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# Executive Insight Brief

April 21, 2023

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- [SpaceX Starship explodes over Gulf of Mexico minutes after liftoff](#)
- [Ukraine defended Bakhmut despite U.S. warnings in leaked documents](#)

**Worth reading:** [The Pentagon leak: how a low-ranked 21-year-old accessed top US secrets](#), featuring insight from TRG Senior Advisor L. Scott “Catfish” Rice

## Aerospace & Defense

### [Raytheon’s Patriot missiles arrive in Ukraine \(Defense News\)](#)

Ukraine’s defense minister said Wednesday his country has received U.S.-made Patriot surface-to-air guided missile systems it has long craved and which Kyiv hopes will help shield it from Russian strikes during the war. “Today, our beautiful Ukrainian sky becomes more secure because Patriot air defense systems have arrived in Ukraine,” Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said in a tweet. Ukrainian officials have previously said the arrival of Patriot systems, which Washington agreed to send last October, would be a major boost and a milestone in the war against Moscow’s full-scale invasion. The Patriot can target aircraft, cruise missiles and shorter-range ballistic missiles. Russia has used that weaponry to bombard Ukraine, including residential areas and civilian infrastructure, especially the power supply over the winter. Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuri Ihnat said late Tuesday that delivery of the system would be a landmark event, allowing Ukrainians to knock out Russian targets at a greater distance. Reznikov thanked the people of the United States, Germany and the Netherlands, without saying how many systems had been delivered nor when. Germany’s federal government website on Tuesday listed a Patriot system as among the military items delivered within the past week to Ukraine, and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock confirmed that to lawmakers in Berlin on Wednesday. Reznikov said he had first asked for Patriot systems when he visited the U.S. in August 2021, five months before the full-scale invasion by the Kremlin’s forces and seven years after Russia illegally annexed Ukraine’s Crimea peninsula. He described possessing the system as “a dream” but said he was told in the U.S. at the time that it was “impossible.” Ukrainian personnel have been trained on the Patriot battery, which can need as many as 90 troops to operate and maintain it. Experts have cautioned that the system’s effectiveness is limited, and it may not be a game changer in the war, even though it will add to Ukraine’s arsenal against its bigger enemy. The Patriot was first deployed by the U.S. in the 1980s. The system costs approximately \$4 million per round and the launchers cost about \$10 million each, analysts say. At such a cost, it’s not advantageous to use the Patriot to shoot down the far smaller and cheaper Iranian drones that Russia has been buying and using in Ukraine.

[‘We need every man’: Ukraine’s troops prepare for counter-offensive](#)

## against Russia

### [Lex: investors are still waiting for the Ukraine sales bump \(Financial Times\)](#)

These should be boom times for US defense contractors. The war in Ukraine has created unprecedented orders for weapons and ammunition. At the same time, concerns over growing security threats from China and Russia are driving governments worldwide to increase their military expenditures. In the US, Congress recently approved plans to increase the defense budget by 10 per cent to a record \$858bn this year. Analysts reckon the figure could surpass the \$1tn threshold in the coming years. Yet arms makers have largely struggled to capitalize on the surge in demand. Labour shortages and supply chain disruptions meant little of this spending has shown up in weapon companies' bottom lines. Lockheed Martin, whose Javelin anti tank missiles are helping Ukraine fight Russia's invasion, reported a drop in revenue and net income last year. It forecast another drop in annual sales this year as it delivered a slight rise in sales and a dip in earnings for the first quarter. Still, new contract wins and a healthy backlog of orders mean investors are willing to be patient. Lockheed shares, up 7 per cent over the past 12 months, are at a record high. The company's decision to return more than \$12bn to shareholders via share buybacks and dividends over the past five quarters has helped sentiment. Overall, Lockheed has outperformed the defense sector and the broader market over the past year. Shares in Raytheon Technologies, which makes the Patriot missile defense system and is the biggest US weapon maker by market value, are flat. Those of Northrop Grumman, a leading manufacturer of attack and surveillance drones, are up 3 per cent. General Dynamics is down 6 per cent. On a forward earnings basis, all four defense companies are trading at multiples above their five-year averages. This reflects the view that global military spending has entered a secular upswing. Investors will have to wait a bit longer though for the bump in Ukraine- driven sales to emerge.

## Joint Chiefs shuffle: Biden's top contenders to replace Trump's military leaders

### [China readies supersonic spy drone unit, leaked document says \(Washington Post\)](#)

The Chinese military could soon deploy a high-altitude spy drone that travels at least three times the speed of sound, according to a leaked U.S. military assessment, a development that would dramatically strengthen China's ability to conduct surveillance operations. A secret document from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which has not previously been reported, shows the Chinese military is making technological advances

that could help it target American warships around Taiwan and military bases in the region. The document features satellite imagery dated Aug. 9 that shows two WZ-8 rocket-propelled reconnaissance drones at an air base in eastern China, about 350 miles inland from Shanghai. The drones are a cutting-edge surveillance system that could help China gather real-time mapping data to inform strategy or carry out missile strikes in a future conflict. The assessment says the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had "almost certainly" established its first unmanned aerial vehicle unit at the base, which falls under the Eastern Theater Command, the branch of the Chinese military responsible for enforcing Beijing's sovereignty claims over Taiwan. This latest revelation about the advancement comes as intensifying military aggression around Taiwan has heightened concern about a Chinese invasion on the self-governed island democracy. CIA Director William J. Burns has said Chinese leader Xi Jinping wants the PLA to be capable of seizing Taiwan by 2027, although he added that this does not mean Xi will order an attack at that time. Beijing introduced the WZ-8 drones in 2019 when two of the jet-black aircraft were paraded past Tiananmen Square during celebrations for the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Communist Party-run People's Republic of China. Few analysts considered the drones fully operational at the time. Also included in the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's assessment are possible flight paths for the drone as well as for the twin-engine H6-M Badger bomber used to launch it. After taking off from its home air base, the warplane would fly to just off China's east coast before releasing the stealthy drone, which could then enter Taiwanese or South Korean airspace at a height of 100,000 feet and fly three times the speed of sound. The document does not detail how the drone is propelled but says "engine features are primarily associated with rocket fuel."

