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Sent: Friday, January 6, 2023 8:00 AM
To: Hall, Karen
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Executive Insight Brief



Executive Insight Brief

January 6, 2023

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Aerospace & Defense

[U.S. weapons package for Ukraine includes 50 Bradley Fighting Vehicles \(Reuters\)](#)

A new U.S. weapons package for Ukraine will include about 50 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, two U.S. officials said on Thursday. On Wednesday President Joe Biden said that sending Bradley Fighting Vehicles to Ukraine was being considered to help fight Russia's invasion. The latest security package for Ukraine is expected to be unveiled on Friday, the officials said. The armored vehicle with a powerful gun, which is manufactured by BAE Systems Plc, has been used as a staple by the U.S. Army to carry troops around battlefields since the mid-1980s. The Army has thousands of Bradleys, which could give the Ukrainians more firepower on the battlefield. Biden's move, however, is short of sending Abrams tanks to Ukraine, which the Ukrainians have been requesting. Late last month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told the U.S. Congress that the tens of billions of dollars of aid it had approved to help Ukraine combat the Russian invasion was not charity, but an investment in global security.

[Pentagon says it will reopen weapons testing reports to public](#)

[New F-35 engine deliveries suspended amid ongoing investigation \(Defense News\)](#)

The U.S. military and defense contractor Pratt & Whitney have suspended deliveries of new engines for the F-35 fighter in the wake of a December mishap on a Texas runway. The F-35 Joint Program Office said in an email to Defense News that the delivery of new F135 engines was paused Dec. 27, after what the JPO described as a "mutual agreement" involving itself, the Defense Contract Management Agency and engine-maker Pratt & Whitney. The JPO said in the email that deliveries are paused while the investigation into the Dec. 15 mishap involving an F-35B continues, and as ground tests take place to identify the root cause of the accident. "The F-35 Joint Program Office and Pratt & Whitney have agreed to delay scheduled delivery and acceptance of F135 engines until further information from the investigation is known and safety of flight can be ensured," the JPO said in a follow-up email. A Pratt & Whitney executive said in a statement emailed Wednesday evening that F135 deliveries were not formally suspended. The company did not immediately respond to a request to clarify its statement.

[France eyes delivery of tank-killing vehicles to Ukraine](#)

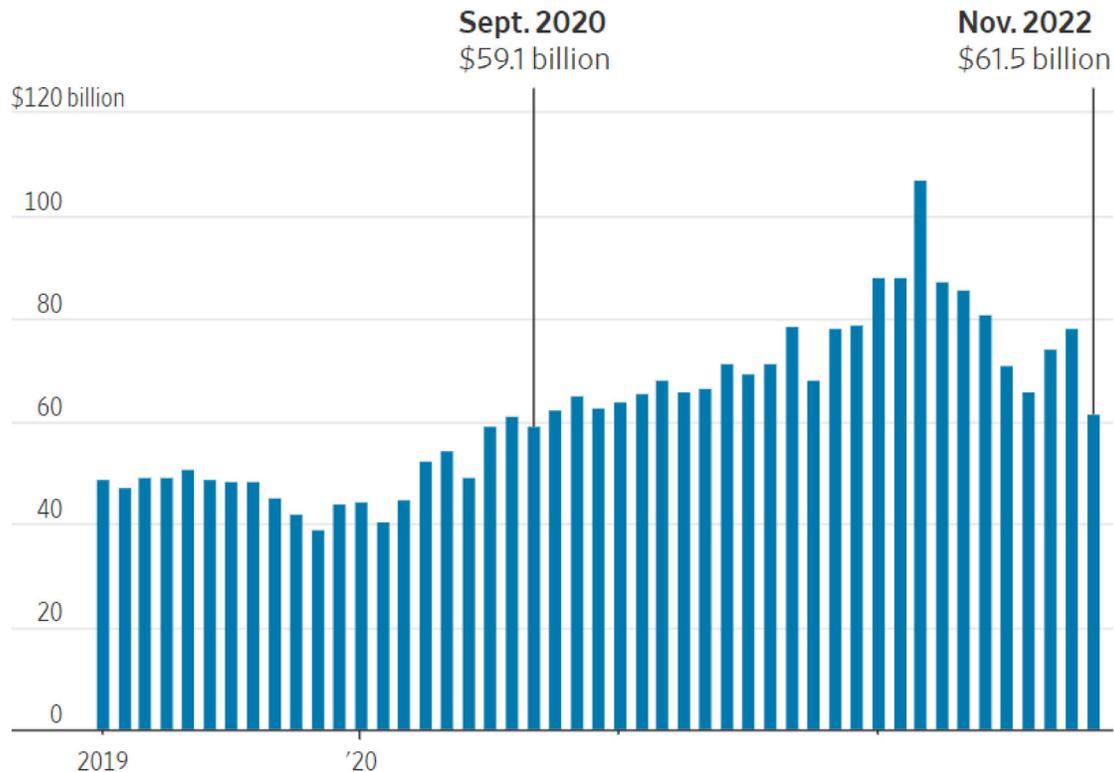
[NATO chief warns against underestimating Russia \(Reuters\)](#)

