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To: Craig Quigley
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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

What happened this week and what's to come

April 16, 2021

Notable Headlines

- [‘It’s Time to End the Forever War’: Biden Announces Withdrawal from Afghanistan](#)
- U.S. drops plans to send destroyers into the Black Sea due to concerns over Russia (POLITICO Pro)
- [The Capital’s ‘Complex’ Power Structure Keeps Causing Chaos Under Pressure \(Defense One\)](#)
- DeLauro Eyes Capitol Security Bill Release By Next Wk: Punchbowl (BGov)
- [U.S. Puts Fresh Sanctions on Russia Over Hacking, Election Interference \(WSJ\)](#)
- [US Space Employment, Investments Resist Pandemic in 2020, Continue to Climb in 2021 \(Space Foundation\)](#)

Keep an eye out for: [Government Agencies to Release Telework Report](#)

A useful reference: [Biden Administration Foreign Policy Tracker](#)

Joe Biden has picked 135 nominees to fill key roles in his administration so far

We are tracking **791** government positions among about 1,200 that require Senate confirmation.

409

positions have no Biden nominee.

43

picks are awaiting formal nomination.

59

nominees are being considered by the Senate.

33

have been confirmed by the Senate.

Additionally, we have identified **247** appointees so far who are serving in termed positions or who were held over from previous administrations.

Progress of the Biden Administration's confirmation process. For a more detailed breakdown, click through the image to the Washington Post's confirmation tracker.

Budget & Appropriations

Biden ally open to splitting off physical infrastructure if GOP can agree on 'robust' package (POLITICO Pro)

An influential Senate Democrat said on Thursday that he would be open to working with Republicans on passing a smaller bipartisan bill focused on physical infrastructure if the GOP can agree to something "robust," then use budget reconciliation to separately move other priorities. Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.), a Biden ally, said during an interview with CNN that bipartisan interest in improving the country's transportation, broadband and drinking water infrastructure "could end up being an \$800 billion to a trillion dollar bipartisan bill."

GOP Puzzles Over Earmarks (POLITICO Pro)

Senate Republicans could decide as soon as next week on an approach to the return of earmarks, as Democrats plow ahead with the reinstatement of the revamped spending system and the majority of House Republicans back the move. Sen. John Neely Kennedy of Louisiana, the ranking Republican on the Energy-Water appropriations panel, said some of his GOP colleagues are interested, but he expects most won't want to participate. "I told them I would listen and that the door is open, but it's a big, old, heavy, thick, oak door," he said. "If they want me to open it, it's heavy. I'm not sure I'm going to be able to lift it. But I'm going to listen."

[Lawmakers ask Biden administration for Technology Modernization Fund spending plan \(FedScoop\)](#)

Lawmakers want to know what IT improvements the Biden administration is planning with the \$1 billion recently injected into the Technology Modernization Fund, according to a letter sent by five Democratic members of the House Oversight Government Operations Subcommittee on Tuesday. The letter asks the Office of Management and Budget, General Services Administration, and TMF Board to submit a spending plan to Congress for the funds appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Act, as well as for partial repayment by agencies. TMF spending is perhaps the fastest way to invest in critical IT and cybersecurity projects across government. But agencies are expected to pay the money back within five years so the fund remains self-sustaining, which is an "unduly burdensome" ask on "inherently riskier projects," according to industry.

[U.S. Budget Gap Hits Record \\$1.7 Trillion for First Half of Year \(Bloomberg\)](#)

The U.S. federal budget deficit more than doubled to a record in the first half of the fiscal year amid a fresh wave of stimulus payments to cushion Americans from the persistent coronavirus pandemic. The deficit last month was \$659.6 billion, the third-largest on record and biggest since last June, swelling the total from October to March to \$1.71 trillion, according to a Treasury Department report Monday. The six-month total compares with \$743.5 billion in the prior-year period. In March 2020, the deficit was \$119 billion, which

didn't reflect the first wave of payments in the Cares Act approved late that month. The March 2021 outlays included \$339 billion in the direct pandemic-relief payments -- of up to \$1,400 per person -- authorized under the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan bill passed last month. With additional payments in train, that law will widen the fiscal gap by more than \$1 trillion this year and over half a trillion in fiscal 2022, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Aerospace & Defense