## Budget & Appropriations

### [No more marathon markup? Rogers weighs ending NDAA tradition \(Politico\)](#)

If Rep. Mike Rogers had his way, his first markup of the defense policy bill as House Armed Services chair will be different from the all-day, all-night format the committee has relied on for decades. Specifically, the Alabama Republican said he's considered splitting the full committee's markup of the annual National Defense Authorization Act, set for late May, into two days rather than one long one. Rogers said he's unlikely to make the change this year given the tight floor schedule, but that he's aiming to do it next year. "We thought about it. I don't think we're gonna be able to pull it off this year," Rogers said in an interview. "That was what I was wanting to do." This year, Republican leadership aims to bring the bill to the House floor the week after HASC approves it. Breaking the markup into two days may not give leaders and staff enough time to get the bill ready for the next step, which is floor debate, Rogers said. "I plan to do it next year if I get them to give me at least a week between the time we come out of committee and the floor," Rogers said. The House NDAA markup is a marathon each year, as lawmakers debate and vote on amendments overnight and sometimes into the following morning. Committee chairs have

used the long hours to grind down opposition, banking that the later the session goes, the less likely rank-and-file members will offer and debate amendments. HASC nonetheless typically considers hundreds of amendments each year. Lawmakers have occasionally proposed moving to a two-day markup to avoid the late nights, but it's been trumped by concerns that a second day would encourage members to offer even more amendments and relitigate issues debated on the first day. HASC last split its NDAA markup into two days more than a decade ago under then-Chair Ike Skelton. Rather than just finishing off proposals that were left over from the day before, committee members filed dozens of new amendments ahead of the second session, and debate lasted much of that day. Aside from avoiding a dead-of-night debate, Rogers argues that a two-day session would give lawmakers more buy-in on the defense bill. That's particularly important this year, now that Republicans hold a thin majority over Democrats on the committee and in the full House. "There's enough people looking for a reason to vote no. I don't want to help them," he said. "So by having extra time, it makes it easier to defuse that argument."

### [What's in the House G.O.P. Debt Limit Bill](#)

#### [Pentagon asks Congress for right to launch new tech programs before it has a budget \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Defense Department is asking Congress to allow the initiation of new development programs before a final budget is approved, a new set of authorities that are aimed at meeting emerging threats or getting ahead of game changing technology, Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall said. "We're in a very aggressive contest for military technology superiority," which necessitates changing how the department gets its funding, Kendall told reporters in the margins of the Space Foundation's annual Space Symposium. He noted that the Department of the Air Force alone has 12 new starts that it's been waiting to initiate for over a year, a delay caused by the use of continuing resolutions. "That's a lot to give away, and it's totally unnecessary," he said. The legislative proposal, which was approved by the White House Office of Management and Budget, was transmitted to Congress on April 12. Called "Rapid Response To Emergent Technology Advancements or Threats," it would grant DoD legal acquisition authority to: "initiate new start development activities, up to a preliminary design review level of maturity, in order to— (1) leverage an emergent technological advancement of value to the national defense; or (2) provide a rapid response to an emerging threat. Kendall first publicly floated the concept at the annual McAleese defense budget conference in March. Speaking at a Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee hearing Tuesday, Kendall called on appropriators to support the proposal. "Our proposal would expand rapid acquisition authority, so the military departments can more quickly respond to emerging threats and take advantage of evolving technology. Within reasonable constraints, this legislative proposal would allow progress on compelling national security needs that would otherwise be delayed until the

next submission and approval of the President's budget. I've been pushing this reform for many years, and we look forward to working with the Congress on this proposal," he said. (Andrew Hunter, the Air Force acquisition head, later that day used a House Armed Services Committee hearing to also push the effort.) How much support can be found in Congress isn't clear at this point. Members did not weigh in on the proposal during either Kendall or Hunter's hearings. But while speaking with reporters today, Kendall stressed that the concept does not impede congressional oversight authority because it only allows early activities. "This is a limited authority. It would allow us to go through the preliminary design review phase in the design, so doing requirements trade offs, doing system engineering, maybe doing some risk reduction to move the program forward," he said.

### [Paying the Defense Bill: Financing American and Chinese Geostategic Competition](#)

#### [Army warns it could lose \\$5.3 billion if Congress fails to pass budget \(Defense News\)](#)

The U.S. Army will not be able to put \$5.3 billion toward modernization efforts key to competing with China if Congress doesn't pass a budget this year, the service secretary said in a Wednesday House Armed Services Committee hearing. The Pentagon has become accustomed to short-term continuing resolutions early in the fiscal year and generally schedules less programmatic activity in the first quarter of the fiscal year. A continuing resolution allows funding to continue without a budget in place, but holds spending to the previous fiscal year's levels. But there are new concerns, with Congress divided over the debt ceiling and spending, that a full-year CR is a possibility. Asked how a CR would impact the Army, Secretary Christine Wormuth said "it would be, I think, a significant problem for us, first of all, at a time where we are competing against China." A CR means "fighting with one hand tied behind our back. A CR would essentially tie down about \$5.3 billion in terms of procurement programs," she added. Without an approved fiscal 2024 budget, the Army would not be able to start at least 10 new procurement programs and would not be able to launch dozens of research, development and testing efforts. The Army's biggest modernization push in 40 years is underway, as the service is poised to deliver to soldiers roughly 24 systems in 2023. It's seeking to procure 36 new systems by 2030 for a fully modernized force. "We are often criticized for being slow in modernization," Army Chief of Staff James McConville said at the same hearing. "But right now we have the opportunity to transform the Army ... and new start production increases — those things don't happen under a CR." Additionally, a continuing resolution would halt planned pay raises for troops, Wormuth added, and would delay parts of a major organic industrial base overhaul, including an effort to modernize and ramp up ammunition production vital to supplying the war in Ukraine and replenishing Army stock. The Army plans to spend \$1.5 billion for modernization efforts at depots and plants in FY24. The service requested a \$185.5 billion budget in FY24, 4.6% more than the Army's \$178 billion

budget last year. Taking into account inflation, the Army's FY24 budget is about 2% below the funding enacted for FY23, Maj. Gen. Mark Bennett, the service's budget director, said last month.

