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To: Rick Dwyer <rdwyer@hrmffa.org>

Subject: Executive Insight Brief

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Below please find this week's edition of Executive.Insight.Brief from The Roosevelt Group.

We are also pleased to announce that registration is now open for the inaugural Virginia Defense Forum taking place in Norfolk 1-2 April. Additional information and registration can be found at: <https://defensecommunities.org/regional/virginia/>

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Executive Insight Brief

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Notable Headlines

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[US proposes critical minerals trade bloc aimed at countering China](#)

[India to sign trade deal with United States in March, minister says](#)

[Middle East Preparing For War Ahead Of U.S.-Iran Negotiations](#)

[Russian cargo plane arrives in Cuba, echoing frantic Caracas buildup](#)

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[Deorbit as a Service](#)

[Sensors and Seekers for Fire Control](#)

[Containerized Autonomous Drone Delivery System \(CADDs\)](#)

View From The Hill

With a surprisingly low level of drama, the U.S. House of Representatives reconvened this week and **passed** legislation to end what amounted to a very short partial government shutdown over the weekend. In a razor-thin 217-214 vote, the House managed to “concur” with the Senate’s amendment to the previously passed minibuss appropriations package, enacting full-year appropriations for the Departments of War, Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Treasury, State, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development. The Senate and White House’s funding agreement leaves the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with stopgap funding through February 13th, as lawmakers attempt to negotiate reforms for DHS’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which has been the subject of intense scrutiny following the shooting deaths of two American citizens in Minneapolis last month. A bipartisan agreement on reforms to the agency **remains** elusive, however, meaning DHS could find itself falling off a fiscal cliff alone next week, as the rest of the federal government moves full steam ahead with safely enacted Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 funding.

The Defense Appropriations bill **includes** an additional \$8.5 billion in Pentagon funding, amounting to \$839.2 billion for FY2026, apart from the \$19.7 billion already enacted for military construction. The legislation allots \$14.4 billion for procurement and \$3.9 billion for research and development. This is all in addition to the \$150 billion enacted as part of last year’s budget reconciliation bill.

Former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State and First Lady Hillary Clinton **managed** to avoid a vote in the House this week, which would have held them in criminal contempt of Congress. The pair had previously refused to testify for the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform’s investigation into the disgraced late financier Jeffrey Epstein; however, they have now agreed to testify before the committee later this month. In pushing back, Hillary Clinton called on the committee’s chairman, Rep. James Comer (R-KY), to instead hold public hearings on the Epstein investigation.

Senior republicans on Capitol Hill **pushed** back on President Trump’s suggestion that the United States should “nationalize” elections, citing constitutionality concerns. The debate comes as Congress considers setting new federal requirements for individuals to provide proof of citizenship prior to voting. While

most republicans are supportive of voter ID laws, many are also skeptical of bolstered federal involvement in how elections are carried out—a process largely left to states.

Former Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) **was** hospitalized this week with flu-like symptoms. The 83-year-old outgoing senator has long faced concerns surrounding his health, and announced last year he would not seek reelection in 2026.

Rep. Barry Loudermilk (R-GA) **joined** a growing list of GOP lawmakers opting to retire at the end of the 119th Congress. Loudermilk joined the House in 2015 and has been a staunch ally of President Trump.

Pentagon News

During a **call** on Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump and U.K. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer discussed the continued operation of the joint U.K.-U.S. military base on Diego Garcia, the Chagos Archipelago's largest island in the Indian Ocean. As a logistical hub for air and naval operations, Diego Garcia enables the U.K. and U.S. to project military power across the Indo-Pacific. The statement underscores the island's clear strategic importance to both leaders, who will maintain coordinated activities essential to future base operations.

The agreement is projected to cost \$47 billion over the next century and marks Trump and Starmer's first known direct engagement on the issue since the U.S. President withdrew support for the U.K.'s proposed sovereignty transfer to Mauritius. Trump's public criticism of the deal raised national security risks, flagging potential strategic implications. Despite these differences, both governments have reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the base and

sustaining bilateral cooperation. The Starmer administration continues to pursue the agreement while parliamentary ratification remains unresolved.

