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Executive Insight Brief

June 2, 2023

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Aerospace & Defense

[DoD announces raft of high-level Biden nominations \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

With Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown officially tapped to be the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Biden administration announced a slew of additional nominations for top national security posts including the Missile Defense Agency, Marine Corps and the Defense Intelligence Agency. Air Force Maj Gen Heath Collins has been nominated to receive a third star and take the reins as the new director of the Missile Defense Agency. Collins is currently serving as MDA's program executive officer for the Ground-Based Weapons Systems, and if approved, would succeed Vice Admiral Jon Hill. The list also included the official Pentagon notice that President Joe Biden wants Gen. Eric Smith, currently the Marine Corps' assistant commandant, to replace Gen. David Berger as the top officer for the service. If approved by the chamber, Smith will succeed Berger at a pivotal time for the service's transformation. The presumed next director of US Cyber Command and the National Security Agency, Lt. Gen. Timothy Haugh, is currently serving as the deputy commander of US Cyber Command, which oversees cyberspace planning and operations. Meanwhile Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Kruse, currently the Pentagon advisor to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, is set to take the reins at the Defense Intelligence Agency. Additional appointments announced include: Air Force Lt Gen Gregory Guillot to receive his fourth star and become the commander of US Northern Command and the North American Aerospace Defense Command; Air Force Lt Gen Donna Shipton to take the reins of the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center; and Air Force Maj Gen Michael Koscheski to become a lieutenant general and take over as the deputy commander for the Air Combat Command. Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Randy George was previously nominated to head up the Army, and over the next few days and weeks, the administration is also expected to name its first draft picks to take over the military reins of the Navy and Air Force. However, nothing is certain before the Senate signs off, which means the Senate Armed Services Committee first needs to approve all of

those nominations before sending them to the chamber floor for a vote. Alabama Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville has placed a legislative roadblock in the way of top Pentagon leaders over his objection to the department's military reproductive policy. As a result, it is unclear when some of these nominations will get a vote or if the administration will need to appoint interim leaders until the roadblock is cleared.

[Pentagon accuses Chinese fighter jet of 'aggressive' action near US plane](#)

[China's Missile Threat Drives New U.S. Approach in Asia \(WSJ\)](#)

At this tiny commercial airport near the northern tip of the Philippines, tents for U.S. military equipment and troops dotted the tarmac alongside U.S. Army helicopters during recent training exercises. It is one of a growing number of outposts for American forces in the Asia-Pacific region designed to meet the rising military challenge from China. It is also part of a shift away from a heavy reliance on big military bases that have been the linchpin of the American presence in Asia for decades. Such bases are increasingly vulnerable as Beijing's missile arsenal grows larger and more technologically advanced. By dispersing weaponry, troops and command posts among smaller outposts such as Lal-Lo, the U.S. hopes to make it harder for Beijing to strike a decisive blow by crippling any single military facility. China's growing military capabilities and the U.S. military presence in Asia are set to be among the themes at this weekend's meeting of defense ministers in Singapore known as the Shangri-La Dialogue. China rebuffed a U.S. request for a meeting at the event between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu, both of whom are scheduled to make speeches. China now has more than 1,300 ballistic missiles that could be used against targets in the Asia-Pacific region, including over 250 that could reach as far as major U.S. military bases in Guam, around 3,000 miles from the Chinese mainland, according to Pentagon estimates. China's development of hypersonic missiles, which are harder for missile defense systems to hit because they don't follow predictable flight paths, has also focused attention on the vulnerability of U.S. bases in Asia. Recent tabletop simulations conducted by American security analysts, including of a hypothetical war over Taiwan, generally assumed Beijing would try to destroy major American installations early in the conflict. That potentially includes Kadena Air Base, the largest American air base in the region on the Japanese island of Okinawa, with more than \$4 billion in jet fighters and other equipment. Alarmed by this possibility, Sen. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.) introduced a bill into Congress in May calling for the U.S. military to build stronger shelters for its aircraft in Asia. Air Force leaders say new shelters alone won't solve the problem. They are giving priority to a hub-and-spoke model that would move many aircraft

away from large bases to an array of smaller facilities, especially if a conflict is looming. As part of that transition, the Air Force is creating small teams of personnel that can quickly convert locations such as airstrips on remote islands into temporary bases for military aircraft when needed. So-called Air Mobility Teams would be dropped into these locations and tasked with rapidly preparing runways and setting up infrastructure like refueling points. A larger number of small bases around the region could also allow the U.S. military to deploy assets closer to where they might be needed, shortening response times in a strategy known as prepositioning.

[Russian mercenaries exploit a war-torn African nation as they lead Putin's fight in Ukraine](#)

[Iran plans to escalate attacks against U.S. troops in Syria, documents show \(Washington Post\)](#)

Iran is arming militants in Syria for a new phase of lethal attacks against U.S. troops in the country, while also working with Russia on a broader strategy to drive Americans from the region, intelligence officials and leaked classified documents say. Iran and its allies are building and training forces to use more powerful armor-piercing roadside bombs intended specifically to target U.S. military vehicles and kill U.S. personnel, according to classified intelligence reports obtained by The Washington Post. Such attacks would constitute an escalation of Iran's long-running campaign of using proxy militias to launch rocket and drone strikes on U.S. forces in Syria. Drone attacks have wounded six U.S. service members and killed a Defense Department contractor, and the new explosive devices could add to the toll of U.S. casualties, risking a wider military confrontation with Iran, current and former intelligence analysts and weapons experts say. The same type of weapon, called an explosively formed penetrator, or EFP, was used by pro-Iranian insurgents in lethal attacks against American military convoys during the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Officials with Iran's elite Quds Force unit directed and oversaw testing of one of the explosives, which reportedly sliced through a tank's armored plating in a trial run conducted in late January in Dumayr, east of Damascus, the Syrian capital, according to one of the intelligence reports. The document, part of the trove of classified materials leaked on the messaging platform Discord, appears to be based on intercepted communications by Syrian and Lebanese militants allied to Iran. One apparent attempt to use such devices against U.S. forces was apparently thwarted in late February when three bombs were seized by U.S.-allied Kurdish fighters in northeastern Syria, a second document states. Another document in the trove describes a new and broader effort by

