said. The researchers analyzed compliance data from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to determine their results.

[New Legislation in Vermont Will Make Fossil Fuel Companies Liable for Climate Impacts in the State. Here's What That Could Look Like](#)

[US assures Europe: We'll keep sending you gas, we promise \(Politico\)](#)

U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to pause approvals for new liquified natural gas (LNG) projects will not affect deliveries to Europe, a top U.S. energy official told POLITICO. "It doesn't impact any of the LNG currently being exported," U.S. Deputy Energy Secretary David Turk said in an interview after a high-level meeting with French officials in the Paris business district of La Défense. "It also doesn't impact any of the current construction going on to export even more LNG," Turk added, speaking from the 27th floor of a skyscraper where the French government keeps several offices. The reassurance to anxious European officials comes several months after Biden halted the sign-off of pending or future LNG exports from new gas projects — a surprise move meant to ease concerns from climate-conscious voters ahead of a knife-edge election in November. The decision rattled European industry, given its increasing reliance on U.S. LNG as the European Union pushes to ditch Russian gas amid Moscow's grinding war in Ukraine. U.S. LNG exports to the EU have steadily increased since the start of the war in Ukraine, and currently make up half of the bloc's LNG supplies — up from about a quarter before the war.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE

Appropriations Committee:

House: NONE

Senate:

- 6/04, 10:00 AM - Review of FY25 Budget for Space Matters
- 6/04, 2:30 PM - Review of FY25 Budget for the FBI
- 6/04, 2:30 PM - Review of FY25 Budget for the Dept. of Treasury

Homeland Security Committee:

House:

- 6/04, 10:00 AM - OSHA's Proposed Rule to Update the Fire Brigades Standard
- 6/04, 2:00 PM - Examining Chinese threats to the Maritime Domain

Senate:

- 6/04, 10:00 AM - Streamlining the Federal Cybersecurity Regulatory Process



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