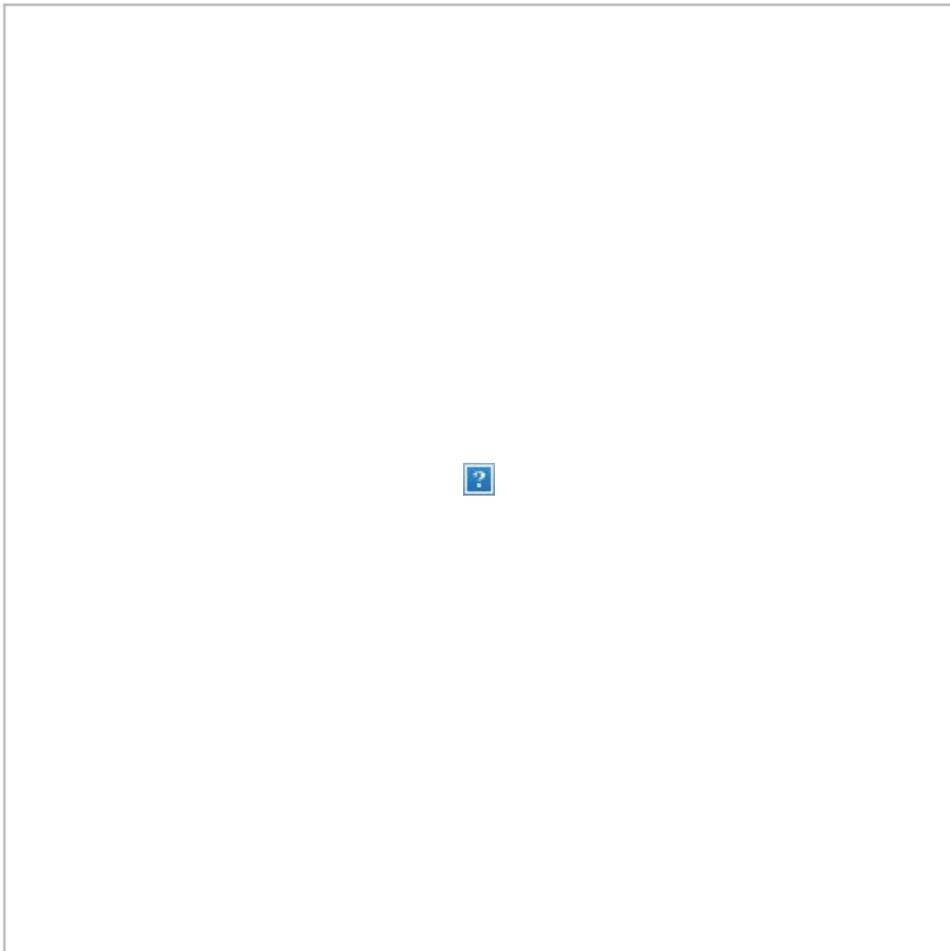
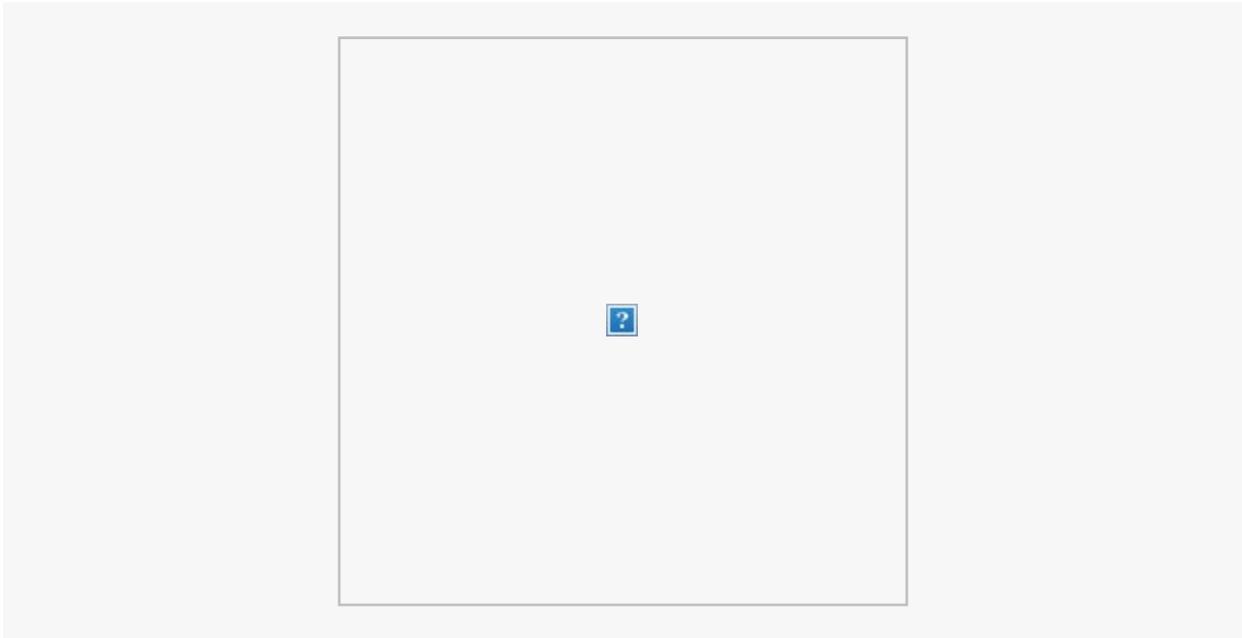