Moscow, Damascus and Tehran to oust the United States from Syria, a long-sought goal that could allow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to reclaim eastern provinces now controlled by U.S.-backed Kurdish forces. The past three U.S. administrations have maintained a small contingent of U.S. troops in Syria — about 900 at any given time, augmented by hundreds more contractors — to prevent a resurgence by Islamic State militants in the country, thwart Iranian and Russian ambitions, and provide leverage for other strategic objectives. U.S. administrations have justified the deployment under the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force, which Congress passed in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to fight al-Qaeda. But the presence of U.S. troops in Syria also creates opportunities for new conflict: Another document in the trove describes how Iran and allied militias were preparing to retaliate for Israeli strikes on their forces by hitting U.S. bases in Syria. The leaked documents describe plans for a wide-ranging campaign by U.S. opponents that would involve stoking popular resistance and supporting a grass-roots movement to carry out attacks against Americans in eastern and northeastern Syria. High-ranking Russian, Iranian and Syrian military and intelligence officials met in November 2022 and agreed on establishing a “coordination center” for directing the campaign, according to a classified intelligence assessment prepared in January. There were no indications in the documents of direct Russian involvement in planning the bombing campaign. But the leaked documents point to a more active role by Moscow in the broader anti-U.S. effort. Russia, like Iran, intervened militarily in Syria’s civil war to keep the Assad regime in power and now backs the government’s efforts to regain control of the entire country. In the months since the leaked documents were written, Russia has engaged in new provocations against U.S. forces, including violating deconfliction agreements, flying over U.S. bases and buzzing U.S. aircraft.

Budget & Appropriations

[Debt-Ceiling Deal Makes it Kevin McCarthy 3, Detractors 0 \(WSJ\)](#)

For House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, pursuing a bipartisan deal to avoid defaulting on the nation’s debt meant putting his own job at risk. Now he is taking a victory lap, even as threats to his leadership endure in corners of his party. On Wednesday, the California Republican successfully shepherded a must-pass bill through the House to suspend the \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling into early 2025 in exchange for reining in federal spending. The bill, crafted in breakneck talks with the White House, now heads to the Senate, where senators are rushing to get it through to make a June 5 deadline and avoid an unprecedented U.S. default. “I think we did pretty dang good for the American public,” a triumphant McCarthy said Wednesday night. Recalling his contentious speaker vote, he

told reporters, “Every question you gave me, ‘Could we survive? What could we even do?’ I told you then, it is not how you start, it is how you finish.” The passage of the bill marked a third key win for McCarthy and a setback for his detractors, who earlier questioned whether he would get the votes to become speaker back in January and doubted he could guide a debt-ceiling bill through the House in April, much less a bipartisan debt-ceiling deal in May. Meanwhile, he has also shepherded through several repeals of Biden administration regulations related to socially conscious investing, waterways, trade and other issues, forcing Senate Democrats to take politically uncomfortable votes and prompting President Biden to issue his first vetoes. “Kevin McCarthy has always been underestimated, always been underestimated,” said Rep. Patrick McHenry (R., N.C.), chairman of the Financial Services Committee and one of the bill’s negotiators. Next for McCarthy will be the appropriations process, set in motion by the bill passed Wednesday. He will once again have to balance those who call for specific spending cuts with those who want to stretch spending, including for pet projects in their districts, and try to make the deadline at the end of September. He also said he wants to organize a bipartisan commission to look at the entirety of government spending, including mandatory spending programs like Medicaid and Social Security that aren’t affected by the debt-ceiling deal. McCarthy won the speakership after a grueling four days of balloting in January, making pledges to trim government spending and agreeing to allow any member to call a vote for a new speaker. Several months later, he largely unified Republicans around the Limit, Save, Grow Act, which proposed reducing spending and rolling back some of Biden’s climate and tax policies as a condition for raising the debt ceiling. After the GOP passed its bill, Biden then started talks, effectively giving up his demand for a “clean” debt ceiling with no conditions attached. Over the Memorial Day weekend, negotiators finalized a debt-ceiling deal, pairing two years of spending restrictions with raising the borrowing limit until 2025, along with other measures related to energy permitting and work requirements for food assistance.

[A break-glass option, gumbo and a bike ride: How the debt ceiling deal got done](#)

[Senators eye Ukraine aid bills as avenue to increase DOD budget \(Roll Call\)](#)

Senators on Wednesday signaled interest in using Ukraine-focused supplemental spending bills as a mechanism to secure defense spending outside of strict caps that would be imposed by a debt limit compromise deal. The caps would restrain defense spending in fiscal 2024 to \$886 billion, the level proposed by President Joe Biden — a

roughly 3 percent increase from current levels. In fiscal 2025, the cap would be \$895 billion, a 1 percent increase from fiscal 2024. But Ukraine aid, if classified as emergency funding, could not count toward those limits, providing lawmakers with an outside avenue for military spending. Congress has appropriated supplemental funds for Ukraine before, including a measure Biden signed into law in May 2022. “When you have a supplemental for Ukraine, I’m hoping we’ll use that as an opportunity to repair the damage done by this budget deal,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. “I don’t see how we help the Ukrainian military and not help our own.” The compromise deal, which would stave off a catastrophic debt ceiling breach and impose across-the-board spending limits, passed the House by a vote of 314-177 on Wednesday. The Senate is aiming to pass the bill before the default deadline of June 5, though consideration could drag longer if an individual senator uses procedural tactics to force a delay. Graham said he planned to offer amendments that would remove the defense spending caps and state U.S. support for Ukraine. Republican senators for months have slammed the Biden administration’s Defense Department budget proposal, arguing it does not do enough to build up the U.S. military in the face of Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific. Many are wary of a debt limit deal that would lock in those spending levels. “I’d like to be spending more on defense, and believe with emergency supplemental we’ll be able to do that,” said Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah. “Clearly our support for Ukraine will be outside the budget, as it has been in the past, but I’d like to see additional support for our own military in emergency supplementals as well.” With Ukraine aid poised to run out before the fall, Congress will likely need to consider a supplemental aid package in the coming months, though it remains far from clear whether such a bill would pass the House. Several GOP lawmakers in that chamber oppose additional aid for Ukraine, and the Republican majority is incredibly slim. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, a member of the Armed Services Committee, noted significant bipartisan support in recent years for defense spending bills that provide billions of dollars more than the president asked for. In nearly every budget hearing in recent weeks, lawmakers from both parties have suggested a willingness to repeat that trend. Sullivan plans to offer an amendment that would claw back IRS money and redirect it to Pentagon unfunded priority lists — projects the Defense Department would like funded that weren’t included in the main budget request.