[US, NATO Troops to Withdraw from Afghanistan by 9/11, US Official Says \(Defense One\)](#)

President Joe Biden has directed that all remaining U.S. forces be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September, which would end America's longest war 20 years after it started. NATO troops will also depart, a senior administration official told reporters on a briefing call Tuesday. "After a rigorous policy review, President Biden has decided to draw down the remaining troops from Afghanistan and finally end the U.S. war there after 20 years," the senior administration official said. "We will begin an orderly drawdown of the remaining forces before May 1 and plan to have all U.S. troops out of the country before the 20th anniversary of 9/11." The senior administration official also said all NATO troops will depart, an announcement that came one day before Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was set to meet with NATO allies in Brussels.

[HASC Chair Blasts White House For 'Dragging Their Feet' On Budget \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

A key Congressional Democrat said it's important to "shout it from the rafters" that the Biden administration is taking too much time to divulge details about when the 2022 defense budget will be released, and while he's been trying, he's heard almost nothing back. "I am deeply concerned about the Biden administration dragging their feet on getting us the damn budget," chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Adam Smith, said during a virtual event hosted by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation. "The White House itself is not doing the job they should be doing."

[Air Force can now deploy drones from other drones \(FedScoop\)](#)

The Air Force's unmanned aerial systems (UAS) capabilities took a step forward with new test flights that launched a small UAS out of a larger drone. The test, conducted in late March by the Air Force Research Lab, showed that a larger Valkyrie UAS can release a

smaller UAS through its weapons bay door, a new capability that could lead to the use of drone networks being deployed during battle. “This is the sixth flight of the Valkyrie and the first time the payload bay doors have been opened in flight,” Alyson Turri, demonstration program manager, said in a release.

Advanced Technologies

[DOD implementing new enterprise ICAM tool to support zero trust \(FedScoop\)](#)

The Department of Defense is working to implement a new identity, credentialing and access management (ICAM) tool, a key part of its journey to a zero-trust cybersecurity model, the department’s chief information security officer said Wednesday. The tool was developed by the Defense Information Systems Agency, which had previously solicited input from industry to help develop the technology to verify users on a network. The first users who will be offered use of the tool are in DOD’s financial management divisions and will be given access on a fee-for-service basis, DOD CISO David McKeown told senators.

[Four Things the Pentagon Needs to Do to Advance Its AI \(Defense One\)](#)

First, the Pentagon needs to get its technical backbone in place. The DoD must have a modern digital infrastructure that supports ubiquitous development and delivery of AI capabilities department-wide, from headquarters to the front lines. Second, the DoD must inculcate technical know-how at all levels. Third, DoD should rapidly integrate AI into all major wargames and exercises and incentivize experimentation. Finally, the Pentagon needs sustained top-down leadership to accelerate change and drive outcomes.

[GSA planning to lend tech, acquisition expertise to support scaling TMF \(FedScoop\)](#)

General Services Administration officials anticipate lending technology and acquisition expertise to agencies modernizing IT using the more than \$1 billion in funds allocated within the American Rescue Plan Act. GSA holds weekly meetings with the Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Digital Service, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, federal chief information officers, and industry to discuss the \$1 billion added to the Technology Modernization Fund (TMF) and \$150 million to the Federal Citizen Services Fund (FCSF). The TMF is a central pot of appropriations that agencies can apply for to fund impactful modernization projects under the stipulation that they’ll pay it back within five years. The FCSF, on the other hand, is an internal GSA fund that TTS can use

to support interagency digital services initiatives.