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January 19, 2024

Headlines - Aerospace & Defense - Budget & Economy - Advanced Tech - Military Installations & Communities - Homeland Security - Transportation & Infrastructure - Biotech & Healthcare - Climate & Development

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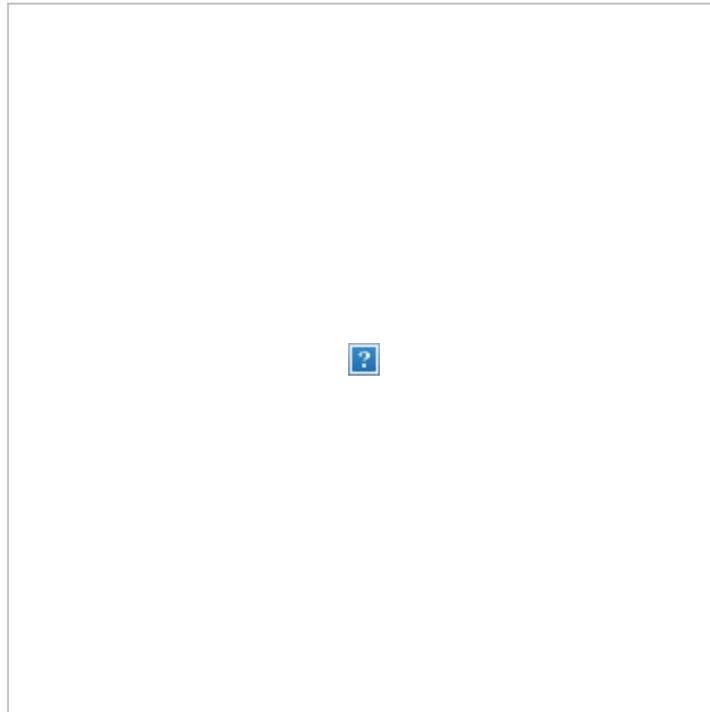
## Notable Headlines

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**ICYMI:** [DOD Releases First Defense Industrial Strategy](#)

## View From The Hill



Congress [passed](#) another laddered Continuing Resolution (CR) yesterday, with the threat of snowy weather coming to Washington pressuring lawmakers to move quickly and head for the airport. This new CR continues the two-tiered approach developed by Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) and keeps the entire government running until the first provisions expire

on March 1st. Between then and the second deadline of March 8th, President Biden will give the latest State of the Union in modern history on March 7th, due to Johnson's later-than-usual [invitation](#) to address a joint session of Congress.

This CR gives appropriators and congressional leadership time to work out various spending allocations beyond already agreed upon topline numbers. While Congress is nowhere near a conclusion on negotiating funding for fiscal year 2024, folks around town are breathing a sigh of relief that the prospects for a January government shutdown are off the table. Members of the House Freedom Caucus remain upset at the speaker for his perceived willingness to cave to previous spending agreements and a lack of hardball tactics. They would like to see government funding tied to concessions from Democrats on border security and immigration policy, as well as deeper spending cuts to domestic programs. Speaker Johnson continues to walk a fine line between governing and the constant threat of being ousted like his predecessor.