[Here's what's in the debt ceiling deal](#)

[Schumer vows to keep Senate in session until debt ceiling bill passes \(The Hill\)](#)

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) told colleagues Thursday he will keep the

Senate in session for as long as it takes to pass legislation to raise the debt ceiling and send it to President Biden's desk, warning the "X-date" when the nation faces default is "less than four days away." "We will keep working until the job is done. Time is a luxury the Senate does not have," he said. The House passed the bill, which President Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) unveiled over the weekend, by a vote of 314 to 117. It would extend the federal debt limit through Jan. 1, 2025. "At this point, any needless delay or any last-minute holdups would be an unnecessary and even dangerous risk, and any change to this bill that forces us to send it back to the House would be entirely unacceptable," Schumer said on the floor. Several senators are pushing for amendments to the bill, including Sens. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Mike Braun (R-Ind.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.). Kaine wants to add language to the bill to strip a provision that would speed approval of the Mountain Valley Pipeline, a natural gas pipeline that would run through West Virginia and Virginia. Paul wants an amendment to impose 5 percent across-the-board cuts to all on-budget spending over the next two years. Lee wants to strike a provision in the debt bill that would allow Biden's budget director to waive pay-as-you-go requirements for federal agencies that draft new rules that would add more than \$100 million to the deficit in a single year. Braun wants an amendment to penalize lawmakers if they fail to pass the annual appropriations bills on time. Senate sources say Graham wants to offer an amendment related to defense spending. Schumer said Thursday morning he hopes that senators' desire to vote on amendments doesn't delay the bill.

Advanced Technologies

[Multiple companies could win work on US Army's Project Linchpin AI \(C4ISRNET\)](#)

The U.S. Army will likely contract multiple companies to construct and operate its fledgling Project Linchpin, an artificial intelligence pipeline meant to feed the service's intelligence-gathering and electronic-warfare systems. An initial contract for the digital conduit is expected to be inked in March or April 2024, according to Col. Chris Anderson, a project manager at the Army's Program Executive Office for Intelligence, Electronic Warfare and Sensors, or PEO IEW&S. "I envision it's going to end up being a series of contracts for various aspects of the pipeline," Anderson told C4ISRNET on the sidelines of the Technical Exchange Meeting X, a defense industry conference held last week in Philadelphia. "Building a team of teams, both within the government, with industry, academia and everybody else — it's going to take a village to make this happen." The Pentagon has for years recognized the value of AI, both on and off the battlefield, and has subsequently invested billions in its advancement and adoption. The technology can help

vehicles navigate, predict when maintenance is required, assist identification and classification of targets, and aid analysts poring over mountains of information. Through Project Linchpin, the Army intends to deliver AI capabilities across the closely related intel, cyber and electronic warfare worlds, documents show, while also addressing hangups associated with the field, such as consumption and incorporation of real-world data and the needed training regimens. Included in the PEO IEW&S portfolio are the Tactical Intelligence Targeting Access Node, or TITAN, meant to centralize and automate the collection, parsing and distribution of data; the High Accuracy Detection and Exploitation System, or HADES, an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance jet outfitted with advanced sensors; and the Terrestrial Layer Systems, or TLS, designed to provide soldiers cyber and electronic warfare assistance. Each will play a specific role on the battlefield of the future. And each will tie back to Project Linchpin. An industry day for Project Linchpin is planned for August or September. PEO IEW&S conducted market research at a previous technical exchange meeting in Nashville.

[Musk's SpaceX wins Pentagon contract for satellite in Ukraine](#)

[Satellite Data Could Boost Border Security, Disaster Response \(Nextgov\)](#)

Data should join radios, flashlights, and maps as indispensable tools in disaster response and border operations, Department of Homeland Security leaders say. "It's not always conducive to operations to just give somebody a radio. I also need to be able to see where they're at," said Dan Steadman, the acting assistant chief for U.S. Border Patrol, during the GEOINT conference. Steadman recalled the fatal shooting of a border patrol agent by a fellow agent in 2012. He said he heard shots fired over the radio, and he believes the death could have been prevented with the right technology and information, namely the Team Awareness Kit or Tactical Assault Kit, known as TAK. If TAK were available in 2012, the agents "would have seen each other, they would have known where each other were, they would have been able to respond appropriately to the situation that was going on. Being able to respond to sensors, they would have had overall situational awareness and that increased officer safety," he said. Initially developed in 2010 for military use, TAK can be used via app or software plugin on Android or iOS devices, web browsers, and with virtual or augmented reality tech. So far, about 80 percent of CBP's 20,000 border patrol agents are trained to use TAK, Steadman said. But the expansion wasn't easy. "The buy-in was difficult to begin with, especially with agents who were just thinking, 'Well, this is just big brother.' We have proven that it is not just big brother. We have proven that this is a life saving technology that can help us," he said. DHS has expanded TAK's use since 2018 to

mobile devices and other accessories for every border patrol agent. And the agency would like to use geospatial intelligence and satellite imagery for better maps that can be used offline, Steadman said. “For anybody that’s familiar with the border—not a lot of cell service. Utilizing ATAK, we need cell service,” he said, adding that the agency contracted with GoTenna to provide a mesh network so the app will work in areas with little to no cellular connectivity. “We want more of that. We want that mesh network. We want that data ingestion for offline mapping, updated satellite imagery to give agents on the ground as they’re responding to officer safety type situations to have the most up-to-date information and how to better respond,” to blocked trails or pathways and other changes to the landscape. Steadman also said he’d like to see predictive analysis for TAK so agents don’t have to rely on tracking physical footprints. “As border patrol agents, we look at footprints a lot, or shoe prints a lot, to try to determine where to walk to. There should be a technology that can tell me with a high enough percentage rate of what a successful interdiction looks like and where I need to go to make that,” he said. Homeland Security relies on satellite imagery for its missions, often working with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, including natural disaster response and analyzing critical infrastructure. But weather and atmospheric conditions can make that challenging.