[FBI Opens a Case on Chinese Activity 'Every 10 Hours,' Intel Chiefs Say \(CNN\)](#)

The FBI has more than 2,000 investigations that tie back to the Chinese government and is opening a new one "every 10 hours," the bureau's director told the US Senate Intelligence Committee on Wednesday. In his testimony, FBI Director Christopher Wray said that no other country represented more of a threat to the US' economic security and democratic ideals than China, adding that its ability to influence American institutions was "deep and wide and persistent."

Final Report

National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence

NSCAI released its 2021 report with assessments and recommendations on the acquisition and implementation of AI across the US government. For full report, click on the image above.

Military Installations & Communities

[Latino Democrats push for Hispanic recognition in military base renamings \(NBC\)](#)

Latino members of Congress are pushing for a U.S. Army base to be named after a Latino military hero and for a greater recognition of the role of Hispanics in the nation's defense. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus and several members of the House Armed Services Committee sent a letter April 12 to the commission tasked with removing Confederate names from military bases and other Department of Defense properties. In the letter, provided to NBC News, they urged the commission to "develop new criteria" that increases chances of honoring enlisted service members as well as officers, and recognizes the diversity and demographics of a base's community.

[First Lady Calls Joining Forces Effort a National Security Imperative \(DoD\)](#)

Joining Forces supports military and veterans' families, caregivers and survivors by helping them find employment, securing child care and making sure families' well-being is addressed. The first lady was joined by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's wife, Charlene Austin, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark. A. Milley's wife, Hollyanne Milley. Military family members, advocates and stakeholders from around the world joined the virtual event on myriad monitors as Biden outlined the new priorities for Joining Forces. "We're here because of you ... because of the stories you have shared with me, your joys and your challenges from difficult [permanent changes in station] to the lack of child care on and off bases, for fighting to keep your own careers, and to saying goodbye to beloved schools and friends, from caring for your loved ones to mourning those who have been lost," Biden, also a military mother, said. "You are the rudder that steers our military, and supporting your physical, social and emotional health is a national security imperative."

[AFCEC construction enhances JBSA capabilities, quality of life \(DVIDS\)](#)

The Air Force Civil Engineer Center is optimizing mission and training capabilities and improving quality of life at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, through its multi-year construction effort. The current projects are a massive \$388 million undertaking at three primary locations -- JBSA-Lackland, JBSA-Fort Sam Houston and JBSA-Randolph. It includes seven active \$310 million new military construction projects and five \$78 million renovation projects currently in design to improve the resiliency and readiness of the force.

Homeland Security

[How will Homeland Security pivot to violent domestic extremism? \(Federal News Network\)](#)

The Department of Homeland Security, by order of the Biden administration, is reportedly shifting resources to the challenge of what the administration calls violent domestic extremism. For a little perspective on this, [Federal Drive with Tom Temin](#) turned to an expert on cyber warfare, surveillance, terrorism and whistleblowers, R-Street Institute senior fellow Paul Rosenzweig.

[The Department of Homeland Security is launching 60-day cybersecurity sprints. What](#)

[advice would you give to a team leading one? \(Protocol\)](#)

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas laid out six sprints the Department will undertake to help strengthen government security. Members of Protocol's Braintrust gave their advice on how to lead them.

[Can the Aviation Community Stop a Cyber Attack from Taking Off? \(Homeland Security Today\)](#)

Recent years have heralded myriad technological advancements including developments in machine-learning techniques, telecommunications (5G), the internet of things and more. The benefits to industries like aviation are clear. Technological advancements support growth and development, including the integration of new airspace users, the development of advanced aircraft systems and applications, automation and integration in data applications and decision-making systems in airports and airlines, and the interconnection between previously isolated systems through data-sharing across the aviation value chain. But with new technology comes new threats, which have grown in number and scale as malicious actors use the digital world to make financial gains, cause harm, and/or create instability and chaos.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Republicans prepping smaller counteroffer to Biden's infrastructure plan \(POLITICO\)](#)

Republicans are preparing a counteroffer to President Joe Biden's infrastructure proposal, a plan that's likely to be in the range of \$600 to \$800 billion, more targeted in scope and funded by unspecified user fees, according to several GOP senators. For some time Republican rhetoric around Biden's \$2 trillion-plus plan, which would fund everything from roads to broadband to schools, has centered on panning it for its expansive definition of infrastructure and for proposing a hike on corporate taxes to fund it. And Republican senators interviewed about the counter suggest it will stick to that script.

