

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Below please find this week's edition of Executive Insight Brief from The Roosevelt Group.

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Executive Insight Brief

Stay informed with The Roosevelt Group's Executive Insight Brief—your weekly roundup of key developments shaping federal policy, defense, and homeland security. Curated by our expert team, each issue delivers timely analysis and strategic context to help you stay ahead.

Notable Headlines

[Putin says there are points he can't agree to in the US proposal to end Russia's war in Ukraine](#)

[NSA has 2,000 fewer people now, meeting Trump-admin goal](#)

[US military blows up alleged drug boat in eastern Pacific, killing 4 'narco-terrorists'](#)

[War Department Asks Industry to Make More Than 300K Drones, Quickly, Cheaply](#)

[Top 6 takeaways from the Pentagon's Signalgate investigation](#)

[Read the Signalgate report](#)

View From The Hill

The holiday season officially kicked off in Washington this week, with lawmakers returning to DC from their Thanksgiving recess. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) hosted the Nevada congressional delegation on the West Front Lawn of the Capitol for the annual Christmas tree lighting festivities. This year's tree is a 53-foot red fir that made its way to Washington from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Nevada.

As the GOP continues to struggle to coalesce around a strategy to address expiring Affordable Care Act subsidies that will lead to sharply increased health insurance costs for millions of Americans, Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) announced a plan to allow Americans to deduct up to \$25,000 a year from their taxes for healthcare-related costs. Hawley indicated the plan had received a positive response from President Trump but has not yet sought nor received buy-in from Senate Finance Chair Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), who is leading healthcare talks for the GOP, or Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD).

A bipartisan effort by Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) is seeking contributions to child savings accounts from America's largest companies. In a letter to Fortune 1000 CEOs this week, the senators urged corporate America to provide contributions to the savings accounts created by this year's budget reconciliation law and following an announcement by Dell CEO Michael Dell and his wife, Susan Dell, committing \$6.25 billion to the accounts, dubbed "Trump accounts," in the law.

In a surprise move, Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) publicly criticized Speaker Johnson this week, accusing him of torpedoing her legislation requiring the FBI to disclose counterintelligence probes of candidates seeking federal office. Stefanik accused Johnson of siding with House Democrats, reflecting an increasingly hostile GOP conference where every vote matters to GOP Leadership. Stefanik announced Wednesday that her measure was back to being included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This unusual public spat represents a broader level of contention within the House GOP and a headache for the Speaker, who is looking ahead to protecting the thin GOP majority in the rapidly approaching 2026 midterms. Besides the Stefanik provision, a number of policy provisions related to AI and other issues have delayed the release of compromise House-Senate NDAA language.

Continuing his robust use of pardon authority, President Trump pardoned Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX) and his wife, Imelda, this week. The Cuellars were charged last year with accepting \$600,000 in bribes from foreign entities.

Pentagon News

In a closed-door briefing on Thursday, lawmakers discussed U.S. strikes in the Caribbean executed on September 2nd. During the classified meeting, senior leaders on the Armed Services and Intelligence committees reviewed unedited footage of the controversial second strike that killed two remaining targets on the alleged drug-smuggling vessel. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine was joined by Special Operations Commander Admiral Frank “Mitch” Bradley to testify before the group. While disputes over the second strike’s legality have circled over the last months, the briefing marks the first official inquiry by Congress to address specific violations of the Department of Defense Law of War Manual. The Manual, most recently updated in 2023, devotes an entire chapter to the “Wounded, Sick, Shipwrecked, Dead, and the Medical Services.” Critics of the strike are leaning on the definition of shipwrecked individuals—“those in distress at sea...in need of assistance and care [who] must refrain from any hostile act”—as a basis for War Crime violations. Defenders of the action have pointed to a variety of justifications, including that the two survivors displayed intent to continue the mission.

The ongoing investigation puts Secretary of War Pete Hegseth in hot water, who clarified his role in authorizing the strikes earlier Tuesday during a Cabinet meeting. Walking through the operation, the Secretary recalled watching the first strike make fiery contact with the boat. He stated that he then walked away before Admiral Bradley ordered the second strike—missing any visual evidence of the two survivors due to the “fog of war.” Secretary Hegseth remains in support of the decision, as the White House continues to define the event’s broader context as a crusade against narcoterrorism and illicit drug-related American deaths.

While the concerns over actions in the Caribbean and physical threats continue to draw attention, an equally significant threat comes from the digital domain.

A sophisticated new threat has emerged from Chinese state-sponsored hackers, who are deploying a sophisticated new type of malware, dubbed “Brickstorm,” to infiltrate and maintain access to government and information technology networks. The alarm was raised on Thursday in a joint report from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the National Security Agency (NSA), and the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. CISA based its initial findings on attacks against eight targeted government and IT groups, confirming a direct response to one incident where the hackers had maintained access and stolen sensitive data for more than a year. CISA Executive Director Nick Anderson stressed that this is a “terribly sophisticated piece of malware being used,” and stated that while only eight groups were identified, he believes it’s a “logical conclusion” that there are more.

Separately, cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike also released findings on the hacking group, which they have labeled “WARP PANDA.” CrowdStrike researchers revealed that the group has been active since at least 2022 and has primarily targeted U.S.-based companies in the technology, manufacturing, and legal industries, also using its access for espionage against an “Asia Pacific government entity.” These findings are the latest evidence of China’s persistent hacking efforts against U.S. critical infrastructure, following previous campaigns by groups like Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon. As WARP PANDA is expected to continue its intelligence-collection efforts, the threat appears far from over.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committee

House of Representatives NONE

Senate NONE

Appropriations Committee

House of Representatives NONE

Senate

- 12/9, 4:30 PM - Hearings to examine a review of the activities and fiscal year 2026 funding priorities of the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Homeland Security Committee

House of Representatives NONE

Senate

- 12/10, 2:00 PM - Hearings to examine defining our healthcare problem, and principles we should follow to solve it.

- 12/11, 10:00 AM - Oversight hearings to examine the Federal Reserve's big bank welfare program, focusing on the Interest on Reserve Balances (IORB) regime.

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