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Thursday it would be dangerous to underestimate Russia and President Vladimir Putin's ambitions amid the war in Ukraine. "They have shown a great willingness to tolerate losses and suffering," Stoltenberg told a business conference in Norway. "We have no indication that President Putin has changed his plans and goals in Ukraine. So it's dangerous to underestimate Russia."

Budget & Appropriations

[U.S. Trade Deficit Narrowed Sharply in November as Global Demand Cooled \(WSJ\)](#)

The U.S. trade deficit shrank in November at the steepest monthly rate in nearly 14 years, adding to signs of a global economic slowdown through the holiday season amid high inflation and climbing interest rates. America's imports fell more than exports, causing the country's deficit in trade of goods and services to narrow in November by 21% to a seasonally adjusted \$61.51 billion, the Commerce Department said Thursday, compared with a \$77.85 billion gap in October. U.S. imports declined 6.4% to \$313.37 billion, as Americans cut back sharply on holiday-related purchases, including items from abroad such as computers and autos. U.S. exports dropped 2% to \$251.86 billion, reflecting weakening demand for American products, including natural gas and crude oil.



[Layoffs are sweeping Corporate America to kick off 2023](#)

['Not a lost cause': The argument for averting a recession in 2023 \(Politico\)](#)

Economists put the odds of a recession this year at 70 percent. Consumers widely share that pessimism. And stock and bond investors have been rattled for months by fears of a looming slump. What if they're all wrong? High inflation, which has prompted the Federal Reserve to jack up interest rates at the fastest pace in four decades, is showing signs of easing. Economic growth has clearly slowed but remained remarkably resilient. And job market gains are leveling off from their record-shattering levels of a year ago yet are still steady, as the latest employment report on Friday is likely to show. All of that signals that a path may be emerging for a surprising — if still unlikely — scenario: that Fed Chair Jerome Powell will manage to cool inflation without triggering a recession, or at least to achieve the “very slight” downturn that President Joe Biden says is possible. “This is not a lost cause,” David Mericle, chief U.S. economist at Goldman Sachs, said in an interview, adding that he thinks the Fed leadership takes the same view. “A recession is not inevitable. There’s a risk, a higher risk than usual, but we’re making pretty good progress so far.”

[FTC Proposes Banning Noncompete Clauses for Workers](#)

[Consumers spent more than \\$200B online during holiday season, breaking record \(The Hill\)](#)

Consumers spent more than \$200 billion online during this past holiday season, breaking another record for e-commerce this season. Data from Adobe showed that online shopping from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31 yielded \$211.7 billion, a 3.5 percent year-over-year increase. The five days between Thanksgiving and Cyber Monday contributed \$35.3 billion of that total, but data shows consumer spending was persistent throughout the entire season, according to an Adobe release. Shoppers spent more than \$3 billion in aggregate on 38 days of the season, on track with what happened last year. But only 25 days of the 2020 season surpassed \$3 billion, the release states. Adobe data shows people spent \$188 billion online during the 2020 season and \$205 billion during the 2021 season. Adobe Analytics previously showed record spending occurred on Thanksgiving, Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Consumers spent \$9.12 billion on Black Friday and more than \$11.3 billion on Cyber Monday. Demand for toys, which grew more than 200 percent compared to the level recorded in October, drove the increase the most.