[President Biden Announces His Intent to Nominate Key Administration Leaders on Climate and Transportation \(White House\)](#)

The President has tapped Tommy Beaudreau for Deputy Secretary of the Interior, Department of the Interior, Meera Joshi for Administrator, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, Faisal Amin for Chief Financial Officer,

Environmental Protection Agency, Christopher Coes for Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Department of Transportation, Shannon Estenoz for Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, Radhika Fox for Assistant Administrator for Water, Environmental Protection Agency, Michal Freedhoff for Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Protection, Environmental Protection Agency, Jill Hruby for Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and Administrator for of the National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy, Winnie Stachelberg for Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget, Department of the Interior, Department of the Interior, and Tanya Trujillo, Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Department of the Interior.

[White House says gas tax won't be part of infrastructure bill \(The Hill\)](#)

The White House said Tuesday that raising the federal gasoline tax is not being considered as part of President Biden's infrastructure package. "I think that was a little bit of a garble, unintentional, but in yesterday's meeting with members of Congress the president mentioned the gas tax only to make a point that even a significant increase in the gas tax, which some people have proposed, would pay for only a fraction of the investment the country needs," she said. Psaki added that Biden believes raising the gas tax would be burdensome to Americans.



USA Today's graphic explaining the White House release of the spending plan. For the full article, [click on the graphic.](#)

Biotechnology & Research

[NIH's COVID-19 data enclave continues to evolve with the virus \(FedScoop\)](#)

Technology linking patient records across data sources while preserving their privacy is being prototyped by the National Institutes of Health as researchers attempt to understand the evolving COVID-19 virus and its variants. The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences within NIH launched the largest COVID-19 dataset in the U.S., the National COVID Cohort Collaborative (N3C) Data Enclave, in April. And now NCATS wants to use privacy-preserving record linkage (PPRL) to link data from its enclave with medical images, omics tools, electronic health records (EHRs), and social determinants of health to answer researchers' lingering questions like why COVID-19 symptoms linger in some patients.

[Biden Infrastructure Plan Would Fund Shift Toward Home Healthcare for Seniors \(WSJ\)](#)

President Biden's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan would devote \$400 billion to providing seniors more medical care at home, with the aim of shifting treatment away from institutions and hospitals as the U.S. faces a looming surge in its aging population. Democrats say the measure is needed because the healthcare system is unprepared for the unprecedented growth in the senior population and the bill would boost incomes for the many women and people in minority groups who provide the services. Republicans contend the plan is too costly and doesn't meet the definition of infrastructure. Opponents also argue that any boost in wages or the unionization of home healthcare workers would ultimately funnel money—by way of dues—to Democratic-friendly labor unions.

[House Passes Bill to Forestall \\$18 Billion in Medicare Cuts \(MedPage Today\)](#)

The House voted 384-38 Tuesday evening to rescind one of two scheduled Medicare cuts, sending the bill on to President Biden for his signature. "Today the house meets on the heels of huge milestones for our country -- more than 180 million vaccine shots in American arms, and more than 150 million rescue checks in Americans' bank accounts," said Rep. John Yarmuth (D-Ky.), chairman of the House Budget Committee. "Today's

legislation will ensure our healthcare providers who have been on the front lines of this pandemic are supported during this difficult time."

[Pfizer CEO: Third dose of COVID-19 vaccine 'likely' needed within 1 year \(The Hill\)](#)

Pfizer's CEO said Thursday that COVID-19 vaccine recipients will "likely" need a third dose between six to 12 months after they're fully vaccinated and suggested vaccinations for coronavirus could be needed every year. Albert Bourla told CNBC's Bertha Coombs at a CVS Health event that he predicts based on current data a "likely scenario" will involve the COVID-19 vaccine being administered to patients annually. Bourla said it "remains to be seen" how often any potential additional vaccines would be provided.