Amidst continued 2024 funding debates, Congress is gearing up for fiscal year 2025 consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the President's budget request, and fiscal year 2025 appropriations. House Armed Services Committee leadership has indicated a March 1st initial deadline for NDAA policy requests from individual congressional offices.

Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) remains [hospitalized](#) with an undisclosed infection, but is said to be in good spirits. At 90 years old, Grassley is the oldest serving member of the U.S. Senate.

## Aerospace & Defense

### [NATO to hold biggest drills since Cold War with 90,000 troops \(Reuters\)](#)

In its largest exercise since the Cold War, drills are underway "rehearsing how US troops could reinforce European allies in countries bordering Russia...if a conflict were to flare up with a 'near-peer' adversary." 90,000 troops will be participating in drills that will run through May 2024. According to NATO the 90,000 troops will also include, "50 ships, 80 fighter jets, helicopters and drones and at least 1,100 combat vehicles." The first portion of the exercise will involve simulations of "getting personnel to Europe," while the second will focus on "NATO's quick reaction force to Poland." With various NATO states bordering Ukraine, a potential Russian invasion would be a true test of the alliance.

### [Japan signs agreement to purchase 400 Tomahawk missiles as US envoy lauds its defense buildup](#)

### [US Marines rush to field two air defense systems amid global threats \(DefenseNews\)](#)

Emerging threats in Europe and the Middle East have the US Marine Corps pushing two air defense systems closer to the field this year. The Medium-Range Intercept Capability "rapidly integrated several existing systems to create a new cruise missile defense capability." This new system is entering into its training and integration ahead of an operation assessment in September. The plan is for the Marine Corp to hand over this system to the "1st Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion in Hawaii in June 2025." The Corps

also announced it “successfully tested the Marine Air Defense Integrated System during a live-fire event that saw the system shoot down several drones at the Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona.” As missile and drone attacks continue in the Middle East these new systems will add another layer of defense “to the protection Navy assets can provide to the region.”

## Budget & Economy

### [Bill to create new debt commission approved in House panel \(Roll Call\)](#)

The House Budget Committee in a bipartisan vote (22-12) advanced legislation that would create “a bipartisan fiscal commission to come up with a solution to the government’s worsening budget outlook.” Scott Peters (D-CA) co-wrote the bill with Bill Huizenga (R-MI) saying it “was a way to get started” and made the argument that relying on “regular order” in Congress to improve the government’s fiscal path is doomed to fail. He continued saying “we’re told it [regular order] exists and none of us has ever seen it.” The bill would create a 16 member commission evenly divided amongst the House and Senate and Republicans and Democrats. It would also include four non-voting members from outside the halls of Congress. The commission would be “charged with writing a report and legislation to improve the long-term fiscal condition of the government, reduce deficits and debt, achieve a sustainable ratio of debt to GDP by 2039, and improve the solvency of federal trust funds including Social Security and Medicare.” Budget Chairman Jodey Arrington (R-TX) says that Speaker Johnson is behind the bill, but the country will have to wait and see if it is attached to any FY 2024 appropriations legislation.

### [Weekly jobless claims post lowest reading since September 2022](#)

### [Fed Finds Economy Holding Stable. Price Pressures Easing \(US News\)](#)

Late in 2023 the conversation surrounding the economy was that we were headed for a recession. Early into 2024 it does not appear that is as likely as it was a month ago. According to the Federal Reserve’s Beige Book regional survey “all of the central bank’s districts reported a decline in manufacturing, several said that travel was strong and New York described as ‘bustling.’” The report also suggested inflation was not as powerful as it was in the last quarter of 2023. While the Fed is expected to hold interest rates when it convenes later this month, it is suggested they may reduce them later in the year. While the US economy is certainly not at its strongest point, early 2024 shows signs of an improving outlook.

## Advanced Technologies

### [US Navy’s four unmanned ships return from Pacific deployment \(DefenseNews\)](#)

The Sea Hunter, Sea Hawk, Mariner, and Ranger left Southern California on August 7 and returned earlier this week. All these vessels were part of the US Navy’s first deployment of unmanned ships. This was a test to see how the ships would “integrate into crewed fleet operations. In a call with reporters Commander Jeremiah Daley, the head of Unmanned Surface Vessel Division One, said, “the four prototypes sailed a combined 46,651 nautical miles and each operated for as much as 50 days at sea at a time almost exclusively in

autonomous mode.” Daley continued saying he and his staff experimented with several ways to control the vessels including “from ashore and at sea, controlling a different number of vessels from a single console, and using a different number of operators.” While there is more testing to be done it can be certain once integrated they offer leverage to the US Navy.