Advanced Technologies

[Gadgets unveiled at CES but Russia is banned \(BBC News\)](#)

One of the world's largest technology shows kicks off in Las Vegas this week, with about 100,000 attendees expected and more than 3,000 exhibitors from around the world showcasing what they hope will be the next big thing. From the technology giants to the smallest start-ups, all are welcome here, if they can afford to attend. It's a smorgasbord of clever ideas - and some completely bonkers ones. But one country is notably absent from CES 2023 - Russia. Last time I was here, in 2020, I took a ride around the city in a driverless car developed by Russian technology giant Yandex. But this year, Gary Shapiro, head of the Consumer Technology Association, which runs the event, says, Russia is "not welcome". "We did not welcome them this year given the political situation," he says. "We just didn't feel it was appropriate. "It wasn't a matter of legal policy for the United States, it's a matter of our policy as an organization." A few Russian companies asked to exhibit, Mr. Shapiro says. "We said they could relocate to another country if they were interested," he says.

[Army green lights an advanced version of its 'mixed reality' goggle](#)

[Why Deere thinks satellites are the next big technology to invest in \(CNBC\)](#)

Drones, robotics technology, and now satellites. John Deere's Chief Technology Officer Jahmy Hindman told CNBC the world's largest agriculture equipment player is in the process of finalizing a satellite partner. "We really have been focused on trying to solve connectivity, globally. We look at the burgeoning efforts that are happening in low Earth orbit satellites as an example – potentially – for us to start to solve some those connectivity issues." The goal is to create a geospatial map that farmers can use to better track productivity and the performance of crops. "There's so much friction and getting that data from the field into the cloud, where they can do something useful with it, that it really isn't used very effectively at all." As to when satellites will become in use, Hindman said Deere is "right at the cusp" of solving the connectivity problem for farmers. Currently, farmers can use the data collected by its See & Spray device to understand what part of the farm still needs to be fertilized. It is one of the technologies that will be showcased at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas on Thursday.

[Stellantis to build U.S. firm Archer's air taxi, up stake](#)

[These states will dominate EV battery manufacturing in 2030 \(CNBC\)](#)

Georgia, Kentucky and Michigan are going to dominate electric vehicle battery manufacturing in the United States by 2030. Each of those three states will be able to manufacture between 97 and 136 gigawatt hours' worth of EV batteries per year by 2030, according to plans they have laid out. Kansas, North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee will also be key players, with planned capacity for between 46 and 97 gigawatt hours' of EV battery production per year by 2030. This planned manufacturing capacity was highlighted by the U.S. Department of Energy on Monday, based on a November 2022 report from the Argonne National Laboratory in November. To keep up with increasing demand for EVs, the total build out of EV battery manufacturing capacity in North America will go from from 55 gigawatt-hours per year in 2021 to almost 1,000 gigawatt-hours per year by 2030. So far, the planned investment in these factories is more than \$40 billion, according to an October report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

Military Installations & Communities

[Troops entitled to 12 weeks of leave after birth, adoption of a child \(Army Times\)](#)

Any service member welcoming a new child can take up to 12 weeks of parental leave in the year following, according to a congressionally mandated policy signed Thursday. In recent years, birthing parents have received from six weeks for birthing parents while non-birthing parents received no leave. Now, both parents are entitled to 12 weeks of leave to bond with a new child, on top of any doctor-recommended convalescent leave for the mother. The new policy normalizes parental leave policies across the services starting with children born or placed after Dec. 27, 2022. For non-birthing parents whose children were born between Dec. 27, 2021 and Dec. 27, 2022, and who requested their full 21 days of leave but haven't taken it, their parental leave allotment bumps up to 12 weeks. So for secondary caregivers who held off on taking leave in anticipation of the new policy, or who took part of their 21 days, they can now take up to 12 weeks, with a deadline of the child's first birthday.

[A better plan for the Marine Corps and the nation: Vision 2035](#)

[Air Force to consider advanced degrees in promoting midlevel officers \(Military Times\)](#)

Airmen and guardians may now have a better shot at becoming a midlevel officer if graduate school is on their resume. The Department of the Air Force announced Dec. 30 that it will consider advanced degrees when deciding whether airmen and guardians are qualified for promotion to major (O-4) or lieutenant colonel (O-5). The new policy took effect Sunday. The change aims to encourage officers to pursue lifelong learning and to bolster institutional knowledge for future wars. "To compete with China, Russia or other potential threats, the Air and Space Forces must incorporate new technology more rapidly and effectively than our competitors," Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall said in a release. "We must also have a deep understanding of the history, motivations, doctrine and thought processes of our potential adversaries." Promotion boards will value an officer's operational and academic expertise, as well as their job experience and performance, the Air Force said in a release.