Beyond these international diplomatic concerns, federal oversight is also intensifying regarding the regulation of emerging aviation technologies.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a [report](#) on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) this past Wednesday, analyzing the agency's management of beyond-visual-line-of-sight (BVLOS) operations for domestic drone flight. To safely integrate and manage drone activity within the National Airspace System (NAS), the study emphasized the need for clear responsibilities between federal and nonfederal roles, paired with technical milestones that validate the platform's communication and deconfliction capabilities. Crucially, the GAO's recommendation incorporates industry-wide feedback from comprehensive engagement with the FAA and more than two dozen industry stakeholders.

In a dual-effort approach, the FAA is slowly opening the door to BVLOS drone flights through a waiver process while drafting rules that would require drones to detect-and-avoid other aircraft in real time. Today, most of those approvals rest on ADS-B technology that is optimized during stable weather and wind conditions, though not designed to support and sustain large-scale drone operations. Stakeholders told the GAO that GPS dependence, congestion, cybersecurity risks, and the prevalence of non-cooperative air traffic (aircraft without ADS-B) leave significant obstacles for full BVLOS drone operations in the NAS.

To close that gap, the FAA, Department of Transportation (DOT), and research partners are experimenting with portable electronic devices, sensor and radar systems, cellular networks, and collision avoidance technologies, while running large-scale operational trials within the industry and NASA. The GAO cautions that without defined roles, costs, and technical benchmarks, the detect-and-avoid requirements could become a limitation rather than an enabler of advanced aviation.

The struggle to establish defined benchmarks for emerging aviation technology mirrors a broader transition in global security, as the expiration of legacy arms agreements leaves the world's nuclear powers without a formal roadmap for the first time in decades.

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the U.S. and Russia **expired** on Thursday. Both nations had agreed to extend the treaty for an additional five years in 2021, after originally signing for a ten-year term back in 2011. The sunset of New START marks an end to the final bilateral agreement limiting U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals after U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty over concerns about Russia's long-standing violations and non-compliance. New START was widely viewed as a success, with the treaty restricting each country to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads across no more than 700 deployed missiles and heavy bombers. It also established transparency measures like data exchanges and on-site inspections. The Bilateral Consultative Commission, established by the treaty and responsible for its compliance and implementation, convened 19 times over the course of the agreement.

Earlier this month, President Trump **insisted** that the People's Republic of China be included due to its rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal. While Beijing **dismissed** the proposal as disproportionate to its smaller stockpile, Secretary of State Marco Rubio **substantiated** this stance during Wednesday's Critical Minerals Ministerial, where he also highlighted China's dominance over critical supply chains. In a Truth Social post published the following day, President Trump signaled openness to negotiating a nuclear arms agreement with Russia, **insisting** on a "new modernized treaty" rather than extending New START.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committee

House of Representatives

- NONE

Senate

- 2/11, 3:00 PM - Hearings to examine the Senior Enlisted Leaders on servicemember and family quality of life.

Appropriations Committee

House of Representatives

- 2/10, 10:30 AM - Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies - Hearing: The Science of Reading
- 2/11, 10:00 AM - Subcommittee on Homeland Security - Hearing: Oversight Hearing Potential DHS Shutdown Impacts

Senate

- 2/10, 2:30 PM - Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs - Hearings to examine Haiti 2026, focusing on security and foreign assistance priorities.
- 2/10, 10:00 AM - Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies - Hearings to examine a review of broadband deployment funding at the Department of Commerce.

Homeland Security Committee

House of Representatives

- 2/10, 10:00 AM - Hearing: Oversight of the Department of Homeland Security: ICE CBP and USCIS.
- 2/11, 2:00 PM - Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology - Hearing: Surveying the Threat of Agroterrorism Part II: Assessing Federal Government Efforts.

Senate

- 2/10, 2:30 PM - Hearings to examine fraud and foreign influence in state and federal programs.
- 2/12, 9:00 AM - An oversight hearing.

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