### [Pakistan’s Air Force say it has a hypersonic-capable missile](#)

#### [AI-enabled Valkyrie drone teases future of US Air Force fleet \(DefenseNews\)](#)

New software was tested aboard an XQ-58A Valkyrie drone that will influence how the US Air Force will develop and deploy autonomous technology. The drone flew a “three-hour sortie” in July “relying for the first time on artificial intelligence algorithms.” According to the Air Force the “programming was matured over millions of hours in simulation and digital environments and in flights with an experimental F-16 jet known as the X-62 VISTA.” The autonomous drones could execute a wide range of assignments including “reconnaissance, gathering intelligence, jamming signals, serving as decoys and striking targets with their own missiles.” Air Force officials have said the computer controlled aircraft (CCA) “could range in cost and complexity, with some being expensive and precious while others could be easily sacrificed in combat.” The key of CCA’s success will be to ensure there is synergy between human and machine.

## **Military Installations & Communities**

#### [Veterans Affairs launched a suicide help program. 50,000 veterans used it \(Washington Post\)](#)

Nearly 50,000 veterans and former service members received free emergency suicide prevention care in 2023 in the first year of a new Department of Veterans Affairs program, the department announced Wednesday. VA has said that ending veteran suicide is its top clinical priority, and a White House fact sheet ahead of President Biden’s 2023 State of the Union called suicide among veterans a “public health and national security crisis. VA Secretary Denis McDonough said in a statement the expansion may have saved thousands of lives “There is nothing more important to VA than preventing veteran suicide,” McDonough said in a statement. “We want all veterans to know they can get the care they need, when they need it, no matter where they are. The initiative is designed to help those in “acute suicidal crisis” access emergency services at VA and non-VA facilities and saved the former service members at least \$64 million in health-care costs, according to VA. The policy covers 30 days of inpatient or crisis residential care, 90 days for outpatient care and related transportation costs.

### [Top Navy Leaders All Say Sailors' Quality of Life Needs to Improve, But Specifics Remain Slim](#)

#### [Military families may get better access to mental health care \(Military Times\)](#)

Military families may get easier access to mental health outpatient care and counseling

under two new provisions in the recently signed defense policy law. The fiscal year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act allows Defense Department health officials to waive out-of-pocket costs for the first three outpatient mental health visits each year for active duty families using Tricare. It also expands non-medical counseling services for military families through the Military and Family Life Counseling Program. But the Defense Department hasn't yet decided whether to make the cost cuts a reality for the more than 1.5 million active duty family members who could benefit from the new law. The Defense Health Agency is reviewing the provision and "has not made any decisions regarding its implementation," said spokesman Peter Graves. The provision says the defense secretary "may" waive the costs of certain mental health services for military families, but doesn't require the Defense Department to do so. If the Pentagon carries out the law as written, it would expand the military's access to mental health care amid a nationwide shortage of providers and appointments.

## Homeland Security

### [Expect a Chinese show of force against Taiwan soon, says INDOPACOM head \(Defense One\)](#)

China is likely to demonstrate "force against Taiwan in the near term" because of the recent election, the head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said—and they will probably blame the United States. "The pressure campaign against Taiwan continues, and we're watching it in the wake of the elections," Adm. John Aquilino said Tuesday at a conference hosted by the Pacific Forum. "Their actions over the past number of years have been pretty consistent. When something occurs that they don't like, they tend to take actions," Aquilino said, noting that China increased its military harassment after then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi visited the island in 2022. China is "clearly not happy," and the U.S. should "not be surprised" if they "attempt to spin it in the information space as the United States as the aggressor," he said. "I don't know how you connect those dots, but they're pretty effective in the information space. Doesn't have to be true. They've just got to say it enough times." On Saturday, Taiwan elected as president a candidate from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, in a blow to China's attempts to more closely control the island. President Biden said after the election that he does not support independence for Taiwan.