[Thousands of Troops with COVID Vaccine Exemption Requests No Longer](#)

Facing Separation with Mandate Gone

[Veterans Face Extended Delays for Referrals for Specialty Care Outside VA Facilities \(Military.com\)](#)

Less than half of veterans are receiving Department of Veterans Affairs referrals for specialty care from outside doctors on time, a new report published Wednesday by the Government Accountability Office found. Those specialist visits can be crucial because veterans often have complicated or chronic illnesses and, while the VA system excels at treating service-connected conditions such as prosthetics and musculoskeletal injuries, it may lack certain specialists or capacity in the immediate area near a veteran. The referral program to community care is designed to ensure that veterans get the care they need when they need it. Current scheduling standards are three business days within the VA for a specialty referral and seven days for scheduling an appointment with a community care provider, a doctor outside of a VA facility. The GAO found that in the third quarter of 2022, more than 90% of all VA medical centers scheduled at least half their appointments within three business days. But fewer than 40% of the facilities scheduled appointments within the 7-day time frame set for community care.

Homeland Security

[DHS Continues to Prepare for End of Title 42; Announces New Border Enforcement Measures and Additional Safe and Orderly Processes \(DOT\)](#)

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to prepare for the end of the Title 42 public health order, which is currently the subject of multiple court orders, and a return to processing all noncitizens under the Department's Title 8 immigration authorities. To that end, DHS today announced new border enforcement measures to improve border security, limit irregular migration, and create additional safe and orderly processes for people fleeing humanitarian crises to lawfully come to the United States. These measures, taken together, are concrete steps to enhance the security of our border while the Title 42 public health order is in place, and that DHS will continue to build on in preparation for the Title 42 order being lifted. DHS is establishing new parole processes for Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans, modeled on the successful processes for Venezuelans and Ukrainians, which combine safe, orderly, and lawful pathways to the United States, including authorization to work, with significant consequences for those who fail to use those pathways. We are also continuing the process with respect to Venezuelans. Through the CBP One app, we are also providing a new mechanism for noncitizens to schedule appointments to present themselves at ports of entry, facilitating safe and orderly

arrivals.

[7 Terrorism Trends to Watch in 2023](#)

[Email addresses linked to 235M Twitter accounts leaked in hack \(The Hill\)](#)

More than 200 million Twitter accounts, including email addresses, were leaked this week, raising privacy and security concerns. Alan Gal, the co-founder of Israeli security firm Hudson Rock, reportedly first uncovered the leak and took to social media to alert the public. “The database contains 235,000,000 unique records of Twitter users and their email addresses and will unfortunately lead to a lot of hacking, targeted phishing, and doxing,” Gal said on LinkedIn. “This is one of the most significant leaks I’ve seen,” he added. According to The Washington Post, Gal discovered the leak on a popular online hacking forum but did not provide a name. This is the latest data breach involving Twitter. In August, Twitter said that a hacker had exploited a bug in its system and was attempting to sell personal data they had obtained. The company said that the bug was first discovered in January 2022 but was quickly fixed, adding that there was no evidence suggesting that personal data was compromised as a result of the vulnerability.

[Democrat-led cities beg Biden for help with migrants](#)

[How the speaker impasse is impacting US national security \(CNN\)](#)

The House’s inability to select a speaker is impacting US national security, Republican and Democratic lawmakers and staffers say, as members who can’t yet be sworn in are being locked out of classified briefings and the Biden administration is effectively operating without House oversight. At a minimum, House members are not staying informed of day-to-day national security developments because they cannot receive a security clearance until they are sworn in. But at its most extreme, the impasse also means that the current Congress is not in a position to either authorize or stop a war, staffers and experts told CNN. “I’m a member of the House (Intelligence) Committee. I’m on the Armed Services Committee, and I can’t meet in the (Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility) to conduct essential business” Wisconsin Rep. Mike Gallagher, a Republican, said in a press conference on Wednesday, referring to the place that is used by military and national security officials to process sensitive and classified information. He added that he was denied entry to a meeting with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mark Milley because he does not yet have a security clearance.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[FHWA Announces \\$2.1 Billion to Improve Four Large Bridges \(Transportation Topics\)](#)