[The big question of how small chips can get](#)

[Fewer U.S. Companies Applied to Export Sensitive Technology to China Last Year \(WSJ\)](#)

Fewer U.S. companies are applying to export sensitive technologies to China amid growing government scrutiny of the flow of goods to the country, especially those with potential military applications, a Biden administration official said. Applications to export sensitive technology and goods to China dropped by 26.2% between 2021 and 2022, according to Thea Rozman Kendler, assistant secretary of commerce for export administration at the Commerce Department’s Bureau of Industry and Security, in prepared remarks delivered before the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee on Wednesday. Kendler attributed the decline to the scrutiny the Commerce Department gives to know-your-customer checks and to its guidance on export red flags. “Many U.S. exporters do not submit license applications for transactions they contemplate are likely to be rejected,” she said. The U.S. in recent months has ratcheted up restrictions on exports of advanced technology to China, including a set of new export restrictions on advanced semiconductors and chip-making equipment imposed in October. Kendler said the restrictions are being imposed with a “scalpel”-like precision to hinder China’s military modernization efforts without unduly interfering with commercial trade. Getting a license to

export to China, however, is proving more arduous. License applications for exporting to China had an average processing time of around 90 days in the calendar year 2022, compared with 76 in 2021, said Kendler, and around 26% of these applications are being denied. For the export of sensitive goods to other countries, the average processing time for an application was 43 days last year. Kendler leads the regulatory side of BIS, identifying sensitive technologies, developing policies to protect those technologies and reviewing export license applications to determine if the exports go against U.S. national security and foreign policy goals. Kendler's comments come as the Commerce Department in recent months has worked across government agencies to further restrict the export of sensitive technologies to China. The Justice Department in February announced it would launch a partnership with Commerce, dubbed the Disruptive Technology Strike Force, to investigate and prosecute criminal violations of U.S. export controls laws. Matthew Axelrod, assistant secretary for export enforcement at the BIS, in testimony before the Senate Banking committee Wednesday, highlighted efforts by Commerce to bolster enforcement of export controls. The Commerce Department in recent months has revised a number of its enforcement policies, including raising penalties for more serious violations, using non monetary settlements for less serious offenses, and treating a company that knows of a potential violation but chooses not to divulge this information to authorities as an an aggravating factor if any penalties are imposed.

Military Installations & Communities

[SPACECOM takes over missile defense ops from Strategic Command \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

US Space Command announced that it will take over responsibility for missile defense operations from US Strategic Command, as a result of President Joe Biden's approval of an update to the Unified Command Plan (UCP) that delineates military command roles. "This transfer is the culmination of a comprehensive study on the roles, responsibilities and authorities associated with the Missile Defense enterprise and represents an alignment to the 2022 Missile Defense Review," said Army Gen. James Dickinson, SPACECOM commander. "Integration of systems and fighting doctrine is critical to modern warfare. By bringing the three mission areas of missile warning, missile defense and space domain awareness under one command as the Global Sensor Manager, USSPACECOM can more effectively integrate and fuse the sensor data for rapid detection, characterization, tracking and dissemination to ensure theaters can defeat any threat," he said. STRATCOM has been responsible for missile defense at least since 2002, when the first version of SPACECOM was folded into it by then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Under that arrangement, for example, in February 2008 the command undertook Operation Burnt

Frost, shooting down a non-functioning US spy satellite using a modified Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) missile defense interceptor launched from the Navy's USS Lake Erie. Biden signed off on the 2022 UCP including the transfer of authority on April 25. The UCP is generally updated every two years or so, but also whenever a new command is formed or a standing one given new jobs. As Breaking Defense was first to report, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley in 2020 launched an update to reflect the 2019 recreation of SPACECOM, which subsequently was signed off by Biden in June 2021. SPACECOM will take on the missile defense mission — ranging from planning and analysis to network management to training. It also will take over STRATCOM's missile defense component, the Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense. However, STRATCOM and the North American Aerospace Defense Command will keep responsibility for "Integrated Threat Warning and Attack Assessment missions," the press release says. "In the increasingly complex global threat environment, missile defense is critical to defending the homeland," Air Force Gen. Anthony Cotton, STRATCOM commander, said in the press release. "I am confident that this UCP better supports our integrated deterrence framework in safeguarding our nation."

[Maintenance failures on Army equipment stored at Kuwait base posed deadly risk, IG says](#)

[Air Force picks Colorado to base new Space Force units \(Washington Examiner\)](#)

The U.S. Air Force has decided to base new U.S. Space Force units in Colorado, not Alabama. Four new units will be based on bases in Colorado, which is notable given that's where Space Command is temporarily headquartered, despite growing questions as to whether it will ultimately move to Huntsville, Alabama, where the previous administration selected for its permanent location. The Air Force made the call "after conducting thorough site surveys which assessed the location's ability to facilitate the missions and infrastructure capacity while accounting for community support, environmental factors and cost," according to a press release shared on Wednesday. The Biden administration has reportedly considered not moving Space Command's headquarters to Alabama due to the state's strict anti-abortion laws, though officials have denied a connection. A White House official told the Washington Examiner earlier this month that abortion laws or reproductive care access are not factors in the review of the permanent location. More than two years ago, the secretary of the Air Force announced the Space Command would move from its temporary location in Colorado Springs to a U.S. Army post, Redstone Arsenal, which is in Huntsville, Alabama. Lawmakers from both states believe their home state should house

U.S. Space Command indefinitely. Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall earlier this month, requesting the department to preserve all documents related to the selection of a location for the U.S. Space Command headquarters. "The Air Force's deleterious actions concerning the selection of a location for SPACECOM Headquarters require the Committee to now seek document preservation in this matter," he wrote. "Air Force officials have continued to delay finalizing the move of SPACECOM Headquarters to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, in response to apparent politically motivated interference by political appointees in the Biden Administration." Alternatively, Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO) said in a statement on Wednesday, "Colorado Springs continues to prove itself as the premier location for our nation's space defense operations. I am pleased to announce that more than 500 personnel from Space Delta 12, Space Delta 15, and the 74th and 75th ISR squadrons will permanently join the 20 current space missions at our five military installations in Colorado Springs."

