

From: [Rick Dwyer](#)
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Subject: [EXTERNAL] Executive Insight Brief
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Ladies & Gentlemen,
Below please find this week's edition of *Executive Insight Brief* from The Roosevelt Group.

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Executive Insight Brief

January 31, 2025

The Roosevelt Group mourns the [67 individuals](#) who lost their lives in the crash between a U.S. Army Helicopter and American Airlines flight 5342. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. We hope the families find

solace as they begin to process this tragedy.

Notable Headlines



- [The latest on the fatal midair plane and helicopter crash](#)
- [John Thune is caught in the crossfire of Trump's trade war](#)
- [Israelis and Palestinians rejoice after more hostages and prisoners are freed](#)
- [Congressional staffers 'unauthorized' to use DeepSeek](#)
- [Bipartisan Senate duo wants to tax more companies out of Russia](#)

View From The Hill



Only the Senate was in session this week, meaning focus on Capitol Hill largely fell to the continued advice and consent process for President Trump's nominees. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., nominated to be the Secretary of Health and Human Services, faced dual hearings before the Senate Finance Committee, as well as the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, where democrats [confronted](#) him with previously-espoused positions on vaccine skepticism, Covid-19, abortion, and other hot-button issues. RFK Jr. sought to distance himself from previous positions, claiming he would not prevent individuals from receiving vaccines or consuming food that they wish to eat, specifically citing President Trump's love of cheeseburgers.

The nominee to be the next Director of National Intelligence (DNI), former Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard went before the Senate Intelligence Committee. Gabbard is considered one of the most [vulnerable](#) remaining nominees before the Senate, over her secretive travel to Syria to meet with the now-deposed dictator Bashir al-Assad and subsequently expressed skepticism over U.S. intelligence assessments blaming the Assad regime for deadly chemical weapons attacks on Syrian civilians. She has also previously expressed [support](#) for infamous intelligence-leaker Edward Snowden and has criticized federal surveillance authorities used for intelligence-gathering purposes. In the hearing, Gabbard stated that Edward Snowden "broke the law" and that her priority as DNI would be to safeguard classified information, if confirmed.

Rounding out the more controversial nomination hearings this week was the Senate Judiciary Committee's grilling of Kash Patel, who is [nominated](#) to lead the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Patel faced staunch questioning from senators for his controversial

comments about impeaching federal judges who rule against President Trump, pursuing investigations against the president's political enemies, as well as empathy towards January 6th rioters. Notably, Patel broke with Trump by stating he did not support pardoning or commuting sentences for anyone convicted of committing violence against law enforcement on January 6th and [emphasized](#) his desire to shrink the FBI's headquarters staff and bolster field investigations of frontline agents.

For less controversial nominees the Hill was a friendlier environment, with former Rep. Sean Duffy [sailing](#) through confirmation on a bipartisan basis to lead the Department of Transportation. Duffy's first major test as secretary [came](#) just one day after being sworn in, when a regional American Airlines flight from Wichita collided with a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter on approach to Washington's Reagan National Airport, sending both aircraft crashing into the icy Potomac River and killing all aboard. The Black Hawk crew were conducting a training exercise at the time of the accident, prompting President Trump's nominee to be Secretary of the Army, Daniel Driscoll, to [question](#) during his confirmation hearing whether such training exercises should continue so close to a major commercial airport. Former Rep. Lee Zeldin was also [confirmed](#) as the next Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, while Scott Bessent was [confirmed](#) as Secretary of the Treasury. The full slate of nomination confirmation activity can be found [here](#).

With the House in recess, the House GOP traveled to President Trump's Doral resort in Florida for their annual policy retreat. While republican leadership hoped to find consensus at the retreat on the party's strategy for upcoming budget reconciliation and spending legislation, agreement remained infamously [elusive](#) for the House Republican Conference. Members expressed frustration over a lack of clear direction from leadership, and [tensions](#) continue to simmer between those representatives seeking deep spending cuts and others wary of voter backlash if the GOP takes spending cuts too far.