President Joe Biden on Jan. 4 visited the worn-out Brent Spence Bridge in Kentucky as part of the administration's renewed push to highlight the bipartisan infrastructure law. On the same day, the Federal Highway Administration announced \$2.1 billion in first-round grants to repair four "economically significant" bridges. "I believe it sends an important message, an important message to the entire country," Biden said from a stage overlooking the soon-to-be-renovated bridge, according to the Associated Press. "We can work together. We can get things done. We can move the nation forward, but just drop a little bit of our egos and focus on what is needed in the country." The administration also said it has plans to make available \$40 billion in future years for improvements to thousands of bridges. "These first large-bridge grants will improve bridges that serve as vital connections for millions of Americans to jobs, education, health care and medical care, and help move goods from our farms and factories," Deputy Transportation Secretary Polly Trottenberg said. "And over the next four years, we will be able to fund construction for the pipeline of shovel-ready projects we are creating through Bridge Planning Grants."

[Auto Sales Fell 8% in 2022 Amid Supply Chain Struggles](#)

[US freight rail traffic slips nearly 3% in 2022 \(Freight Waves\)](#)

U.S. rail traffic in 2022 was generally lower than 2021 levels amid concerns about an economic recession and subpar rail service. The U.S. operations of freight railroads handled about 25.4 million carloads and intermodal units in 2022, down 2.8% from 2021, according to data from the Association of American Railroads. Of that, U.S. carload traffic was flat to lower, slipping 0.3% to nearly 12 million carloads, while intermodal volumes fell 4.9% to about 13.4 million containers and trailers. The data represents 52 weeks in 2022. For carloads, the five commodities with the biggest volumes in 2022 showed no consistent trend year over year. While coal volumes rose 2.7% to 3.4 million carloads and volumes for non-metallic minerals — which includes crushed stone, sand and gravel — increased 3.7% to 1.6 million carloads, chemicals volumes were roughly flat, at nearly 1.7 million carloads. Grain volumes slipped 4.2% to 1.1 million carloads and metallic ores and minerals volumes fell 6.6% to nearly 1.1 million carloads. How much rail service disruptions factored into the drop in carloads in 2022 remains to be seen, especially since non-service-related factors, such as U.S. grain harvest levels, high natural gas prices and inflation fears can contribute greatly to volume increases and decreases.

[Secretaries Granholm, Buttigieg to Headline 2023 TRB Conference](#)

[Southwest Airlines' schedule stabilizes after holiday meltdown but costs are still piling up \(CNBC\)](#)

Southwest Airlines stabilized its schedule over the weekend after about 16,000 cancellations since late last month, but its systemwide holiday meltdown could cost it hundreds of millions of dollars. Southwest had canceled 304 flights since Friday, 2% of its schedule, most of them on Monday when U.S. airlines faced bad weather and ground stops in Florida tied to a Federal Aviation Administration equipment outage. For comparison, from Dec. 21 through Dec. 29 Southwest had scrubbed about 45% of its operation, a far bigger share than other major airlines, according to FlightAware. Now come two more difficult tasks for Southwest: going through thousands of passenger reimbursement receipts and improving the internal technology that contributed to the meltdown. Now come two more difficult tasks for Southwest: going through thousands of passenger reimbursement receipts and improving the internal technology that contributed to the meltdown.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[Hospital margins improve modestly in November as expenses dip \(Healthcare Dive\)](#)

Hospitals notched slightly better operating margins in November, compared to the month before, as expenses eased and outpatient revenue increased, according to a latest analysis from Kaufman Hall. The positive monthly showing, however, is tempered by weak profit performance over most of 2022, as hospitals absorbed high labor and other costs that outpaced revenues. While the median operating margin rose 12% in November from October, it still slumped 5% year over year and declined 44% for the year to date compared to 2021, according to the data from more than 900 hospitals. "The November data, while mildly improved compared to October, solidifies what has been a difficult year for hospitals amidst labor shortages, supply chain issues, and rising interest rates," Erik Swanson, Kaufman Hall's senior vice president of data and analytics, said in a release. Inflation and staffing shortages, particularly in nursing, caused historically high expenses for hospitals and health systems in 2022. The persistent labor crisis also forced facilities to operate below full capacity, pressuring volumes and revenues, Kaufman Hall found in a prior survey.