[Pentagon leaders cancel drag show at a Nevada Air Force base](#)

[As the U.S. government expands UFO investigations, a new group forms for pilots who spot them \(NBC News\)](#)

The first active-duty military pilot to come forward to Congress about his experience with so-called unexplained aerial phenomena is starting a first-of-its-kind nonprofit group to support other pilots who see things they can't explain, he said. Airline passengers are encouraged to report suspicious activity in the name of national security, but the pilots on those same planes often face professional stigma and institutional obstacles in reporting unexplained aerial phenomena, or UAPs, that could represent national security threats in the age of drones and spy balloons, advocates say. For instance, the Federal Aviation Administration has no mechanism for pilots to report UAPs, the term preferred to UFOs, instead directing them to civilian UFO groups that are often dismissed as the domain of cranks and conspiracy theorists. Americans for Safe Aerospace, which is officially launching Thursday as the first pilot-led advocacy organization dedicated to UAPs, seeks to change that. Co-founded and run by former Navy fighter pilot Ryan Graves, the group, which provided exclusive details to NBC News, aims to better support aviators who witness unexplained events. The group wants to push for policy changes, like better reporting mechanisms, serve as a hub for pilot whistleblowers and advocate for more disclosure by the military and other government agencies. "Unidentified objects in our airspace present

an urgent and critical safety and national security issue, but pilots are not getting the support they need and the respect they deserve,” Graves said. “When I served, my squadron was encountering UAP nearly every day, and nothing was being done.” Five other former military aviators, in addition to a commercial pilot and flight instructor, have joined the group’s Aircrew Council, and its Advisory Board includes prominent civilian researchers like Harvard astronomer Avi Loeb; politicians like Susan McCue, the longtime chief of staff to the late Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid; astronaut Terry Virts, the former commander of the International Space Station; and a former head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, retired Navy Rear Adm. Tim Gallaudet. UAPs are often conflated with aliens in the popular imagination, but earthly mysteries may be more pressing — from the undeclared drone attacks on Moscow apartment buildings this week to the recent flight of a Chinese spy balloon over sensitive U.S. military installations, which advocates say traditional U.S. aerospace defenses aren’t calibrated to detect. U.S. fighter jets shot down two other unidentified objects, which many people now suspect were hobbyist balloons, over North American airspace in the days after the U.S. military knocked out the Chinese balloon, but the confusion and lack of information about what’s happening over the U.S. is dangerous for pilots and passengers, Graves and others say.

Homeland Security

[China Investing in Open-Source Intelligence Collection on the U.S. \(NYT\)](#)

China’s intelligence agencies are investing deeply in open-source intelligence to learn more about the capabilities of the American military in the Pacific and beyond, according to a new report. The analysis, by the threat intelligence company Recorded Future, details efforts by China’s government and companies to collect publicly available data from the Pentagon, think tanks and private firms — information Beijing’s military can use to help plan for a potential conflict with the United States. As the relationship between the United States and China has become more adversarial, both countries are investing more in their intelligence collection capabilities. With Beijing’s investments in big data management, mining publicly available sources of information could give China an advantage in collecting intelligence on the United States and its allies. While autocratic countries like China hide information about their military, the United States — as a democracy that tries to be responsive to its public — puts out a plethora of information about its military capabilities, doctrine and planning. China can mine that information, looking for material it can use to its own military advantages. For example, the report details some of the work one prominent Chinese open-source intelligence company has done to analyze publicly available insights from the Office of Net Assessment, the Pentagon’s in-house think tank.

Recorded Future also outlined how China has tried to gather information put out by the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. “The U.S. Naval War College has a China Maritime Studies Institute, and it produces a lot of open-source research on China,” said Zoe Haver, a threat intelligence analyst with Recorded Future. “This is done in an academic setting, but ultimately foreign governments consider this valuable intelligence.” China’s secret intelligence-gathering abilities have grown in leaps and bounds in recent decades, and Beijing’s investment in open-source information has intensified over the last decade. The definition of open-source intelligence is broad, but Recorded Future looked at information that the intelligence agencies of China’s People’s Liberation Army were using to help them make plans and develop the military. Much of what Beijing is mining from open-source data may well be available in one Chinese spy agency or another. But China’s intelligence agencies are walled off from one another and do not share information, according to Recorded Future’s analysts. And it may be easier for parts of the P.L.A.’s intelligence arms to develop open-source information about American capabilities than to request classified information from a sister spy agency.