## Advanced Technologies

### [Manchin and Rounds call for national security AI rules \(Politico\)](#)

A bipartisan pair of senators said on Wednesday that Congress should set guidelines for how the Defense Department uses artificial intelligence — and they asked the defense software industry for input to help write the forthcoming legislation. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), along with Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), asked a panel of expert witnesses to put together some recommendations “as quickly as possible — 30 to 60 days, put a little team together” on “what you think can be and should be done” about AI. Manchin said the report would help members of the Senate Armed Services Cybersecurity Subcommittee start writing a bill that would put “guardrails” on how the Pentagon ends up deploying AI tools in the future. “I mean, the stakes are so high on what we’re doing,” the West Virginia Democrat said. “Tell us, what should be there to protect not just protect your market, if you will, but protect basically the use of this and the intentions of what it’s for.” The senators asked for help from senior executives at defense contractors Palantir and Shift5 and the policy nonprofit RAND Corporation during the hearing. “My biggest fear is ... knowing the capability of AI — having people say something they never said, having the image of a person doing something they did, having a country declare a war that never happened — the stakes are so high on what we’re doing,” Manchin said. Sen. Rounds noted the recent high-profile open letter calling for a pause on AI development altogether, but concluded that “the greater risk ... from a U.S. security standpoint, is taking a pause while our near peer competitors leap ahead of us in this field.” Rounds told reporters following the hearing that he believes Congress needs to “offer guidelines” around the use of AI, and that he could see AI legislation passing this Congress. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer last week announced that he is circulating a “high-level framework” for regulating AI, something Rounds said he had discussed with Schumer but not yet seen. “I see the possibility of AI legislation that would help guide it and help promote it in a way that meets our ethical expectations,” Rounds said. “We want to be very careful so that we do good and not harm our ability to defend against AI applications coming from other countries, adversarial countries, and at the same time having the capabilities they fear.” Manchin said AI has the potential to change how warfare is waged, which only increases the urgency behind new rules to make sure the technology is deployed responsibly.



## [CENTCOM hires former Google Cloud exec as first-ever AI, robotics advisor](#)

### [Drones: China's growing dominance of the market is a worry \(Financial Times\)](#)

Black market drones have been used in military attacks for years. Drones have been heavily used in the Ukraine war too, prompting speculation that China was involved. Beijing has denied widespread reports that the country exported drones to aid Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The speculation highlights China's growing dominance in commercial drone manufacturing. The government has regularly refuted reports that Chinese drones have been provided to Russia. Beijing says it has strict control of drone exports to prevent them from being used in conflicts and vowed to strengthen export controls for drones. Still, China's civilian models dominate global market share. The world's biggest drone maker DJI — also known as Da Jiang Innovations — currently accounts for about 70 per cent of the global market alone. When combined with local peers such as Guangzhou EHang Intelligent Technology and Avic Xi'an Aircraft Industry Group that share goes up to well above 80 per cent. So it is not surprising that DJI has been one of many companies that has found its products used in the war in Ukraine. These are controlled using modified drone firmware from a vast black market. One of the most popular models seems to be the Mavic 3, DJI's \$1,500 flagship camera drone, along with its drone-detection platform. DJI has said its drones are designed for civilian use, and do not meet military specifications. Demand for drones, which are already used widely for filmmaking, firefighting, deliveries and agricultural seeding, is growing rapidly. The global commercial drone market is expected to double to about \$60bn in the next three years. The growing use of drones for military purposes is adding a further boost to sales. The Nasdaq-listed shares of Guangzhou EHang have tripled in the past six months. Its market value remains small at \$649mn and has hardly changed in the past few years. Meanwhile, despite US efforts to blacklist the company, DJI's private valuation is estimated to have surpassed the \$15bn mark five years ago during a funding round then. As the list of US and European sanctions on Russia grows, the latter has become increasingly dependent on Chinese technologies and companies. But when it comes to civilian drones, that reliance is just as big for the rest of the world. In the current environment that looks unsustainable.

## [US Space Command seeks maneuverable, refuelable satellites by 2030](#)

### [TSMC's Tough Quarter Complicates its U.S. Chip Ambitions \(WSJ\)](#)

The latest results from the world's largest contract chip manufacturer confirm the grim



outlook facing the semiconductor industry. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co.'s weak earnings could also make already difficult negotiations with Uncle Sam over big chip sector investments in the U.S. even more fraught. The scramble for chips has turned into a glut at an inconvenient time. TSMC is an industry bellwether that supplies Apple and Nvidia, and is negotiating with Washington for a hefty chunk of the chip manufacturing subsidies recently authorized by Congress. Its revenue in dollar terms for the three months ended in March fell 5% from a year earlier, figures released Thursday showed, or a 16% decline quarter over quarter. One key sticking point for TSMC's planned investments in Arizona is a requirement that it would share any excess profits—i.e. returns above projections—with the government if it takes federal money. Such a requirement makes subsidies easier to sell politically but may be galling for companies to swallow in a down cycle, particularly given the very hefty capital expenditures needed up front to build cutting-edge chip plants. TSMC expects its capital expenditure this year will decline to between \$32 billion and \$36 billion, unchanged from its guidance at the beginning of 2023. Its capex last year was \$36.3 billion. The extent of the pullback will ultimately depend on how long the downturn lasts. And TSMC expects sales to remain sluggish this quarter. At the midpoint of its guidance, revenue in dollar terms will drop around 7% from last quarter while margins will also shrink. TSMC forecasts revenue will fall by a low-to mid-single digit percentage year over year for the whole of 2023. While TSMC's earnings still managed to beat analysts' expectations on S&P Global Market Intelligence, its gloomy outlook is a reminder that the chip industry's hangover will be more than a one morning affair. Semiconductor companies are still digesting massive inventories. By the end of 2022, companies in the semiconductor supply chain needed 132 days to turn over their inventory, compared with a historical average of around 85 days, according to Morgan Stanley. Meanwhile, consumer demand for gadgets is still looking soft. Global smartphone shipments fell 12% year on year in the first quarter of 2023, according to research firm Canalys. PC sales dropped 29% from a year earlier, according to International Data Corp. Demand from cloud computing is also slowing.