[Best diet for 2023 is the science-backed Mediterranean style of eating](#)

[Digital health 2023: Cloud, human-centered design and getting back to basics \(Healthcare IT News\)](#)

Digital health technologies are hot as the sun today. Healthcare provider organization CIOs and other health IT leaders are studying and implementing these technologies to improve the patient and provider experiences and hopefully boost patient outcomes. Marcus Perez is president of Altera Digital Health, which offers health IT designed to enable clinicians at hospitals and large physician practices to spend more time with patients and less interacting with technology. In May 2022, N. Harris Computer Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of Constellation Software, purchased Allscripts Healthcare Solutions' Hospitals and Large Physician Practices business segment. The segment now operates as Altera Digital Health, a business unit of Harris Healthcare. We spoke with Perez to get his predictions for digital health in 2023.

[What do these IT leaders see for healthcare in 2023? 'Flux'](#)

[New Covid strain is the most transmissible yet, WHO says \(Politico\)](#)

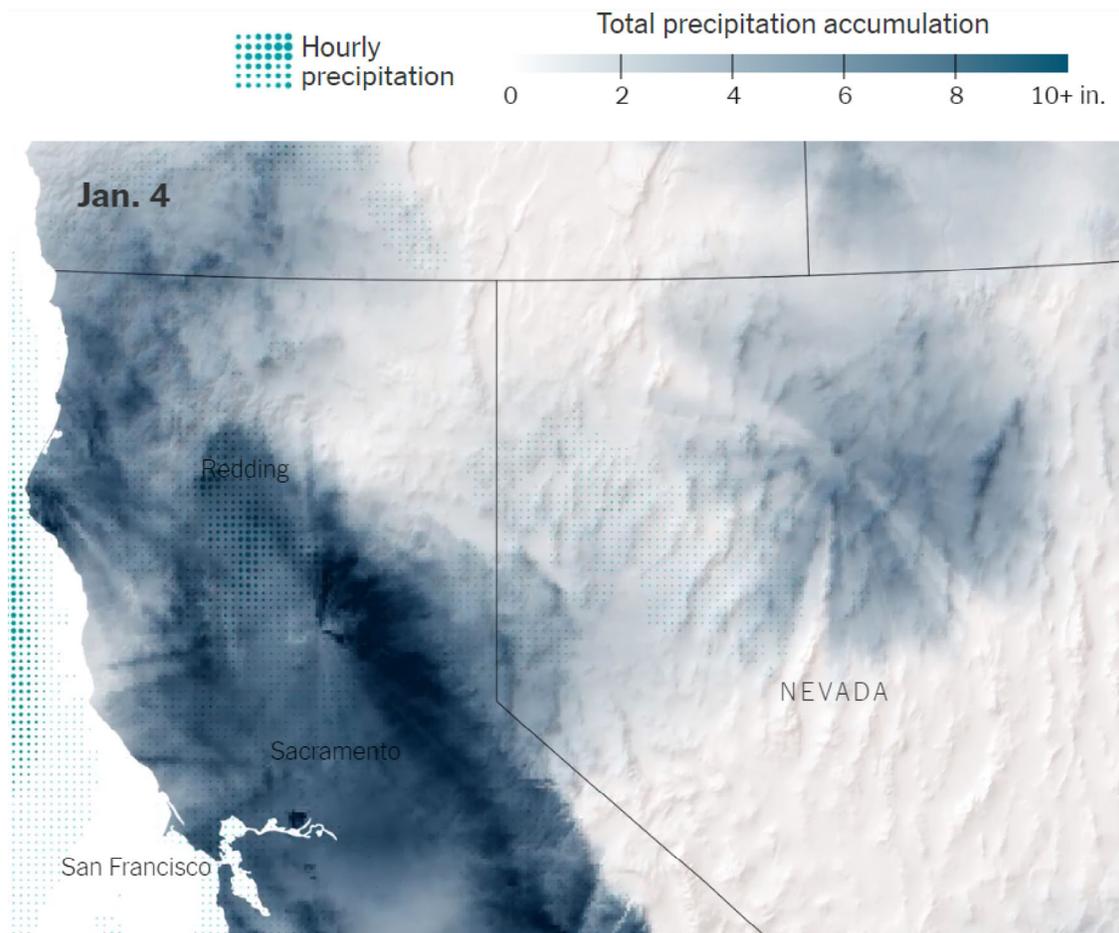
The coronavirus Omicron strain XBB.1.5, which has become the dominant strain in the U.S. in just a matter of weeks, could drive a new wave of cases, a World Health Organization official told reporters. "We are concerned about its growth advantage, in particular in some countries in Europe and the Northeast part of the United States, where XBB.1.5 has rapidly replaced other circulating sub-variants," said Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's Covid-19 technical lead. Still, health officials are not sure whether that means more people will go to the hospital or die, because of immunity built up by vaccination and prior infection. Public health officials have detected the strain in 29 countries, but it could be circulating in many more, Van Kerkhove said. In the U.S., the sub-variant went from being present in 4 percent of sequenced cases to 40 percent in just a few weeks, White House Covid-19 Response Coordinator Ashish Jha tweeted Wednesday. But the WHO doesn't yet know whether XBB.1.5 is more severe than other circulating sub-variants.