[Jan. 6 Capitol Attack: The Rioters’ Legal Reckoning, Visualized](#)

[DHS faces slow disaster response burdened by legacy systems, officials warn \(Nextgov\)](#)

The Department of Homeland Security is continuing to use mission-critical, legacy information technology systems that can jeopardize national security, public safety and privacy, officials warned in congressional testimony on Wednesday. Kevin Walsh, director of IT and Cybersecurity for the Government Accountability Office, expressed concerns about the potentially detrimental impact of severely antiquated systems on disaster response efforts nationwide and stressed the urgent need for increased financial support and federal investments to transition from outdated technology. He described the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s grants management modernization program as an example of one effort at DHS to replace a series of legacy IT systems “that are a burden for recipients, a burden for the agency and are slowing down the response to disasters.” “If that legacy system were to fully go off the rails, a disaster without grants from the government would be very difficult for our citizens,” Walsh added. Several DHS components have made significant advancements in modernizing their systems and capabilities, officials told the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee on emerging threats and spending oversight. Yemi Ohinnaiye, chief information officer of the Transportation Security Administration, said the agency recently transitioned its Performance and Results Improvement System to a cloud platform,

allowing it to "grow, scale and provide robust analytics for TSA compliance activities." Ohinnaiye also described how TSA used an iterative and agile approach to prototyping and implementing an improved in-flight security scheduling system that reduces the burden of manual processing and provides more rapid solutions. DHS' complex network of diverse IT systems has made it a challenge for the department to streamline operations, improve data sharing and embark on enterprise wide modernization journeys over the years. To combat an evolving landscape of cybersecurity threats, border issues and emergency response needs, the department initiated a multiyear effort to promote IT modernization initiatives, adopt cloud-based computing and consolidate data centers. A 2020 inspector general report found that several DHS components had not complied with or fully embraced the agency's department-wide modernization goals due to a lack of standard guidance and funding. More recently, GAO said that DHS failed to implement all of its recommendations to ensure legacy IT systems that support financial, biometric identity and grants management are successfully replaced. DHS is expected to spend over \$10 billion on its IT systems in fiscal 2023, according to GAO, with nearly \$8.8 billion of that total going to maintenance operations. While DHS developed a complete plan last year to modernize one of its critical legacy systems following a report GAO published in 2019 that identified its most severely outdated technology, the agency has not yet done so for several other mission-critical legacy systems, Walsh said.

[DHS Operations Blue Lotus and Four Horsemen Stopped Nearly 10,000 Pounds of Fentanyl, Led to 284 Arrests](#)

[China accuses US of interference with naval exercise before spy plane intercept \(The Hill\)](#)

China's defense ministry is accusing the United States of interfering with and surveilling a naval exercise in the South China Sea before an incident during which one of its fighter jets intercepted a U.S. spy plane last week. The Southern Theatre Command of China's military said in a statement on Wednesday that it "operated professionally" and in accordance with all laws and regulations. But the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command has accused the pilot of the Chinese J-16 fighter of performing an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" while intercepting a U.S. Air Force RC-135 aircraft. The U.S. said the Chinese jet flew directly in front of its aircraft's nose. "The RC-135 was conducting safe and routine operations over the South China Sea in international airspace, in accordance with international law," the U.S. said. Senior Col. Zhang Nandong, a spokesperson for the Southern Theatre Command, said the U.S. was making "false accusations" to try to confuse the international community, calling on the U.S. to "conscientiously restrain the actions of front-line naval and air forces, strictly abide by relevant international laws and

relevant agreements, and prevent accidents at sea and in the air.” China has claimed almost all of the South China Sea to be its own, but the U.S. does not recognize that claim. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Wednesday that the U.S. must end its “dangerous acts of provocation” that threaten China’s sovereignty and security. “Such provocative and dangerous moves are the root cause for maritime security issues,” she said.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[NHTSA planning to require automatic emergency braking on new vehicles \(The Hill\)](#)

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the top federal roadway safety agency, proposed a rule Wednesday to require all new vehicles to include automatic emergency brakes. The agency said in a release Wednesday that the proposed rule would “dramatically” reduce the number of crashes with pedestrians and rear-end collisions. It projects that the rule would save 360 lives and reduce injuries by 24,000 every year. “Today, we take an important step forward to save lives and make our roadways safer for all Americans,” Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in the release. “Just as lifesaving innovations from previous generations like seat belts and air bags have helped improve safety, requiring automatic emergency braking on cars and trucks would keep all of us safer on our roads.” The Transportation Department (DOT) argues that the rule would prevent many crashes from occurring at all and make those that happen less destructive. The rule is part of the department’s National Roadway Safety Strategy, which the administration launched in January 2022 to address traffic fatalities and injuries. The agency noted that it has received “unprecedented” funding from President Biden’s bipartisan infrastructure law from 2021, and the department announced more than \$800 million in grants for communities in high-crash areas. A provision of the infrastructure law required DOT to issue a rule ensuring all vehicles manufactured in the U.S. have an automatic emergency braking system.

[Biden-Harris Administration Announces More than \\$52 Million in Advanced Technology Grants to Improve Safety and Reduce Travel Times](#)

[US, EU Agree on Heavy-Truck Charging Standard \(Transport Topics\)](#)

To further the quest to electrify trucking, the U.S. government and European Union have agreed that when a megawatt charging standard is developed for heavy trucks, it must be universal. A common international standard on megawatt charging systems to recharge electric heavy-duty vehicles was among key decisions made May 31 during the fourth ministerial meeting of the US-EU Trade and Technology Council in Lulea, Sweden. “This [standard] will facilitate transatlantic trade and investment by reducing the manufacturing and deployment costs,” the council stated. A White House statement May 31 said the TTC will work “to maximize clean energy development, accelerate the transition to a net-zero emission economy no later than 2050, increase the security of supply chains for clean energy technology, and sustain and create well-paying jobs for workers in the transatlantic economy” by sharing information. The TTC meeting was co-chaired by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and U.S Trade Representative Katherine Tai, along with European Commission executive vice presidents Margrethe Vestager (competition) and Valdis Dombrovskis (trade). The TTC noted it is “placing decarbonization efforts at the heart of trade policy to accelerate the transition toward a net-zero economy,” since climate change challenges are priorities in the U.S. and EU.