## Military Installations & Communities

### [Air Force Inspector General Probe of Airman Jack Teixeira's Unit Could Lead to More Charges \(WSJ\)](#)

The intelligence unit of a U.S. Air National Guardsman who allegedly accessed and shared highly classified intelligence documents has come under scrutiny, and officials aren't ruling out punitive action for the unit, defense officials said Wednesday. The Air Force inspector general is investigating the home unit of Airman First Class Jack Teixeira, the Massachusetts Air National Guardsman who has been charged with taking and sharing a trove of government secrets. The inspector general is seeking to determine whether the unit complied with procedures designed to protect against leaks, those officials said. Defense officials said there may be nothing that happened at the unit that isn't endemic to

dozens of other such units across the Defense Department. But the step is the first sign of a broader push to hold accountable those who may have been directly or indirectly involved in this unauthorized disclosure of government secrets. “At this point, there is no reason to think that anything particularly egregious occurred, but that doesn’t mean that it isn’t important to fully investigate and get to the ground truth of what happened,” a defense official said. The Justice Department charged Airman Teixeira on Friday with unauthorized retention and transmission of national defense information and unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents or material, charges that combined carry a potential 15-year prison sentence upon conviction. Airman Teixeira hasn’t yet entered a plea. The criminal case against him is unfolding as the U.S. government scrambles to protect its secrets after the classified documents were posted first on Discord, a social-media platform popular with gamers, and then on other online forums. The Pentagon and other components of the intelligence community have moved in recent days to tighten access to classified information, with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announcing a 45-day “review and assessment” of the department’s information security procedures. Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall said on Tuesday that he directed the service’s inspector general to investigate Airman Teixeira’s unit, the 102nd Intelligence Wing, and temporarily reassigned its mission to other parts of the Air Force. The Air Force also said Tuesday that the 102nd Intelligence Wing “is not currently performing its assigned intelligence mission.” While defense officials said they didn’t see red flags, they want to determine whether the unit complied with procedures designed to protect against leaks. One particular concern is whether the unit effectively disposed of printed classified documents like those that were leaked and whether such secrets were being handled appropriately.

### [The Navy Says it Has Cleared its Backlog of Discharge Paperwork](#)

#### [US commander pushes back against colleagues ‘guessing’ Taiwan invasion date \(Financial Times\)](#)

The top US military commander in the Indo-Pacific has pushed back against colleagues who are “guessing” the date of a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Admiral John Aquilino, head of US Indo-Pacific command, on Tuesday told Congress the Chinese threat to Taiwan had increased but declined to endorse other top military brass who have suggested timelines for a possible conflict. “I think everybody is guessing,” Aquilino told a House armed services committee hearing when asked about such warnings, including one from his predecessor, now retired Admiral Philip Davidson, who sparked alarm two years ago when he said China could move before 2027. Last October, Admiral Mike Gilday, chief of naval operations, said the US must prepare for possible action before 2024. And in January, General Mike Minihan, former deputy Indo-Pacific commander, predicted the US and China would go to war in 2025. “For me, it doesn’t matter what the timeline is . . . I’m responsible to prevent this conflict today and if deterrence were to fail to be able to fight

and win,” said Aquilino. He stressed that the US defense department and industry needed to move more quickly to reduce the odds of a conflict. Indo-Pacific command has \$3.5bn in requests that the Biden administration did not include in its recent \$842bn defense budget, which some critics say undermines the stance that China is the “pacing threat” for the US. Aquilino said the US military currently “exceeds anything China can deliver” but said it had to “go faster” in some areas, including hypersonic weapons. Asked if he believed the threat from China had grown, Aquilino replied: “The trends for the threat are in a wrong direction.” Aquilino said Davidson had referred to 2027 because Chinese president Xi Jinping has ordered the People’s Liberation Army to develop sufficient capabilities by that date. In February, CIA director William Burns said the US intelligence community believed Xi had ordered the Chinese military to “be ready” by 2027 to invade Taiwan. In recent months, senior officials have played down the possibility of an imminent Chinese invasion as part of an effort to push back against what some fear is loose talk from top military officers. Two people familiar with the situation said the Pentagon leadership had responded to the string of speculative dates, particularly from Minihan, by making clear that senior officers should not be talking about possible timelines for an invasion. The Pentagon declined to comment on whether officers had been warned. But a spokesperson said defense secretary Lloyd Austin and senior officials had “been clear that we do not believe an invasion of Taiwan by [China] is imminent or inevitable”. The debate underscores concern about China’s increasingly assertive air and naval activity around Taiwan.

### [Army, Navy and Air Force predict recruiting shortfalls this year](#)

#### [Newest transfer brings Guantanamo detainee population down to 30, Biden administration wants to cut it still more \(NBC News\)](#)

The U.S. military transferred an Algerian detainee from Guantanamo Bay to Algeria on Thursday, according to the Defense Department, bringing the population of the detention facility at the base in Cuba down to 30. The Biden administration is discussing options, including a possible executive order, to further reduce the number of detainees in the coming months and ultimately close the detention facility by the end of President Joe Biden’s current term, according to one current and one former administration official. Said bin Brahim bin Umran Bakush, also known as Abdul Razak Ali, was captured in Pakistan in March 2002 while living in a guest house affiliated with Al Qaeda operative Abu Zubaydah and several other men affiliated with the terrorist group. He claims he was the victim of mistaken identity and that he was not part of Zubaydah’s group. The U.S. government deemed him clear for transfer from the facility last April through the Periodic Review Board process, which determines whether continued detention is necessary for security reasons. Before the United States can transfer anyone out of Guantanamo, it must have an agreement with another country to accept the detainee, since a law passed by Congress in 2015 bans the transfer of any detainees to the U.S. The biggest challenge for reducing the

population is finding places for the detainees to go. The Biden administration has recently transferred detainees to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Belize, with a significant number of additional ones expected in the coming months. Soon after taking office, Biden began a quiet effort to close the facility with hopes of transferring detainees to other nations and shrink the population as small as possible and then convince Congress to allow the transfer of the last few to detention in the U.S. Since that effort began nearly two years ago, 10 detainees have been transferred to other nations. Biden would not take executive action to circumvent the 2015 law banning transfers to the U.S., two administration officials said, and the White House doesn't plan to push Congress to overturn it after assessing there's little political will for such a move. The officials said administration officials are instead weighing other options to deal with those Guantanamo detainees who are deemed too dangerous to be transferred and released in a foreign country, like transferring them to a foreign country for additional incarceration. Of the 30 remaining detainees, 16 are already eligible for transfer and three are eligible to be considered for review. Nine are being tried via the military commission process and two have been convicted via the commission process. Under the existing protocol, any detainee convicted by the commission process would be sentenced to further confinement at Guantanamo.