Climate & Development

World whiffs on Biden's pleas for bold climate pledges (POLITICO Pro)

The U.S. is prodding world leaders to come to President Joe Biden's climate summit next week with bold new pledges to fight the rising temperatures threatening the globe — but so far, he's coming up empty. The diffidence from both allies and rivals show how difficult it will be for Biden to live up to his promises to lead the world effort to face down climate change, and comes just three months after Biden brought the country back into the 2015 Paris climate accord that former President Donald Trump had spurned. It's yet another sign of foreign leaders' reluctance to follow Washington's lead on climate change so quickly after enduring four years of Trump's assault on international cooperation.

[Kathleen Hicks on Need to Prioritize Resilience of Military Facilities Against Climate Change's Effects \(ExecGov\)](#)

Kathleen Hicks, deputy secretary of the Department of Defense and a 2021 Wash100 Award winner, visited Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida to assess the damage caused by Hurricane Sally and took part in a video conference with other military leaders from other installations to highlight the need to develop resilience against the effects of climate change, DOD News reported Monday. "At the Department of Defense, we know that the readiness of the force is very much tied to how well we manage through and think about resilience in the face of climate," Hicks said during the conference. "So this is an effort by the team and I to make sure that we understand, again, how that plays out in your plans, in the missions you have to execute, in your budgets, so we can get a better sense of how to

help at the high end."

[Biden prepares sweeping order on climate-related risks \(POLITICO\)](#)

President Joe Biden is preparing to instruct federal agencies to take sweeping action to combat climate-related financial risks to government and the economy, including moves that could impose new regulations on businesses. In a draft executive order obtained by POLITICO, Biden reaches into all corners of the federal government with plans that would touch every sector of American industry, including banking and insurance, oil and gas, housing, agriculture, and federal contracting, purchasing and lending.

Upcoming Events & Hearings (Times in ET)

- [Brookings Institute: Sustainable U.S. Presence in the Middle East: Balancing Short and Long-term Needs.](#) (April 19 @ 10am)
- [National Science Foundation holds a meeting by teleconference of the Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure](#) (April 19 @ 11am)
- [Heritage Foundation New Tools for New Threats: Strengthening U.S. Intelligence Capabilities.](#) (April 19 @ 11am)
- **House Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber** will convene its members for a briefing entitled, "Cyber 101." (April 19 @ 4pm)
- **Senate Armed Services Committee** holds a hearing on "United States Strategic Command and United States Space Command in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY2022 and the Future Years Defense Program." (April 20 @ 9:30am)
- **House Armed Services Committee** holds a hearing on "National Security Challenges and U.S. Military Activities in the Greater Middle East and Africa." (April 20 @ 11am)
- [INSA: Intelligence National Security Alliance holds a virtual discussion on "Securing Microelectronics Supply Chains."](#) (April 20 @ 12pm)
- **House Foreign Affairs Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber Subcommittee** holds a hearing on "Restoration of the Transatlantic Dialogue: The Global Fight Against Climate Change." (April 20 @ 2pm)
- [Woodrow Wilson Center and RAND: Business as usual or Time for Change? Revisiting U.S. Strategy in the Middle East](#) (April 21 @ 10am)

- [House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology \(Committee on Energy and Commerce\) hearing on "Leading the Wireless Future: Securing American Network Technology"](#) (April 21 @ 10:30am)
- **Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee** holds a hearing on the current and future cyber workforce of the Department of Defense and the military services (April 21 @ 2:30pm)
- **Senate Armed Services Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee** holds a hearing on science and technology, technology maturation, and technology transition activities (April 21 @ 2:30pm)
- [Space Foundation: Virtual discussion with Brig. Gen. Heather Pringle, commander of the Air Force Research Laboratory, about how AFRL is leading the discovery, development and integration of aerospace warfighting technologies, for both the Air Force and Space Force, part of "Space Symposium 365"](#) (April 22 @ 1pm)



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