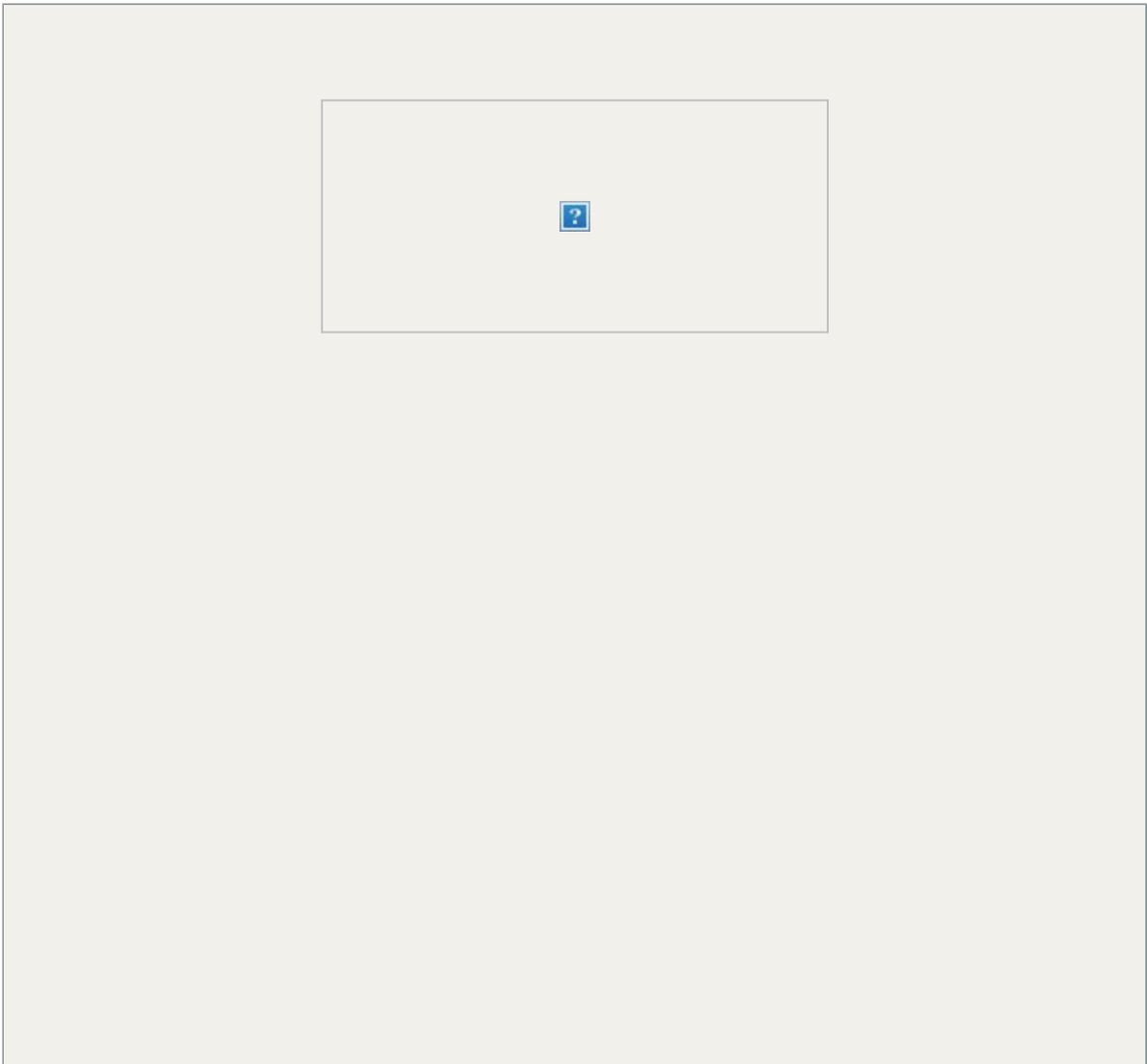


From: [Rick Dwyer](#)
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Subject: Executive Insight Brief
Date: Friday, July 18, 2025 8:25:59 AM

Ladies & Gentlemen,
Below please find this week's edition of *Executive Insight Brief* from The Roosevelt Group.

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July 18, 2025

Executive Insight Brief

Stay informed with The Roosevelt Group's Executive Insight Brief—your weekly roundup of key developments shaping federal policy, defense, and homeland security. Curated by our expert team, each issue delivers timely analysis and strategic context to help you stay ahead.