## Homeland Security

### [Why China's police state has a precinct near you \(Politico\)](#)

Beijing has been operating an overseas police station in New York. And London. And Rome. And Tokyo. And Toronto. The Department of Justice's indictment of two Chinese citizens this week for using the unlawful Chinese police station in Manhattan to go after dissidents highlights the growing tentacles of Beijing's overseas operations, which it uses to harass and silence critics around the world. The network also shows the extent to which Beijing has managed to conduct influence campaigns inside Western countries and violate others' sovereignty while mostly evading law enforcement. Security agencies across Europe and the Americas are investigating more than 100 facilities that an advocacy organization exposed in September as overseas outposts of China's security apparatus. In the U.S., that includes at least two others besides the one targeted this week. "These secret police stations reveal the CCP's blatant disregard and disrespect for the American rules and privacy," said Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas), chair of House Foreign Affairs Committee, using the abbreviation for the Chinese Communist Party. McCaul urged the Biden administration to "root out these encroachments on U.S. sovereignty." Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.), chair of the House Select Committee on China, said in a statement Tuesday that the Chinese police outposts raise the risk of the U.S. becoming "a hunting ground for dictators."

## [China publishers ditch US books as geopolitical tensions mount](#)

### [Intelligence Leaks Cast Spotlight on a Recurring Insider Threat: Tech Support \(WSJ\)](#)

Jack Teixeira, the 21-year-old Air National Guardsman charged with leaking top-secret U.S. documents, shares at least one thing with leaker Edward Snowden: They both worked in tech support. Massachusetts Airman Teixeira's alleged disclosures on a social-media platform demonstrate anew how information-technology workers responsible for routine tasks such as network maintenance pose a potential risk to the government's efforts to control classified information. "It's a challenging design problem—how to give enough access to fix all the computing systems without giving too much access that can compromise secrets," said Peter Swire, a professor of cybersecurity and privacy at the Georgia Institute of Technology who took part in a U.S. government review of intelligence practices following the Snowden leaks. While leaks of classified information are rare and have been linked to all manner of federal employees and contractors, those trusted with managing or troubleshooting technology perform roles that are so ubiquitous in a high-tech age that they represent a unique insider threat, said Mr. Swire and other former officials. Airman Teixeira was arrested by federal agents last week. His initial detention hearing on Wednesday was postponed two weeks, as his lawyers said the government had agreed to their request for more time to address issues presented in the case. He hasn't yet entered a plea. The Justice Department has charged him with transmitting national defense information and unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents or material. According to the charging document, a person an FBI agent identified as Airman Teixeira posted dozens of classified documents on Discord, a social-media platform popular with gamers. Those documents included specific assessments about the trajectory of the war in Ukraine, including potential battlefield vulnerabilities and the composition of parts of Ukraine's forces and other international-security matters that concern allies such as Israel, South Korea and the U.K. Airman Teixeira worked on cyber transport systems—a role that involved work to "keep our communications systems up and running," according to an Air Force job description. Mr. Snowden, who lives in Russia, was described by officials at the time of his leak in 2013 as a systems administrator. He has said his job was a more senior role when he was a contractor for the National Security Agency and collected secret documents on the agency's surveillance programs—an estimated hundreds of thousands of files that he then provided to journalists. Employees and contractors who work in information technology pose a security risk because of the nature of their duties, which typically requires broad access to the computer networks where secrets are stored, according to the former officials. While unusual activity, such as accessing a file unrelated to an employee's specific job, might be easily detected and flagged as suspicious by monitoring technology, IT personnel often have wider latitude to roam within a network. In some cases, they might be required to pass annual security screening, which could include polygraphs, and tighter auditing procedures to ensure when those individuals got access, they actually need it.

## [Marjorie Taylor Greene prohibited from speaking at hearing after calling DHS secretary 'a liar'](#)

### [Senior DHS border official put on leave amid reports of security violation \(The Hill\)](#)

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has placed an employee on administrative leave as it investigates a reported security incident. DHS is following its standard operating procedure after reports of a security incident by placing the individual on administrative leave, according to a department spokesperson. This news comes after multiple outlets reported that a senior DHS border official was escorted on Monday from his office, which was reportedly left sealed with crime tape. "DHS is committed to ensuring all operational security protocols are followed and is conducting an inquiry into a reported security incident," a DHS spokesperson said in a statement to The Hill, adding the department wouldn't comment on "ongoing internal investigations." Rolling Stone magazine first reported that the DHS official placed on leave was Brian Sulc, the executive director of the Transnational Organized Crime Mission Center within DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis. According to four sources familiar with the matter, Rolling Stone reported Sulc is under investigation for an alleged security violation of bringing a personal device into the office that prohibits electronic devices and phones. The report said Sulc was escorted from the office to be questioned at a second location after three squad cars from the Federal Protective Service pulled up to the DHS's northwest Washington office. The magazine reported that Federal Protective Service officers joined the office's security team to search Sulc's office, which was then sealed with crime tape and evidence seals on the keyhole and door to prevent people from entering. "He is a big deal," a source with direct knowledge of the incident told Rolling Stone. "He does the border, all the big issues and crises. This is why this is all so shocking." Sulc is tasked with overseeing intelligence assessments on "transnational organized crime, border security and terrorist travel threats," has been in his role since 2022 and has worked at DHS since 2008, according to his LinkedIn. Politico also reported a source familiar with the matter said Sulc was placed on leave and is under investigation. The source also said Sulc was escorted from his office Monday, according to Politico.