A Massachusetts man was [arrested](#) outside the U.S. Capitol on Monday, who surrendered to police and claimed to have traveled to Washington seeking to kill House Speaker Mike Johnson, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. Ryan English, 24, from Deerfield, Massachusetts also stated he wanted to burn down the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

Pentagon News



The Trump administration's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) walked back a controversial decision Wednesday, reversing a memo issued just two days prior that froze a broad range of federal financial assistance programs. The freeze, aimed at ensuring compliance with Trump's executive orders, sent shockwaves through a vast array of federal programs, including Medicaid, Head Start, community health centers, and key veterans'

services. While direct benefits like Social Security, Medicare, and food stamps remained untouched, grants for medical research, caregiver support, veterans' nursing homes, and military education were temporarily halted. Perhaps the biggest ripple came in the defense sector, where reports of an [Army contract freeze](#) fueled anxiety among industry insiders of a broader Pentagon-wide pause. Confusion spread across defense firms and the Army itself, as conflicting statements emerged on whether new contracts were still moving forward.

Although the immediate freeze has been lifted, the White House affirmed that Trump's executive orders—targeting diversity programs, climate initiatives, and foreign aid—remain in effect. Lawmakers from [both parties](#) voiced alarm over the disruption, with [Sen. Richard Blumenthal](#) (D-Conn.) calling it a “betrayal” of veterans and military families. Many nonprofits have also joined the fray, with [lawsuits](#), arguing that withholding congressionally approved funds is unconstitutional. Meanwhile, uncertainty looms over future funding restrictions, with agencies, the defense industry, and nonprofits bracing for what may come next.

Daniel Driscoll, President Trump's nominee for Secretary of the Army, was on Capitol Hill Thursday for his nomination hearing. Despite Driscoll being an unconventional pick his hearing went smoothly and seems poised for a [hassle free confirmation](#). In comparison to Pete Hegseth's hearing which was full of questions regarding his personal conduct, Driscoll received little pushback from democratic lawmakers. Although the President has made removing “DEI” from the military a priority, the term did not once appear in Driscoll's hearing. Driscoll did say the Army should look to “[purchase non-development](#) and commercial-off-the-shelf solutions to meet its requirements.” Driscoll also stated concerns he had with the industrial base, including the U.S.' shrinking technological edge. The nomination hearings for John Phelan (SECNAV) and Troy Meink (SECAF) have not been scheduled.

In a move aimed at enhancing national security, President Trump issued an executive order this week entitled “[The Iron Dome for America](#),” named after the missile defense system in Israel. The proposed next-generation missile defense system faces challenges regarding cost and feasibility of deploying a shield that would cover the entirety of the U.S., but many are hopeful it could meaningfully address this long-standing homeland security concern. The executive order mandates that Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth submit an implementation plan for domestic air- and missile defense architecture by the end of March in order to include options for the fiscal year 2026 budget request.

The implementation of missile defense may be slow due to its involvement of multiple systems, but technology can be created that will rise to the occasion according to Tom Karako, director of the Missile Defense Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. While [Israel's Iron Dome](#) is meant to eliminate short-range rockets fired from up to 43 miles away, the U.S. does not face threats at the border as Israel does, so using the same technology is not practical. The U.S. does have its own technology—Ground-Based Interceptors (GBI)—capable of neutralizing long-range missiles, with 40 at Fort Greely in Alaska, and four at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. These GBIs may be the basis of the new missile defense shield, but the details will likely remain murky until

Secretary Hegseth delivers his plan.

Next Week's Hearings



Armed Services Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE

Appropriations Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE

Homeland Security Committee:

House:

- 2/5, 10:00 AM - Preparing the Pipeline: Examining the state of America's cyber workforce

Senate: NONE

Other Nominations:

- 2/6, 10:00 AM - Nominating Hearing for Jamieson Greer to be U.S. Trade Representative (Finance)



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