### [Speaker Johnson pushes Biden on border shift in White House meeting](#)

### [Chinese-Manufactured Drones Pose Cybersecurity Threat to U.S. Critical Infrastructure \(Homeland Security Today\)](#)

The latest update from CISA states that Chinese-manufactured Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), commonly known as drones, present a substantial risk to critical infrastructure and national security in the United States. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has implemented laws that grant the government extensive legal authority to access and control data held by Chinese firms. This poses a heightened risk of data theft and network compromises through vulnerabilities in UAS. To address this threat, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are advising U.S. critical infrastructure owners and operators to exercise caution when procuring Chinese-manufactured UAS. The agencies recommend prioritizing UAS that adhere to secure-by-design principles, with a particular emphasis on

those produced by U.S. companies. CISA and the FBI stress the importance of following secure-by-design principles to reduce the risk to networks and sensitive information. They further guide cybersecurity measures and best practices for organizations procuring and operating UAS. By adopting these recommendations, U.S. entities can enhance their cybersecurity posture and mitigate potential threats associated with the use of Chinese-manufactured drones.

## Transportation & Infrastructure

### [40 Boeing jets inspected so far, officials say \(The Hill\)](#)

At least 40 Boeing 737 Max 9 jets have been inspected so far in the Biden administration's probe into the aircraft, after one of the planes lost part of its fuselage midflight earlier this month and was forced to make an emergency landing, officials said Wednesday. Representatives from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) told the Senate Energy and Commerce Committee they will review information collected from the jets, all identical to the aircraft used in the Alaskan Airlines flight that experienced the blowout, before clearing the planes for passenger flights. The FAA confirmed the number in an emailed statement. "All 737-9 MAX aircraft with door plugs will remain grounded pending the FAA's review and final approval of an inspection and maintenance process that satisfies all FAA safety requirements," the agency wrote. "Once the FAA approves an inspection and maintenance process, it will be required on every grounded 737-9 MAX prior to future operation." "The safety of the flying public, not speed, will determine the timeline for returning these aircraft to service," it added.

### [Biden-Harris Administration Announces Grants to Upgrade Almost 4,500 Public Electric Vehicle Chargers](#)

### [Freighters seek air cargo back-up amid Red Sea shipping crisis \(Reuters\)](#)

More manufacturers are seeking to fly their products in the next few weeks as attacks on Red Sea shipping force them to find alternate routes, logistics firms say, a potential boon for a sector dealing with muted post-pandemic demand and overcapacity. The Red Sea, which leads to the Suez canal, lies on the key east-west trade route from Asia's manufacturing hubs to Europe and onto the east coast of the Americas. About 12% of world shipping traffic accesses the Suez Canal via its waters. But more than two months of attacks by Yemen's Houthi militia on ships in the region have affected companies and alarmed major powers in an escalation of Israel's war with Palestinian Hamas militants in Gaza. While air freight prices have so far remained relatively stable as the shipping crisis coincides with a seasonal lull in demand, data from freight booker Freightos showed rates on a China-to-Europe route had surged 91% week-on-week on Sunday. Price reporting agency TAC Index also said there were signs of an uptick in China-to-Europe air freight rates this week. "We are talking to many customers already about increased air capacity," said Yngve Ruud, head of Air Logistics at global logistics firm Kühne+Nagel. "We have probably 20-30% more discussions and proposals than usual in January." Air freight is costly compared to sea freight, and not competitive for bulky, low-margin items. Such constraints have limited air cargo to less than 1% of global trade by volume, according to airline industry association IATA.

## Biotechnology & Healthcare

### [Startup Rad AI taps Google's cloud tech, MedLM to streamline repetitive tasks for radiologists \(Fierce Healthcare\)](#)

Rad AI, a startup that developed an AI platform for radiology, is teaming up with Google to use its cloud and large language models to streamline workflows and reduce radiologists' administrative burdens. Founder Dr. Jeff Chang, a radiologist, started the company because he was troubled by high error rates, radiologist burnout and rising imaging demand despite a worsening shortage of U.S. radiologists. Rad AI uses state-of-the-art machine learning and AI to automate repetitive tasks for radiologists and automate workflow for health systems. Rad AI's software is in use at 8 of the ten largest private radiology practices in the U.S. As part of the partnership with Google, Rad AI will use the tech giant's cloud platform and AI tools, including MedLM, a family of foundation models fine-tuned for healthcare industry use cases, including Gemini-based models in the future. "This partnership represents an exciting leap forward in our commitment to transforming the radiology reporting landscape," said Doktor Gurson, co-founder and CEO of Rad AI, in a statement. "Through this unique collaboration with Google, we can dramatically accelerate our mission of reducing radiologists' burnout, streamlining workflow, and ultimately improving the quality of patient care." Medical imaging is critical for diagnosing patients, and billions of imaging examinations are performed globally each year. Imaging data accounts for about 90% of all healthcare data, according to one study, and the number of images continues to grow, increasing the workload for radiologists.