## **Transportation & Infrastructure**

### [USDOT opens application period for Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program \(Transportation Today\)](#)

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) recently opened the application period



for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program. A total of \$1.177 billion will be awarded to individual communities or groups of communities, including cities, counties, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, multijurisdictional groups, federally recognized tribal governments, towns, and special districts that are subdivisions of a state, certain transit agencies to fund local projects that improve roadway safety. “The crisis of traffic deaths on our nation’s roadways demands urgent and sustained action by us all,” U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said. “With our Safe Streets and Roads for All program, we are helping communities across the country save lives by making their roads safer.” The SS4A grant program launched in 2022 to address the high number of traffic deaths nationwide. It is part of the agency’s National Roadway Safety Strategy. Funding can be used for known high-crash areas, improving sidewalks and adding high-visibility crosswalks, reconfiguring intersections, and other uses. As part of their Action Plans, applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that include the use of demonstration activities, also known as “quick build” projects. The application deadline is July 10. USDOT plans to award at least \$250 million in demonstration activities this funding round.

### [Chairmen Sam Graves and Garret Graves Statements from FAA Reauthorization Hearing on Aerospace Workforce](#)

#### [Pete Buttigieg Talks Safety, Supply Chain on 2024 Budget \(Transport Topics\)](#)

President Joe Biden’s fiscal 2024 budget request paves the way for improvements to the safety and connectivity of the nation’s mobility system, Secretary Pete Buttigieg told House lawmakers April 20. Agencies at the Department of Transportation tasked with advancing the safety of motorists would benefit from funding proposals included in the administration’s budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year. Specifically, programs at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration would help tackle roadway safety concerns. The secretary highlighted a \$3.1 billion funding request for safety programs which he explained are designed to “save lives through much-needed projects, as well as advanced safety research initiatives.” NHTSA data determined that there were nearly 43,000 traffic fatalities in 2021, marking a 10.5% increase from the year prior. “This budget will support the department’s work in three major areas: running our agency operations effectively, building good projects well and protecting the safety of everyone who interacts with each part of America’s transportation system,” the secretary told the GOP-led Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. The panel is tasked with drafting a funding bill for the Department of Transportation. The White House budget request also focuses on supply chain connectivity operations. The administration is proposing \$230 million for the Port Infrastructure Development Program to advance programs meant to facilitate the movement of freight at commercial ports. Buttigieg touted the administration’s record: “With regard to supply chains, we’ve strengthened ports around the country — from smaller ports like Helena, Ark., and



Kaskaskia, Ill., to major ones in Portsmouth, Va., and New York City.” “This work complements the nearer-term efforts that have helped cut the number of ships idling at American ports from over a hundred down to the single digits, and contributed to Pacific shipping rates coming down 80%,” he added.

### [U.S. trains keep derailing. Why?](#)

#### [NHTSA Estimates for 2022 Show Roadway Fatalities Remain Flat After Two Years of Dramatic Increases \(U.S. DOT\)](#)

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has released its latest projections for traffic fatalities in 2022, estimating that 42,795 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes. This represents a small decrease of about 0.3% as compared to 42,939 fatalities reported for 2021. The estimated fatality rate decreased to 1.35 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2022, down from 1.37 fatalities per 100 million VMT in 2021. Americans are driving more than they did during the height of the pandemic, almost a 1% increase over 2021. NHTSA also projects that fatalities declined in the fourth quarter of 2022. This is the third straight quarterly decline in fatalities after seven consecutive quarters of increases that started in the third quarter of 2020. “We continue to face a national crisis of traffic deaths on our roadways, and everyone has a role to play in reversing the rise that we experienced in recent years,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. “Through our National Roadway Safety Strategy, we’re strengthening traffic safety across the country, and working toward a day when these preventable tragedies are a thing of the past.”

NHTSA estimates that 27 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are projected to have had decreases in fatalities in 2022 as compared to 2021, while 23 States are projected to have experienced increases. In January 2022, DOT released the comprehensive National Roadway Safety Strategy, a roadmap to address the national crisis in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. It adopts the Safe System Approach and builds multiple layers of protection with safer roads, safer people, safer vehicles, safer speeds, and better post-crash care. The NRSS is complemented by unprecedented safety funding included in President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and in February, the Department announced more than \$800 million in grants to help communities carry out projects that can address high-crash areas. DOT also launched the next phase of the NRSS, its Call to Action campaign, and released a one-year progress report and accompanying data visualizations that highlight the extent and magnitude of the U.S. roadway safety problem.

## Biotechnology & Healthcare

### [The CDC Lacks a Rural Focus. Researchers Hope a Newly Funded Office Will Help \(KFF Health News\)](#)

In 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published multiple reports analyzing health disparities between rural and urban populations. That effort pleased researchers and advocates for improving rural health because the dozen or so examinations of rural health data provided important details about the 46 million Americans who live away from the nation's population centers. It began to fill a gap in the information used by those who study and address the issues that affect people in rural communities. But those reports, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report rural health series, began and ended in 2017. And though the CDC has addressed rural health in other weekly reports and data briefs, the agency hasn't examined it in such depth since. That's one reason rural health advocates successfully pushed for the CDC to extend its rural health focus by creating an Office of Rural Health at the agency. The office is operational as of March 2023, and advocates hope the agency will commit to rural health research and provide analyses that lead to good public health policies for rural communities. "What we're seeing is rural continually getting left behind," said Alan Morgan, CEO of the National Rural Health Association, which urged Congress to fund the office. "They're communities at risk, communities that may not be employing public health safety measures, and we are flying blind," he said. "What's needed is an ongoing look at rural communities, their populations, to better direct both state and federal efforts to address health disparities," he said. The omnibus appropriations bill signed by President Joe Biden in December 2022 gave the CDC \$5 million for the 2023 fiscal year to create the Office of Rural Health inside the agency, which has a \$9.3 billion budget this year. Congress directed the CDC to sharpen its focus on public health in rural areas with the new office, after covid-19 had an outsize impact on rural America. Though the CDC is a data-driven public health agency, it's unlikely the new office will solve preexisting rural data challenges. But CDC officials have said in-depth rural health initiatives that require collaborations across the CDC — like the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report rural health series — could become more common practice at the agency.