[Louisiana DOTD announces major project to repair I-20](#)

[Legislation seeks to lower gasoline prices, encouraging increased domestic energy production \(Transportation Today\)](#)

Legislation recently introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives would lower gasoline prices, encourage increased domestic energy production, and reduce reliance on foreign energy sources. The Pay Less at the Pump Act would amend the IRS Code of 1986 to terminate the Hazardous Substance Superfund (Superfund Tax) financing rate. The Superfund Tax applies to imported petroleum products and is imposed on crude oil when it is received at a U.S. refinery. It was reinstated as part of the Inflation Reduction Act at a rate of \$0.16 per barrel. The rate is indexed annually for inflation, and the current rate is \$0.25 per barrel. The national average for a gallon of gasoline is \$3.57. Terminating the Superfund Tax would save an estimated \$10.5 billion over the next 10 years. Natural gas prices are projected to increase 25 percent since last winter compared to the previous year. U.S. Reps. Mike Carey (R-OH), Ron Estes (R-KS), Kevin Hern (R-OK), Darin LaHood (R-IL), Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Carol Miller (R-WV), and Adrian Smith (R-NE) introduced the bill. “The American people need any relief they can get when it comes to the cost of energy, and this is a step in the right direction to reduce energy prices across the board,” Carey said.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[US births in 2022 didn't return to pre-pandemic levels \(AP News\)](#)

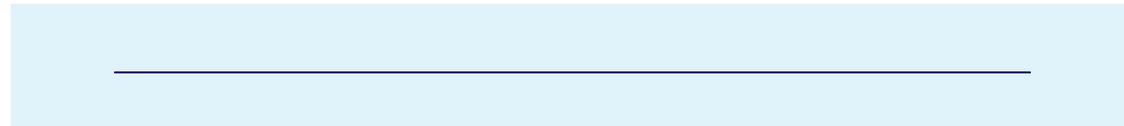
U.S. births were flat last year, as the nation saw fewer babies born than it did before the pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday. Births to moms 35 and older continued to rise, with the highest rates in that age group since the 1960s. But those gains were offset by record-low birth rates to moms in their teens and early 20s, the CDC found. Its report is based on a review of more than 99% of birth certificates issued last year. A little under 3.7 million babies were born in the U.S. last year, about 3,000 fewer than the year before. Because the numbers are provisional and the change was small, officials consider births to have been “kind of level from the previous year,” said the CDC’s Brady Hamilton, the lead author of the report. U.S. births were declining for more than a decade before COVID-19 hit, then dropped a whopping 4% from 2019 to 2020. They ticked up about 1% in 2021, an increase experts attributed to pregnancies that couples had put off amid the early days of the pandemic. More findings from the report the highest birth rates continue to be seen in women in their early 30s. The number of births for women that age was basically unchanged from the year before. Births were down slightly for women in their late 20s, who have the second-highest birth rate. Births to Hispanic moms rose 6% last year and surpassed 25% of the U.S. total. Births to white moms fell 3%, but still accounted for 50% of births. Births to Black moms fell 1%, and were 14% of the total.

[Telemedicine and RPM transform care delivery in Alabama, racking up wins](#)

[Ketamine Makes a Strong Showing in a Study on Severe Depression \(Everyday Health\)](#)

Ketamine infusions may work at least as well as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) for improving symptoms in some people with severe depression, the results of a new study suggest. “ECT has been the gold standard for treating severe depression for over 80 years,” said the lead study author, Amit Anand, MD, the director of psychiatry translational clinical trials at Mass General Brigham in Boston, in a statement. “But it is also a controversial treatment because it can cause memory loss, requires anesthesia, and is associated with social stigma.” Dr. Anand and his team set out to compare ECT with

ketamine — a surgical anesthetic that was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2019 as a nasal spray medication for treatment-resistant depression (depression that is not alleviated by at least two different antidepressant therapies). “This is the largest study comparing ketamine and ECT treatments for depression that has ever been done, and the only one that also measured impacts to memory,” Anand said. The study included about 400 adults who were diagnosed with treatment-resistant depression. Scientists randomly assigned participants to receive ECT three times weekly or ketamine infusions twice weekly for three weeks.



[What is berberine, the supplement dubbed 'nature's Ozempic' on social media? \(NBC News\)](#)

A dietary supplement called berberine is gaining momentum on social media for its weight loss effects, even being referred to by some as “nature’s Ozempic,” in reference to the popular drug that can help people shed pounds. Users say berberine, which is found in a number of plants, including barberry plants, helps curb appetite and improve blood sugar levels, resulting in weight loss. Google searches for “berberine” began to increase at the end of March before they spiked in late May. Berberine is rising in popularity as demand increases for medications like Ozempic and Wegovy, known for their weight loss effects. Ozempic and Wegovy are part of a class of drugs called GLP-1 agonists, which mimic a hormone that helps reduce food intake and appetite. They are highly effective, but they are in short supply in the U.S. They are also expensive — around \$1,000 or more out of pocket — and need to be prescribed by a doctor. By comparison, berberine appears to be widely available online, and it usually ranges in price from \$15 to \$40 for a month’s supply. “You don’t have to deal with a doctor, and it’s going to be a lot less expensive,” said Dr. Pieter Cohen, who researches supplement use at the Cambridge Health Alliance in Somerville, Massachusetts. “So from an advertising perspective, it’s perfect.”

Climate & Development

[Icy moon Enceladus spews massive water plume \(BBC News\)](#)

Astronomers have detected a huge plume of water vapor spurting out into space from Enceladus, an icy moon of Saturn. The 313 miles moon is well known for its geysers, but

this is a particularly big one. The water stream spans some 9,600km - a distance equivalent to that of flying from the UK to Japan. Scientists are fascinated by Enceladus because its sub-surface salty ocean - the source of the water - could hold the basic conditions to support life. Nasa's Cassini mission (2004-2017) gathered tantalizing evidence of the necessary chemistry by regularly flying through the geysers and sampling the water with its instruments - although it made no direct detection of biology. The new super-plume was spied by the James Webb Space Telescope. Previous observations had tracked vapor emissions extending for hundreds of kilometers, but this geyser is on a different scale. The European Space Agency (Esa) calculated the rate at which the water was gushing out at about 300 litres per second. This would be sufficient to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool in just a few hours, Esa said. Webb was able to map the plume's properties using its extremely sensitive Near-Infrared Spectrograph (NIRSpec) instrument. The instrument showed how much of the ejected vapour (about 30%) feeds a fuzzy torus of water co-located with one of Saturn's famous rings - its so-called E-ring. "The temperature on the surface of Enceladus is minus 200 degrees Celsius. It's freezing cold," commented Prof Catherine Heymans, Astronomer Royal for Scotland.