### [New Cancer Cases Projected to Top 2 Million, Hit Record High in 2024](#)

### [What is Disease X and why is it in the news? \(New Scientist\)](#)

Don't panic! Disease X doesn't exist yet – but it might one day. Disease X is the label that the World Health Organization uses to refer to some currently unknown infectious condition that is capable of causing an epidemic or – if it spreads across multiple countries – a pandemic. The term, coined in 2017, can be used to mean a newly discovered pathogen or any known pathogen with newly acquired pandemic potential. By the latter definition, covid-19 was the first Disease X. But there could be another in the future. The World Health Organization has been warning global leaders about the risks of future pandemics at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting, held this week in Davos, Switzerland. "Some people say this may create panic," says WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "No. It's better to anticipate something that may happen – because it has happened in our history many times – and prepare for it." We don't know – that is why it is called Disease X. The coronaviruses, a large group of viruses, were long seen as a prime contender for producing a new pandemic, even before the covid-19 outbreak. That is because the novel coronavirus wasn't the first dangerous pathogen from this group. In 2002, a different coronavirus started spreading in China. It caused a form of pneumonia called SARS that killed around 1 in 10 of those it infected, before it was stopped by strict infection control measures. Another, even deadlier coronavirus called MERS occasionally breaks out, causing a pneumonia that kills 1 in 3 of those infected.

## Climate & Development

### [Interior Department adds six states to western solar-development plan \(The Hill\)](#)

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on Wednesday announced an update to its 2012 plan for solar power development in the western U.S., adding five states to the original six. The original plan identified prime areas for solar development in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. The BLM on Wednesday updated and finetuned its analyses and added Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming to the plan. The Interior Department used \$4.3 million in Inflation Reduction Act funds for the update. The BLM projected about 700,000 acres of public lands will be necessary to meet the U.S.'s expected renewable energy needs, while the preferred BLM alternative of the six outlined in the updated plan would free up about 22 million acres. Meanwhile, the BLM is also processing some 67 onshore renewable energy projects on public lands across the west, a combination of wind, solar and geothermal that together could potentially add nearly 37 gigawatts to the grid. The Biden administration has set a target of a fully renewable grid by 2035. In addition to the updates and the additional states, the BLM noted that Nevada is advancing four solar power proposals, while California is set to take the first steps on a 44-megawatt photovoltaic solar facility and Arizona has completed a 179-megawatt photovoltaic project on private land

### [Supreme Court Weighs Overturning a Pillar of Federal Regulatory Law](#)

### [IEA raises 2024 oil demand forecast but lags OPEC view \(Reuters\)](#)

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has again raised its 2024 global oil demand growth forecast, though its projection remains lower than OPEC's expectations, and said the market looked well supplied because of strong growth outside the producer group. The IEA and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) have clashed in recent years over issues such as future oil demand. The IEA expects oil demand to peak by 2030 as the world shifts to cleaner fuels, a view OPEC dismissed in an article on Wednesday. The IEA, which advises industrialized countries, on Thursday predicted global consumption will rise by 1.24 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2024. This was its third consecutive upward revision in as many months but was below OPEC's 2.25 million bpd projection. With conflict in the Middle East raising concern over supply, the IEA said that - barring significant disruptions to flows - the market looked reasonably well supplied in 2024 and a surplus could emerge if OPEC and its allies unwind output cuts as scheduled in the second quarter. The IEA's latest upward demand growth revision, up 180,000 bpd from its previous projection, was linked to improving global economic growth and lower crude prices in the fourth quarter plus China's expanding petrochemicals sector. "The consensus economic outlook has improved somewhat over the last few months in the wake of the recent dovish pivot in central bank policy," the Paris-based IEA said in its January report.

## Next Week's Hearings

### **Armed Service Committee:**

**House:** None listed

**Senate:** None listed

**Appropriations Committee:**

**House:** None listed

**Senate:** None listed

**Homeland Security Committee:**

**House:** None listed

**Senate:** Tuesday, January 23, 2024, 2:45pm EST; "[Improving Export Controls Enforcement](#)"



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