### [Bipartisan Senate committee targets drug industry middlemen](#)

### [Scientists Get Closer to a 'Universal' Flu Vaccine \(U.S. News\)](#)

Researchers are reporting progress on the path to a "universal" flu vaccine -- one that

would battle all strains of the virus and give the world a weapon against future flu pandemics. In an early clinical trial, U.S. government scientists found that their experimental flu vaccine was able to coax recipients' immune systems to produce "cross-reactive" antibodies. That is, they made antibodies against many strains of influenza type A -- one of the two major groups of the virus. Experts called the findings promising, in that the vaccine did exactly what you'd want in this early phase of testing. However, it has not yet been shown to actually protect people from the flu, stressed researcher Sarah Andrews of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' Vaccine Research Center. She estimated that it could take five to 10 more years of development before, if all goes well, the vaccine is ready for the real world. Right now, the available flu vaccines prime the body to fight four flu strains: two type A influenza strains, and two type B. The problem is, there are many strains within those two groups, and different ones are in high circulation each flu season. So the flu vaccine has to be updated annually to include the four strains that scientists think are likely to dominate in the upcoming season. It's essentially an educated guess. "And that guess isn't always correct," said Dr. Mirella Salvatore, an associate professor at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City, and a spokeswoman for the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Salvatore, who was not involved in the new research, said that a universal flu vaccine could not only get rid of the yearly guessing game, but also help arm people for the next flu pandemic.

### [Moderna teams up with IBM to put A.I., quantum computing to work on mRNA technology used in vaccines](#)

#### [U.S. Authorizes a New Round of Covid Boosters \(NYT\)](#)

In a nod to the ongoing risk the coronavirus poses to millions of Americans, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended on Wednesday that adults 65 and older and those with weakened immune systems receive another dose of the reformulated booster that debuted last fall. The endorsement followed a daylong discussion by the C.D.C.'s expert advisers. The Food and Drug Administration authorized the booster plan on Tuesday, and the C.D.C.'s recommendation was the final administrative step. Eligible Americans will be able to receive booster doses immediately. Federal health officials are also phasing out the original vaccine formulas created by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, revoking their authorizations in the United States. And instead of needing an initial series of two shots, unvaccinated people will now require just a single dose of the reformulated, or "bivalent," Covid shot to be considered vaccinated. Until now, federal officials had required two doses of the older vaccine before recipients could begin to receive the bivalent boosters, a process some experts felt was confusing. Limited data on the reformulated vaccines indicate that in older adults, the shots offer additional protection against severe disease and death from Covid, although the protection wanes rapidly in the

weeks after inoculation. There are about 53 million adults 65 and older in the United States, accounting for about 16 percent of the population, according to the Census Bureau. And seven million Americans have weak immune systems because of an illness or a medication. Roughly 250 people in the United States are still dying from Covid-related causes each day, a vast majority of whom are over 70 or have impaired immune systems. The median age of those hospitalized is 75, according to the C.D.C. Yet only about 43 percent of adults 65 and older have received a bivalent booster shot so far.

## Climate & Development

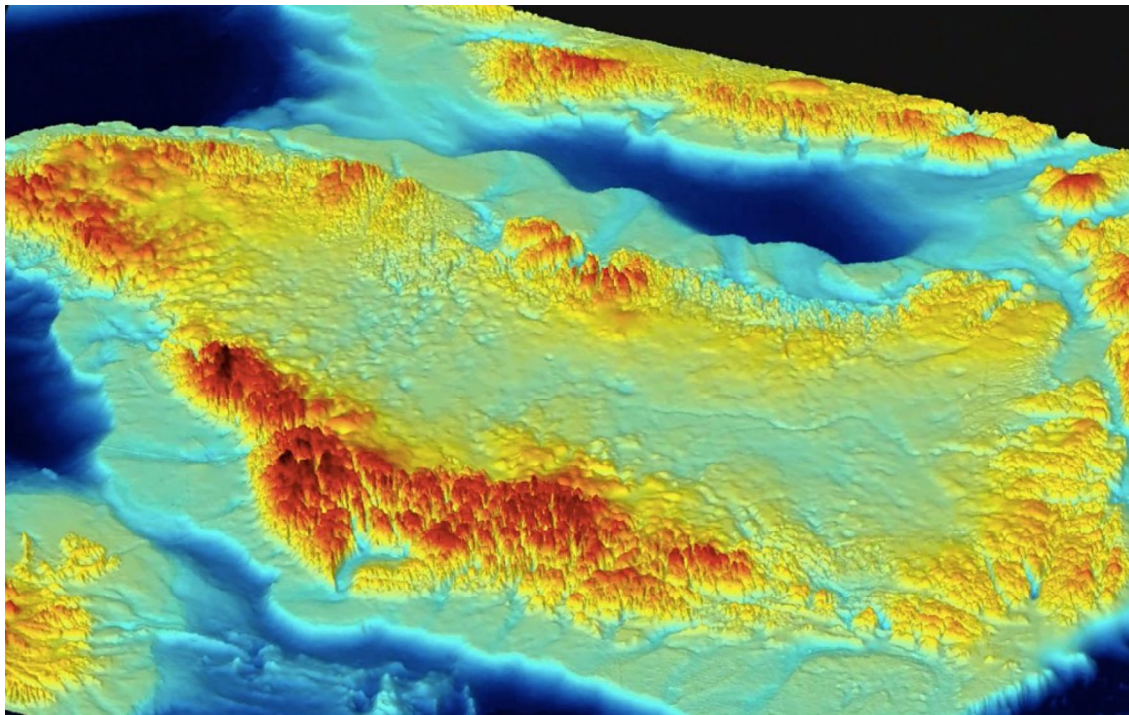
### [Biden commits \\$1B to international climate fund \(Politico\)](#)

