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Executive Insight Brief

March 21, 2025

Notable Headlines



[Judge calls Trump administration's latest response on deportation flights 'woefully insufficient'](#)

[Trump signs executive order to dismantle the Education Department](#)

['Hitting a fly with a sledgehammer': Judge blocks DOGE from accessing sensitive Social Security records](#)

[Trump invokes emergency powers to boost US critical minerals production](#)

[As Trump and Musk loom, congressional spending leaders' morale hits rock bottom](#)

View From The Hill

After flying a little close to the sun on government funding, the Senate [managed](#) to pass the House's version of a Continuing Resolution (CR) last Friday, lasting through the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30th. The Senate promptly adjourned, following the House into a recess this week. However, leaving Washington did little to quell outrage among many democrats over the perception that Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) caved to republicans and President Trump by providing enough votes to pass the measure. In the week since, Schumer has been working the phones with colleagues and making media appearances trying to [explain](#) his reasoning that a shutdown would be more painful than the CR, however that has not stopped fellow democrats and [progressive groups](#) from piling on calls for a [primary challenge](#) or for him to [step down](#) as leader.

The flurry of executive actions coming out of the Trump White House to cut federal agencies' staff and funding has been met with multiple court rulings pausing or reversing some orders, leading to pressure on the right for Congress to impeach federal judges perceived as adversarial to the administration. To be clear, these efforts do not have sufficient support on Capitol Hill to actually pass, but the situation is still managing to put Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) and his fellow republicans in an [awkward](#) position with the MAGA base.

The republican leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees released a surprisingly strong [joint statement](#) on Wednesday [challenging](#) rumored plans by the Department of Defense to significantly alter the posture of the U.S. Armed Forces. Chairmen Mike Rogers (R-AL) and Roger Wicker (R-MS) asserted congressional prerogative over potential actions they believe "risk undermining American deterrence around the globe." Reports indicate that the Pentagon is considering relinquishing the NATO position of Supreme Allied Commander Europe, a position held by an American general since 1949, as well as folding together U.S. Europe and Africa commands and abandoning plans for a bolstered troop presence in Japan. While their position is far from abnormal among national security hawks on Capitol Hill, republican resistance to the Trump administration has been mostly nonexistent since the start of the second term.

In a strange chapter in the relationship between the U.S. Government and the city where it calls home, the District of Columbia, the House failed to include language in the CR preventing the District from needing to revert to fiscal year 2024 spending levels. This put in jeopardy hundreds of millions of dollars approved by the District's city council in their 2025 budget, sending city leaders and residents reeling. Democrats accused republicans of intentionally bullying DC, which they have a [history](#) of [doing](#), due to Congress's unique role in managing the federal city. The Senate, however, quickly passed a standalone measure to fix the issue, and with President Trump [weighing](#) in in support of DC's budget, the House is expected to take the measure up and pass it next week.

Former GOP Senator [Al Simpson](#) (WY) passed away this week at the age of 93. He served from 1979 to 1997, along with a decade-long stint as Republican Senate Whip from 1985 to 1995. One of his last public-serving roles was when he

was appointed as a co-chair of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform by President Obama. Former democratic Representative [Nita Lowey](#) (NY) also passed away this week at the age of 87. She served in the House from 1989 to 2021 representing a large piece of the New York City suburbs including Westchester and Rockland counties. Lowey was the first female chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and House Committee on Appropriations.

Pentagon News



A [new memo](#) was released this week which listed positions that are exempted from the Department of Defense's civilian hiring freeze which was put in place to be in line with President Trump's DOGE initiatives. The directive came from Jules Hurst III who was sworn in as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Readiness and is currently performing the duties of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel Readiness. The memo states that "The Secretaries of the Military Department and other DoD Component heads must send their proposed hiring freeze exemptions...by the close of business each Tuesday. Proposed exemptions should include justifications and prioritize positions directly linked to readiness." Some positions covered under the exemption are related to immigration enforcement, recruiting, or public safety. Other categories include positions at shipyards, arsenals, and staff at child care centers.

The exemption memo comes as the Pentagon begins their civilian workforce reduction [through voluntary action](#). DoD has a goal of reducing its 878,000 civilian workforce by 5% to 8% which equates to 50,000 to 60,000 employees. This has started through the use of voluntary workforce reduction, a method being used by other departments like the [General Services Administration](#), [Department of Education](#), and [Department of the Interior](#). It is unclear at this point if DoD can achieve their goal without forced reductions. Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth is "confident it can be done without negatively impacting readiness in order to make sure our resources are allocated in the right direction." Currently, about 21,000 civilian employees have had their voluntary resignation requests approved by DoD and will continue to be paid through the end of the fiscal year (Sept. 30). DoD had begun the termination of around 5,400 probationary civilian employees which has been paused by a federal judge. Addressing the workforce is the first step for DoD officials in executing Trump's goal of sustaining the world's most lethal fighting force.

As seen through various actions, the status quo will be challenged in Trump's second administration. During the DoD Cyber Workforce Summit, [Katie Arrington](#), who is performing the duties of the Department of Defense Chief Information Officer, spoke on alleviating policies that may be hindering DoD personnel from countering adversaries. She said, "If a regulation or a policy is impeding you doing your job, say something. This is an opportunity to change this...but you need to communicate upward what the challenges are, because otherwise the status quo will remain." She also said, "Policies are in place, and yes we need to modify some. We need more offensive capability." Her comments on

increasing [offensive cyber capabilities](#) align with several administration officials who say an increase in the offensive capabilities in cyberspace “will allow the US to hit back against adversaries and deter undesirable behavior.”

Arrington also warned that Americans have become complacent about cybersecurity while adversaries know US networks and will exploit them. With attacks on critical infrastructure and other cyber attacks likely to continue, education on the subject of cybersecurity will be a top priority. Arrington said the US needs to do a better job and that adversarial nations know how the US does business because “we are a fully transparent government.”

Next Week's Hearings



Armed Services Committee:

House:

- 3/35, 3:30 PM - Posture and Readiness of the Mobility Enterprise
- 3/26, 3:30 PM - U.S. Special Operations Command, Challenges and Resource Priorities for FY2026

Senate:

- 3/25, 2:30 PM - Testimony on the state of conventional surface shipbuilding
- 3/25, 3:30 PM - Testimony on harnessing artificial intelligence cyber capabilities
- 3/26, 9:30 AM - Testimony on U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Space Command in review of the Defense Authorization Request and Future Years Defense Program
- 3/26, 2:30 PM - Testimony on the status of the Military Service Academies

Appropriations Committee:

House:

- 3/25, 10:00 AM - Interior and Environment (Member Day)
- 3/25, 2:00 PM - Oversight Hearing, Capitol Complex Public Safety and Security
- 3/26, 9:30 AM - Oversight Hearing, National Transportation Safety Board
- 3/26, 10:00 AM - National Security and Department of State (Member Day)

Senate: NONE

Homeland Security Committee:

House:

- 3/25, 10:00 AM - Part 1: Consequences of Failure: How Biden's Policies Fueled the Border Crisis

Senate: NONE

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