

Schott, Heather

From: Rick Dwyer <rdwyer@hrmffa.org>
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Ladies & Gentlemen,
Below please find this week's edition of *Executive Insight Brief* from The Roosevelt Group.

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Executive Insight Brief

December 13, 2024

Notable Headlines

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 - [Mysterious drone sightings in New Jersey prompt security concerns. Here's what we know](#)
 - [Watchdog finds no proof of undercover FBI agents at Jan. 6 attack](#)
 - [Johnson takes hands-off approach to picking his policy leaders](#)
 - [Hegseth walks back controversial comments on women and gays in the military](#)

View From The Hill



The House **passed** the sweeping, 1,800-page final version of the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on Wednesday, in a 281-140 bipartisan vote. This year's NDAA is being muscled through over objections from many democrats over a provision limiting gender-affirming care for minors under the military's healthcare system. The \$895 billion bill, expected to pass the Senate next week, includes a 14.5% pay increase for junior service members, funding for improved military housing, and additional resources for the Indo-Pacific amidst increasing competition with Beijing. The legislation stays **under** the spending cap levels set by last year's *Fiscal Responsibility Act*, much to the chagrin of a bipartisan chorus of high-ranking defense hawks across Capitol Hill who wanted higher levels of funding for the Department of Defense and U.S. Military.

Over veto threats from the White House, Congress **sent** legislation to the president's desk this week that would increase the size of the federal judiciary by sixty seats. The bipartisan legislation originated in the Senate and is intended to alleviate the current strain of cases over the course of the next three presidential administration; however, the White House and some congressional democrats have come out newly opposed to the bill now that Donald Trump is set to return to the Oval Office.

As mentioned in last week's brief, a younger generation of House Democrats has been **working** feverishly to pump fresh blood into plum committee leadership posts. In the case of the House Judiciary, Natural Resources, Oversight, and Agriculture Committees, younger Members are actively vying to either topple current, much older leaders on those panels or beat out other colleagues vying for open spots. Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) has already proven successful in ousting Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY) from atop the Judiciary Committee, and the same has played out at the House Natural Resources Committee with Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA) challenging Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ). Firebrand squad-member Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez (D-NY) is angling for the top job on the House Oversight Committee, and while Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) appears to be actively working **against** AOC's effort, she did receive rare bipartisan support from the

Republican Chairman of the committee, James Comer (KY), who spoke **fondly** of his collegial relationship with the congresswoman.

Congressional negotiators **appear** to be coming closer to a stopgap continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government running beyond the end of the current CR on December 20th, pending agreement on roughly \$115 billion in disaster aid for recovery efforts following hurricanes Milton and Helene. Outstanding disagreement appears to be focused on how and whether to pay for some of the funding, but most folks around town agree that Congress is eager to pass a CR and skip town for the holidays.

With the U.S. Government still reeling from the depth and breadth of the Chinese state-linked Salt Typhoon hacking of American telecommunications infrastructure, Members on both sides of the aisle **emerged** alarmed from a classified briefing this week. Capitol Hill is largely coming to terms with the chilling reality that the hack represents a major demonstration of Beijing's capabilities in cyberspace, and lawmakers have begun calling for not only a major push to close vulnerabilities in U.S. critical infrastructure, but also for increased offensive deterrence on the part of the federal government.

Amidst the political flurries, some holiday cheer continues to make its way across the Capitol Complex this season, as the official Capitol Christmas **tree**—a Sitka spruce sourced from Alaska—gleams brightly on the West Front facing the National Mall. Additionally, the much-loved annual tradition of a giant gingerbread **replica** of the U.S. Capitol continues, using 125 pounds of gingerbread and 30 pounds of frosting.

Pentagon News



The Air Force's infrastructure is barely hanging on—luckily, a new plan is taxiing in to give it a much-needed lift. At a December 11 Warfighters in Action event, Chaudhary emphasized that the effectiveness of military installations in projecting power will be crucial in the Great Power Competition. In response, the Air Force is focusing on strengthening base resilience to maintain an advantage over rivals like China and Russia, addressing threats from ballistic missiles, cyberattacks, climate change, and budget limitations. The Department of the Air Force's installations czar outlined a **[plan to improve deteriorating Air Force and Space Force facilities](#)**, focusing on critical infrastructure, eliminating outdated facilities, and enhancing resilience against various threats. The plan aims to address key issues, including half of the infrastructure being at high risk, a third of utilities in critical condition, and severe degradation at Pacific Air Forces locations. To manage underutilized bases, the Air Force plans to use public-private

partnerships and other arrangements to reduce reliance on lengthy funding processes. Finally, the plan seeks to improve infrastructure resilience, including energy security through microgrids at 16 bases by FY30 and readiness exercises to prepare for various threats, including cyberattacks.

The Pentagon has recognized that the U.S. stands at a critical crossroads in AI development, understanding that failure to act could pose serious national security risks as adversaries like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea capitalize on this technology. In response, Dr. Radha Plumb, Director of the Pentagon's Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office, announced the dissolution of Task Force Lima and the [establishment of a new AI Rapid Capabilities Cell](#), following recommendations from a panel on the use of generative AI in the military. Plumb emphasized that the new cell will tap into the best industry expertise, with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) serving as the main point of contact for engaging both traditional and non-traditional companies to keep up with rapid advancements in the commercial sector. With \$100 million in funding for FY 24-25, the AI RCC is prioritizing AI pilot projects, allocating funds for four pilots focused on war-fighting capabilities and enterprise management. A significant portion of the funding will also support Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) awards, which will be issued in mid-January to explore AI solutions across various DoD ecosystems, including commercial applications, healthcare, financial management, and critical areas such as autonomy.

The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) took a step forward in the defense of Guam earlier this week when it conducted a [successful missile defense test](#). This was the first “live-fire” event in the development of a Guam Defense System (GDS) which is U.S. Indo-Pacific Command’s “number one materiel priority.” While the Department of Defense is still refining the combination of Army, Navy, and Air Force technologies that could be integrated into a GDS architecture, the test completed was largely composed of mature Navy technology. An air-launched Medium Range Ballistic Missile was destroyed utilizing the Aegis Guam System which was “integrated with the new AN/TPY-6 radar - and Vertical Launching System, fired a Standard Missile-3 Block IIA.” This test was also the first end-to-end tracking use of the radar during a live ballistic missile flight test. China’s growing capacity including H-6K bombers which can carry six land-attack cruise missiles give the People’s Liberation Army “long-range standoff precision strike capability that can range targets in the Second Island Chain from home airfields in mainland China,” according to a 2022 DoD report. The test is good news, but it is important to note efforts are still being undertaken to ensure more permanent capabilities in Guam. The Pentagon is aiming to demonstrate an initial operational capability for the GDS system by the end of 2024, with a more robust version ready by 2027. The Pentagon is anticipating full operational development, including all planned components by 2031.

Next Week's Hearings



Armed Services Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE

Appropriations Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE

Homeland Security Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE



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