President Joe Biden pledged \$1 billion to a major international climate aid fund on Thursday, a move that seeks to burnish United States credibility after former President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans had zeroed out U.S. contributions for the program. The financial injection to the Green Climate Fund brings the U.S. contribution to a total of \$2 billion, still short of former President Barack Obama's initial \$3 billion promise. But it signals the Biden administration is responding to calls from developing nations to deliver more money to help them cope with the effects of the changing climate. "The impacts of climate change will be felt the most by those who have contributed the least to the problem, including developing nations," Biden told the virtual gathering of the the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate. "As large economies we must support these economies. The fund is critical in ways to helping developing nations that they can't do now — but it should not be the only way." The Major Economies Forum was first launched in 2009 and now includes more than two dozen countries that produce 80 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and GDP. It is the first such meeting since last November's U.N. climate talks in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where nations agreed to a "loss and damage" fund to pay vulnerable nations for irreparable climate damage. Poorer nations have ramped up pressure on rich ones to provide more finance for combating climate change. Biden has tried to answer that call with a pledge to deliver \$11 billion in climate finance annually by 2024 — but it is unclear how the administration will get House Republicans to approve that spending. Biden said that nations must work together to reshape multilateral development banks like the World Bank to fight climate change. The Bank concluded its spring meetings last week and laid out an "evolution roadmap" to engage on climate change.

### [Greener flights will cost more, says industry](#)

[Accelerating melt of ice sheets now 'unmistakable' \(BBC News\)](#)

An international group of scientists who work with satellite data say the acceleration in the melting of Earth's ice sheets is now unmistakable. They calculate the planet's frozen poles lost 7,560 billion tons in mass between 1992 and 2022. Seven of the worst melting years have occurred in the past decade. Mass loss from Greenland and Antarctica is now responsible for a quarter of all sea-level rise. This contribution is five times what it was 30 years ago. The latest assessment comes from the Ice Sheet Mass Balance Intercomparing Exercise, or Imbie. This project, which is supported by the US and European space agencies, issues regular reviews of the state of the planet's ice sheets. This is the third such report, and like the previous studies, it has collated and reviewed all available satellite measurements. It includes the observations from orbit of some 50 spacecraft missions from 1992. That particular year was when orbiting instruments best suited to studying the elevation and velocity of ice started overflying the poles routinely. The 7,560 billion tons of ice lost from Greenland and Antarctica during the study period pushed up sea-levels by 21mm. Almost two-thirds (13.5mm) of this was due to melting in Greenland; one-third (7.4mm) was the result of melting in Antarctica. "All this has profound implications for coastal communities around the world and their risk of being exposed to flooding and erosion," said Dr. Inès Otosaka from the UK's Centre for Polar Observation and Modelling (CPOM), who led the latest assessment.





## [Former EPA Administrator Discusses Biden Administration's Climate Policies at Harvard Weatherhead Lecture](#)

### [UN court gets request for advisory opinion on climate change \(ABC News\)](#)

The United Nations' highest court confirmed Wednesday that the General Assembly has asked for it to issue an advisory opinion on "the obligations of States in respect of climate change." U.N. nations led by the South Pacific island state of Vanuatu adopted a historic resolution late last month calling for the International Court of Justice to lay out the legal framework of obligations countries have to curb warming and protect communities from climate disaster. Vanuatu Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau called the resolution "a win for climate justice of epic proportions." The Hague-based court said Wednesday it has been asked to answer two questions. Firstly, what are nations obliged to do under international law to ensure the protection of the climate and environment from greenhouse emissions? And, secondly, what are the legal consequences if nations, either by their actions or failure to act, have caused significant harm to the climate and the environment, in particular on small island states that are especially hard hit or vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and "peoples and individuals of the present and future generations." Under the court's rules, after receiving the request for an advisory opinion, its registrar informs all countries entitled to appear before the court and gives them an opportunity to submit written statements. International organizations "likely to be able to furnish information" also are allowed to make written submissions. After the written submissions, the court will hold public hearings at its seat, the Peace Palace, where nations and organizations can make statements. The 15 judges will then deliberate before issuing a non-binding opinion at another public hearing. The entire process is likely to take years.

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## Next Week's Hearings

### **Armed Service Committees**

House:

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 10:30 AM EDT: ["U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in Europe"](#)

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 2:00 PM EDT: ["FY24 National Security Space Programs"](#)

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 2:30 PM EDT: "FY24 Army Modernization Programs"

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 12:30 PM EDT: "[Department of the Air Force FY24 Budget Request](#)"

Thursday, April 27, 4:00 PM EDT: "[A Review of the Defense Intelligence Enterprise's posture and capabilities in strategic competition and in synchronizing intelligence efforts to counter the People's Republic of China](#)"

Friday, April 28, 9:00 AM EDT: "[Department of the Navy Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request](#)"

Senate:

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 9:30 AM EDT: "[To receive testimony on the Department of Energy and National Nuclear Security Administration atomic energy defense activities in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2024 and the Future Years Defense Program](#)"

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 2:30 PM EDT: "[To receive testimony on Air Force modernization in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2024 and the Future Years Defense Program](#)"

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 3:00 PM EDT: "[To receive testimony on public integrity and anti-corruption laws at the Department of Defense](#)"

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 8:00 AM EDT: "[To receive testimony on the posture of United States European Command and United States Transportation Command in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2024 and the Future Years Defense Program](#)"

### **Appropriations Committees**

House:

Tuesday, April 18, 2023, 2:00 PM EDT: "[FY24 request for Navy and Marine Corps MILCON and family housing](#)"

Wednesday, April 19, 2023, 10:00 AM EDT: "[FY24 request for the Coast Guard](#)"

Senate:



Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 2:00 PM EDT: ["A Review of the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation"](#)

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 10:00 AM EDT: ["A Review of the FY 2024 Budget and FY 2025 Advance Appropriations Requests for the Department of Veterans Affairs"](#)

### **Homeland Security Committees**

House: None Listed

Senate:

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 2:30 PM EDT: ["Subcommittee on Government Operations and Border Management Examining the Effects of Increased Migration on Communities Along the Southern Border"](#)

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 10:00 AM EDT: ["Lessons Learned: 10 Years Since the Boston Marathon Bombings"](#)

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