Notable Headlines

[4 takeaways from second-quarter fundraising reports](#)

[US sanctions six top leaders of Venezuela gang Tren de Aragua](#)

[Bondi faces skepticism on Epstein from chorus of GOP critics](#)

[An Idaho judge has lifted a sweeping gag order in Bryan Kohberger's quadruple murder case](#)

[Trump judicial nominee Bove clears Senate panel despite Democratic protest](#)

View From The Hill

Congress was extremely busy this week, with lawmakers [clearing](#) the White House's \$9 billion rescissions package to claw back billions of dollars in previously-approved funding for public media and foreign aid. It is the first time in decades Congress has passed a standalone rescissions package of this nature. Congress also [gave](#) final approval to the *GENIUS Act*, which creates the first-ever regulatory framework for certain crypto currency. Enacting stablecoin legislation is a major win for the crypto industry after years of battling for legitimacy in the eyes of lawmakers. The measure faced a rocky road to final passage in the House, where conservative lawmakers initially balked at advancing it and two other crypto related bills, forcing House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) to hold open a vote to set rules of debate for a record nine hours, until President Trump managed to strike agreement with holdouts to vote in favor of moving forward. The House also passed its version of the fiscal year (FY) 2026 Defense Appropriations bill, a measure with mostly flat funding following the additional billions of defense dollars provided in the recently enacted budget reconciliation legislation.

The Senate Judiciary Committee **voted** along party lines to advance the controversial nomination of Emil Bove to be a federal judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Bove is a former federal prosecutor in Manhattan and also defended President Trump in two criminal cases previously filed by the Department of Justice, raising concerns among Senate Democrats and across the legal profession about his ability to remain objective on the federal bench. Former National Security Advisor Mike Waltz also **faced** senators this week in his confirmation hearing to be the Trump administration's ambassador to the United Nations. Waltz was grilled by Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee over a scandal several months ago in which he used the messaging application, Signal, to discuss sensitive military operations with other high-level administration officials, including Sec. of State Marco Rubio, Sec. of Defense Pete Hegseth, and Vice President JD Vance. In the chat, Waltz erroneously added Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of the *Atlantic* news magazine, who later reported on the contents of the chat.

In a hearing before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy **testified** that the total cost of overhauling the nation's antiquated and increasingly troubled air traffic control system would be approximately \$31.5 billion. Members of the panel expressed some sticker shock to Duffy, while also pressing on the ability of the Federal Aviation Administration to get the job done effectively and in a timely manner.

Fallout from the Jeffrey Epstein investigation and calls to release all files related to the case continues to roil the MAGA voter base, causing heartburn for House GOP leadership. Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) and Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) introduced a parliamentary measure known as a discharge petition that would force consideration on the House Floor of their motion to compel release of Justice Department's files on the Epstein Case. With the requisite number of signatories having been reached, the motion could now force lawmakers to vote on the motion as early as next week.

The Congressional Womens' Softball Game was **played** at DC's Audi Field this week, where Members of Congress squared off against the women of the Capitol Hill press corps. The annual fundraiser for breast cancer awareness was forced to be called early due to lightning storms in the area, allowing the lawmakers' team to end their multi-year losing streak, beating the reporters 5-3.

Pentagon News

In a major push to integrate AI into national defense, the Pentagon **tapped** Anthropic, Google, OpenAI, and xAI for contracts worth up to \$200 million each. These awards **will** support the development of large language models, agentic workflows, and other advanced technologies into warfighting, intelligence, business, and enterprise systems. Elon Musk's xAI is a notable inclusion among those awarded contracts, as they recently **unveiled** "Grok for Government," a suite of products available to federal agencies through the General Services Administration.

The Pentagon's move underscores the growing urgency to harness commercial AI for strategic advantage. While the latest Pentagon tech initiatives **have focused on** drones and cyber, this action signals a shift toward embedding AI into command, development, and decision-making systems. The contracts model the scale and ambition of past programs, but have a sharper focus on large language models and autonomous agents. Notably, the investment meets the moment of surging industry momentum around generative AI. As U.S. adversaries rapidly **scale** military applications of artificial intelligence, clear signals indicate that the Pentagon is ready to fight back.