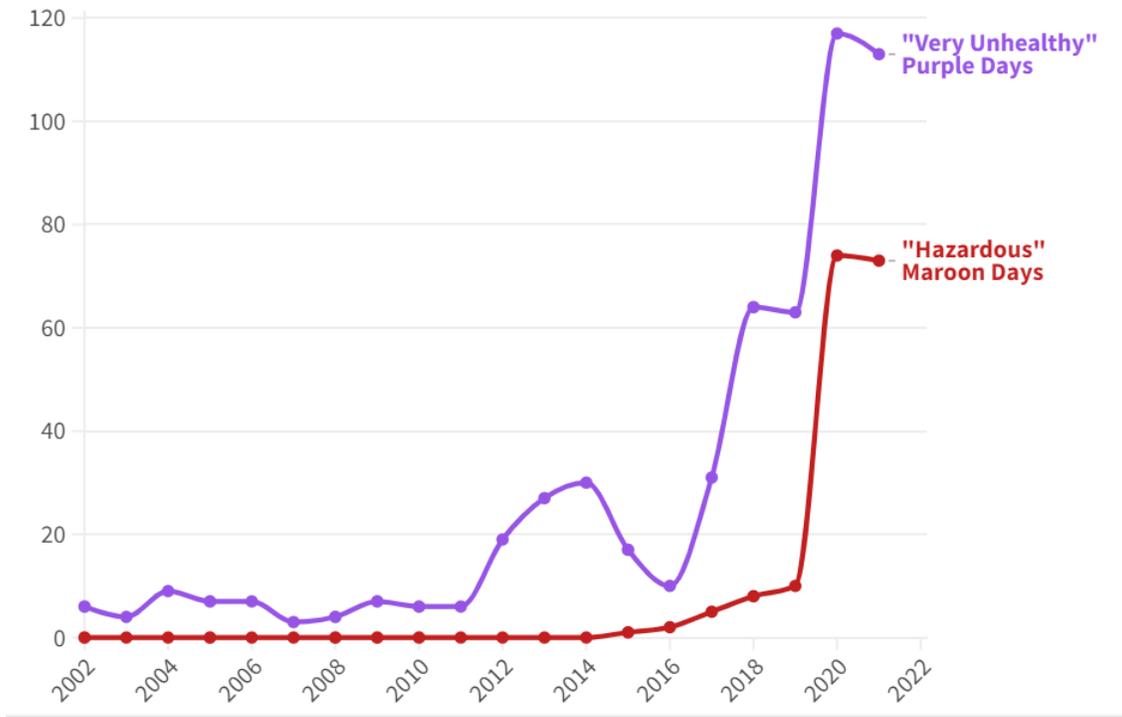
[Debt ceiling deal advances pipeline and tweaks environmental rules. But more work remains](#)

[Hazardous air alerts are rising in unexpected places, thanks to climate change \(The Hill\)](#)

Climate change threatens to reverse decades of progress in cleaning America's air, especially in the West. Unhealthy air alerts triggered by particles of pollution are rising in dozens of cities and counties, chiefly in Western states, the American Lung Association reports. The main reason is rampant wildfires, fed by global warming, causing an annual cycle of smoky devastation. Eight of the 10 cities with the most days of high particle pollution, including soot from fires, sit in California, the lung-disease nonprofit found in its 2023 State of the Air report. Another is Fairbanks, Alaska, a city without enough cars or people to generate much air pollution on its own. Smoke from wildfires is befouling the air in remote cities that have never known L.A.-style smog: Logan, Utah; Missoula, Mont.; and Fargo, N.D. Wildfire smoke can blanket cities hundreds of miles away. "A few weeks ago, I was speaking with someone from Colorado who was staying indoors because of smoke from forest fires in Calgary," said William Barrett, national senior director for clean air advocacy at the American Lung Association. Particle pollution is spreading at a time when another category of air pollution, ozone, stands in decline. Most large American cities log many fewer days of unhealthy air due to ozone, or smog, than in decades past.

Dangerous air days are on the rise

Maroon and purple alerts for particle pollution, the most hazardous federal categories, are increasing in American counties. Wildfires are largely to blame.



[New Research Shows Global Climate Benefits Of Protecting Nature, but It's Not a Silver Bullet](#)

[New global renewables capacity additions to rise by a third this year \(Reuters\)](#)

Global additions of renewable power capacity are expected to rise by a third this year, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Thursday, as stronger government policies and energy security concerns drive more clean energy deployment. In its Renewable Energy Market update report, the IEA said additions of renewable capacity worldwide are set to jump by 107 gigawatts (GW), the largest absolute increase ever, to more than 440 GW in 2023. Next year, total global renewable electricity capacity is expected to rise to 4,500 GW, equivalent to the total power output of China and the U.S. combined. "Solar and wind are leading the rapid expansion of the new global energy economy," IEA Executive Director

Fatih Birol said. "This year, the world is set to add a record-breaking amount of renewables to electricity systems – more than the total power capacity of Germany and Spain combined." In Europe, the growth of renewable energy is at the heart of the bloc's response to the energy crisis in the wake of the Ukraine war. New policy measures are also helping to drive significant capacity increases in the U.S. and India over the next two years. China is also expected to account for nearly 55% of global additions of renewable power capacity in both 2023 and 2024, the IEA said. Solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity additions will account for two-thirds of this year's increase, and are expected to keep growing in 2024. High electricity prices have been driving the faster growth of rooftop solar PV, the report said. Wind power capacity additions are forecast to grow by almost 70% in 2023 year-on-year due to the completion of projects that had been delayed by COVID restrictions in China and by supply chain issues in the U.S and Europe.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committees

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

Appropriations Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: Closed Hearing: Wednesday, June 7th, 10:30am EST, "A Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2024 Funding Request and Budget Justification for Capacity of the Defense Industrial Base and Wartime Stockpiles"

Homeland Security Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: Thursday, June 8th, 10:00am EST: ["FASTA Implementation and Optimizing the Efficient Use of Federal Property"](#)



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