

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Below please find this week's edition of *Executive Insight Brief* from The Roosevelt Group. Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year!

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December 19, 2025

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

[Aftermath Of Ukraine's Underwater Drone Attack On Russian Submarine Seen In Satellite Imagery](#)

[Trump rebrands Congressionally-approved troop housing subsidy as ‘warrior dividend’ bonus](#)

[Air Force Shakes Up Acquisition Leadership](#)

[Hegseth says he won’t release full boat strike video](#)

[Trump targets defense giants' shareholder payouts as cost overruns mount, sources say](#)

View From The Hill

With the government temporarily funded and having **passed** the final version of the \$901 billion *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026* (NDAA), Congress adjourned for the year to celebrate the holidays. The Senate voted 77-20 on Wednesday to send NDAA to the President’s desk, where Trump signed it Thursday, enacting a record-breaking authorization of defense spending, targeting reforms of procurement and acquisition programs for the Department of War, and providing a 3.8% increase in pay for servicemembers. The legislation requires War Secretary Pete Hegseth to provide Congress with unedited footage of strikes on suspected drug trafficking boats in the Caribbean or face restrictions on his official travel. This year’s NDAA also limits the Pentagon’s ability to draw down the number of troops stationed in Europe, absent Congressional involvement.

Appearing before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on Thursday, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr **testified** that his agency was not “independent.” This was in response to bipartisan criticism over his agency’s recent investigations into major broadcasters, including Disney-owned ABC, which briefly suspended late-night host Jimmy Kimmel in September following criticism by Carr over his response to the shooting of Charlie Kirk.

The Senate also **passed** bipartisan legislation introduced by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), known as the *ROTOR Act*, intended to address aviation safety concerns following the tragic collision of an American Airlines passenger jet and an Army Black Hawk helicopter earlier this year. The legislation prohibits military aircraft from turning off advanced location-transmitting technology, known as Automatic Dependent Broadcast-Out, when flying in and around Washington, D.C. Additionally, billionaire entrepreneur Jared Isaacman was **confirmed** by the Senate to lead NASA this week, 67-30, after being nominated, then withdrawn and renominated earlier this year. Isaacman's stated focus is on ensuring America's dominance in the space race to return astronauts to the moon and overseeing efforts to send humans to Mars.

Former Department of Justice Special Counsel Jack Smith **testified** behind closed doors this week before the House Judiciary Committee, defending his criminal investigation, which concluded that President Trump engaged in criminal efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election. The committee has been investigating the Smith-led probe, with Republicans arguing it amounted to a partisan-motivated targeting of Trump by the Biden administration.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA-04) **faced** a fresh headache from within his own ranks this week, as four GOP moderates joined all House Democrats by signing on to a discharge petition to renew *Affordable Care Act* subsidies expiring on December 31st. By adding their names, Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01), Rob Bresnahan (R-PA-08), Ryan Mackenzie (R-PA-07), and Mike Lawler (R-NY-17), are forcing the measure to the Floor for an up or down vote. That vote is not expected to come until January, however, after the current subsidies have already expired.

Pentagon News

On Wednesday, the Department of the Navy (DON) released two memos establishing the first transition to the Warfighting Acquisition System within the Department—officially standing up the Portfolio Acquisition Executive Robotic

Autonomous Systems (PAE RAS) office. In a [memo](#) signed by Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition (ASN(RD&A)) Jason Potter, [Rebecca Gassler](#) was appointed to lead PAE RAS; she previously served as the Deputy Director for Overmatch for the Navy. [Project Overmatch](#) spearheads the Navy's efforts to the Joint Staff-led Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) initiative. Gassler now holds acquisition authority over at least 47 distinct systems and will receive administrative assistance from the previous authorizing parties.

In an accompanying [memo](#) signed by Secretary of the Navy John Phelan, the Secretary emphasized the vision for PAE RAS to serve as a force-multiplier for autonomous hedge capabilities. Given the broad range of programs under the office, the Department views the consolidation as an aid to driving mass, persistence, and adaptability for autonomous Navy and Marine systems. Within 60 days, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will be signed that delegates roles and responsibilities and sets forth a "transition playbook" to guide ASN(RD&A) Potter. Other authorities dealing with autonomous hedge force capabilities that have not been consolidated into the new office have been instructed to notify the Principal Military Deputy (PMD) ASN (RD&A) within 30 days.

PAE RAS is set to consolidate 47 total systems across four Program Executive Offices (PEO U&W; SSN; USC; C4I; LS); the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory; two Defense Innovation Unit projects; the National Geospatial Agency's Project Maven; and the Marine Corps Systems Command's PM Combat Support Systems. To review the full list of systems, see Appendix A of Secretary Phelan's [memo](#).

Last week, we discussed how the DON rolled out the Rapid Capabilities Office (RCO), which will embed rapid capability cells into PAE RAS, as well as PEO U&W and PEO C4I. While Pentagon acquisition policy continues to evolve rapidly on the domestic front, the international stage is set with the U.S. bringing key stakeholders together in Miami this weekend with the goal of brokering a peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia.

A pivotal moment is set to unfold in the Sunshine State this weekend, where Trump administration officials will meet with Russian representatives to attempt to [negotiate](#) an end to the nearly four-year conflict. Representing the U.S. side are special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, who recently concluded marathon discussions in Berlin aimed at balancing Ukrainian security guarantees with territorial concessions. While the U.S. has proposed a mutual defense promise akin to NATO's [Article 5](#), the Administration is reportedly ratcheting up pressure on Kyiv to accept specific concessions to break through the current stalemate in diplomacy.

The path to peace remains steep, as the Russian delegation—expected to include the head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund, Kirill Dmitriev—has not flinched on their core demands. Despite U.S. optimism that Moscow might accept Ukraine's eventual EU membership in exchange for Western security guarantees, Russian President Vladimir Putin has redoubled his efforts, [vowing](#) to “liberate its historic lands” and dismissing European backers of Kyiv as “swine” that would ultimately lose power. As European leaders scramble to iron out plans for a demilitarized zone and troop pledges for monitoring a ceasefire, the upcoming Miami summit serves as a high-stakes attempt by the administration to secure a definitive breakthrough in 2025.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committee

House of Representatives

- NONE

Senate

- NONE

Appropriations Committee

House of Representatives

- NONE

Senate

- NONE

Homeland Security Committee

House of Representatives

- NONE

Senate

- NONE

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