Climate & Development

[Four Big Things to Expect in Clean Energy in 2023 \(Inside Climate News\)](#)

In 2023, the country's first super-size offshore wind farms will come online, or at least get close to it. U.S. sales of electric vehicles will continue to accelerate, likely hitting 1 million units per year for the first time. And, state lawmakers in Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan and Minnesota are poised to pass climate and clean energy legislation. Meanwhile, the most significant event for the clean energy economy in 2022—the Inflation Reduction Act—is going to have reverberations throughout 2023 and beyond as federal agencies work to implement the law and consumers and companies begin to see its benefits. That's a lot. And that's just the top of my list of what to watch and expect this year. The United States has two operational offshore wind farms, one each in Rhode Island and Virginia, with a total of seven turbines and capacity of 42 megawatts—barely a blip in our electricity system. By the end of the year, the first of a new generation of gigantic offshore wind farms should be online or close to it. Vineyard Wind 1 off of Massachusetts, with 800 megawatts, and South Fork Wind off of New York, with 132 megawatts, are both under construction.

[Floods Show California's Climate Dilemma: Fight the Water, or Pull Back?](#)



[India approves \\$2.3 billion to develop green hydrogen \(AP News\)](#)

The government has approved \$2.3 billion to support production, use and exports of green hydrogen, aiming to make India a global hub for the nascent industry. The funding, announced late Wednesday, is a first step toward establishing the capacity to make at least 5 million metric tons of green hydrogen by the end of this decade. Green hydrogen is hydrogen that is produced through the electrolysis of water, powered by electricity generated from renewable sources of energy. Most of the world's hydrogen is produced using fossil fuels, especially natural gas. The aim of the funding initiative is "to make green hydrogen affordable and bring down its cost over the next five years. It will also help India reduce its emissions and become a major exporter in the field," said Anurag Thakur, India's minister for information and broadcasting. He said the financing would also help add about 125 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030. As of October, India had about 166 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity.

[2022 was officially the U.K.'s hottest year on record – and human-caused climate change made it 160 times more likely](#)

[Brazil to play lead role on climate change policy -environment minister \(Reuters\)](#)

Brazil will not shy away from playing a leading role in addressing climate change and the impending emergency the world is facing, new environment minister Marina Silva said. Silva announced the creation of an extraordinary secretary to end deforestation and plans to set up a climate authority within the administration of President Lula da Silva. Lula took office on Sunday pledging to stop deforestation in the Amazon, a vital biome to curb climate change. He quickly revoked policies of his far-right predecessor Jair Bolsonaro who eased environmental protection and allowed the rate of deforestation to surge to a 15-year-high on his watch. "The environmental agenda was destroyed by the previous government," Silva said in a speech as she took office. "Climate change policy was dismantled to the point that Brazil became an environmental pariah in the world," she said. Silva, the daughter of Amazon rubber tappers, became a prominent environmentalist and held the same ministerial position for five years during Lula's first and second terms.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: None Listed

Appropriation Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: None Listed

Homeland Security Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: None Listed

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