As the Pentagon accelerates its push for AI-driven capabilities, it is also redefining its engagement with the broader national security community—most notably through a sharp break with one of Washington’s premier defense forums.

The Pentagon’s sudden withdrawal of its senior officials from the Aspen Security Forum has drawn significant attention to the growing divide between the Department of Defense (DoD) and global forums traditionally seen as bipartisan venues for debate. Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell **explained** the move, stating that senior DoD officials will no longer be participating at the Aspen Security Forum because “their values do not align with the values of the DoD.” Parnell **emphasized** that the DoD will maintain its focus on initiatives such as increasing the lethality of warfighters and revitalizing the warrior ethos, making clear that the Aspen Security Forum is not in alignment with these goals. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth **echoed** this sentiment, sharing on social media a screenshot of the headline, “Pentagon pulls all military speakers from ‘globalist’ Aspen Security Forum,” with the comment: “Correct.” Notably, DoD press secretary Kingsley Wilson, **accused** the conference of promoting “the evil of globalism, disdain for our great country, and hatred for the president of the United States.”

The Aspen Security Forum organizers **defended** their annual event as an important gathering that fosters diverse perspectives on pressing national security challenges. The forum has a strong record of bringing together top officials from both Republican and Democratic administrations to address issues of global security and has expressed disappointment in the Pentagon’s decision but intends to proceed with its commitment to creating a platform for meaningful debate and policy development. The Pentagon’s decision highlights the DoD’s shift away from traditional bipartisan platforms, a trend that will limit constructive dialogue and shift the United States’ approach to international cooperation in the coming years.

At the same time the Pentagon is signaling a shift in institutional alliances, and political leaders are grappling with their own divides over America’s role in

global conflicts—nowhere more apparent than in the unfolding controversy over President Trump’s proposed weapons deal with Ukraine.

Trump’s plan to send American-manufactured weapons to Ukraine has ignited frustration among even the most staunch “America First” supporters. Framed as a deal, not a donation, the president **explained** that the weapons systems will be bought and paid for by NATO allies. According to Trump, the move is meant to uphold his promise to avoid entangling the U.S. in foreign wars. Attempting to distance the effort from traditional aid, Trump continues to **insist** that his latest move aligns with his “America First” policy platform by supporting the decades-long view that America has been ripped off by allies and who have gotten a free ride on defense.

But for figures like Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (GA-14) and Steve Bannon, the distinction rings hollow. To them, the weapons deal feels like a step backward, opening another chapter into endless war, masked by diplomacy and transaction. Greene, who has been one of the most loyal Trump supporters on Capitol Hill, expressed **skepticism** that the deal aligns with “what everybody voted for,” **arguing** that, “Without a shadow of a doubt, [American] tax dollars are being used.” Bannon, a former advisor to Trump, calls it a dangerous drift into international wars, **saying**, “It’s a European war. Let Europe deal with it.”

Even some former Trump allies **admit** that while the optics are different, the outcome feels the same. The plan, in their view, risks escalation and contradicts the promise of peace. It’s a reminder that in the world of foreign policy, even the facade of a business deal can lead a nation into war, and for many in the MAGA movement, that’s a direct deviation from the Trump administration’s platform.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committee

U.S House of Representatives

- 7/23, 10:00 AM - Hearing: Reforming Defense Acquisition to Deliver Capability at the Speed of Relevance

Senate

- 7/22, 9:30 AM - Hearings to examine the nominations of Vice Admiral Frank M. Bradley, USN, to be admiral and Commander, United States Special Operation Command, and Lieutenant General Dagvin R.M. Anderson, USAF, to be general and Commander, United States Africa Command.
- 7/24, 9:30 AM - Hearings to examine the nomination of Admiral Daryl L. Caudle, USN, for reappointment to the grade of admiral and to be Chief of Naval Operations, Department of Defense.

Appropriations Committee

U.S. House of Representatives

- NONE

U.S. Senate

- NONE

Homeland Security Committee

U.S. House of Representatives

- 7/22, 10:00 AM - Hearing: Fully Operational: Stuxnet 15 Years Later and the Evolution of Cyber Threats to Critical Infrastructure.
- 7/22, 2:00 PM - Hearing: Task Force on Enhancing Security for Special Events in the United States - Lessons Learned: An Examination of Major Security Incidents at Mass Gathering Events

U.S. Senate

- NONE



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