



Velocity Update October 2, 2020

Congressional Schedule. The Senate is in session. The House plans to recess after today. (*More below.*)

U.S. Economic Outlook

Weekly numbers and long-term outlook. Economic numbers are still a mixed bag. Some areas are doing better, but that's better for pandemic levels. [837,000 people applied for unemployment benefits](#) for the first-time last week, which is down just a bit. Another 650,000 people claimed Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the program for self-employed or gig workers, for the first time, which is up just a bit. A total of 26.5 million are claiming some kind of unemployment benefits, also a slight increase from last week. Several major companies announced layoffs or furloughs this week, including Disney theme parks, Allstate, United Airlines, and American Airlines. On Thursday, the [Commerce Department reported](#) that personal incomes fell by 2.7-percent in August and that disposable personal income also fell. And in more positive news, consumer spending grew 1-percent during the month. More and more, economists and business leaders are beginning to look at longer term changes in how we work. "Clearly the covid shocks have led to an economy in transition," said Chester S. Spatt, an economist at Carnegie Mellon University. "Even once we get back to full employment, the jobs aren't going to be the same as the old jobs. People talk a lot about when we return to normal, but I don't think normal is defined as the way we did things before." For more on how tech companies are setting some of the new working norms (and how many of us might follow), this [article on remote work](#) is an interesting read.

Coronavirus government operations update

National perspective. As of Friday at noon, the number of confirmed cases in the U.S. [is at least 7,248,000 with at least 207,000 deaths](#). Data shows that the [number of new cases](#) nationwide has risen 32% since early September (currently, just over 45,000 a day), and by [at least 10%](#) in 21 states. However, the death rates and hospital stays have dropped dramatically. Some experts believe we are likely very close to entering a third wave. On Tuesday, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker announced that he was quarantining as a precaution after a member of his staff tested positive for Covid-19. Pritzker noted that he had so far tested negative and that he and his staff were all wearing masks, so the risk for transmission was low. On Wednesday, Stéphane Bancel, the CEO of Moderna – one of the companies developing a vaccine included in Operation Warp Speed – said that their vaccine [would not be ready for emergency approval](#) until at least Nov. 25 and that the company would not be ready to seek approval for general public use until late January next year, meaning public distribution could be as early as March or April 2021.

Washington metro area. Overall coronavirus cases in [D.C., Maryland, and Virginia topped 289,00 by Friday morning – or about one in every 55 residents – with at least 7,000 deaths](#). Most schools remain shut down in the metropolitan area, the vast majority of those who can continue to telework. The region's caseload has stabilized since late July is not expected to decline in the coming months, even as officials continue to lift restrictions on activities, and as cooling weather sends people indoors. Positivity rates are 6-percent in Maryland, 4-percent in Virginia, and 1-percent in D.C.

The White House. While some staff continues to telework or rotate into the office in shifts to handle classified materials, many staff are going physically back into the office on a regular basis. Since May, the White House staff have been mandated to wear masks within the Executive mansion and are even sporting a coveted branded

White House mask with the presidential seal on it. (Additional information regarding the late breaking news [President Trump testing positive for Covid](#) is in the campaign update section.)

Pentagon still in Phase Two operations. There are ongoing discussions within the Pentagon on new policy to support telework and the phasing in of DoD personnel in person. The Pentagon remains in Phase Two (Bravo), which means a maximum of 80-percent of staff allowed on-site, though the actual number of staff on site tends to be much lower. If you are planning to visit, give yourself plenty of time to go through the visitor's center. All visitors should expect to get their temperature checked along with their IDs.

NASA is still relying on mostly telework. All of NASA's facilities are at Stage 3 of its pandemic response plan. (Stage 3 means mandatory telework except for those needed for critical work for missions.)

Access to Congress remains limited. Access to the congressional office buildings and capitol complex continues to be limited, open only to Members, Congressional staff, and credentialed press. Many offices continue to encourage the staff to telework. However, an increasing number of staff, especially at the committee and senior level, are coming into the Capitol complex to support their bosses during this active legislative season.

National Census. Last week, a federal court ruled that the 2020 census must continue through the month of October, after administration officials said they planned to stop counting on Oct. 2 in order to meet the statutory requirement of finishing the Census by 31 December set by [Congress](#). This week, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross appeared to ignore that order in a statement that ordered the 2020 census count to end on Monday, Oct. 5. U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh issued an injunction to prevent the census from ending early. She was backed up by a three-judge panel, who on Thursday [rejected a Trump administration appeal](#) to suspend Koh's order. Koh is now considering whether to hold the administration in contempt, though civil rights groups and local governments are asking for her to enforce compliance instead.

Congressional activities

Proxy voting extended, again. Pelosi announced in a letter to members on Wednesday that remote voting has been extended until Nov. 16 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SCOTUS confirmation process. On Saturday, President Trump [announced](#) his nomination, Judge Amy Coney Barrett, to fill the Supreme Court seat. Barrett has served on the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals since late 2017. She began meeting with Senators this week, including Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Several Democratic Senators have said that they do not plan to meet with Barrett. Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Kamala Harris, who sits on the Judiciary committee, is planning to leave the campaign trail to attend Barrett's confirmation hearing. And each side of the committee is [staffing up](#) in advance of the hearing and vetting process, adding more than 20 staffers, including lawyers and law clerks. The hearing will begin on Monday, Oct. 12 with opening statements, followed by two rounds of Q&A on Tuesday and Wednesday, outside witnesses on Thursday, and a vote to report the nominee out of committee the following Thursday, Oct. 22. No vote on the Senate floor has been scheduled (and likely won't be officially scheduled until the committee votes), but the plan is to hold that vote before the end of October so that Senators can leave to campaign. We'll note that although there have been shorter-than-average confirmation processes, no SCOTUS nominee has ever been confirmed this close to a presidential election, and never in so rapid a timescale either.

Border wall funding. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit [unanimously agreed](#) that House lawmakers could proceed with their lawsuit blocking President Trump from transferring billions of dollars from other accounts to pay for a border wall. In their opinion, the court said that the Constitution gives Congress

spending authority, and it “requires two keys to unlock the Treasury, and the House holds one of those keys. The Executive Branch has, in a word, snatched the House’s key out of its hands.” The panel of three judges said that the Administration had effectively cut the House out of the appropriations process, and that the House did not need the consent of the Senate to protect its interest. “The ironclad constitutional rule is that the Executive Branch cannot spend until both the House and the Senate say so. Unlike the affirmative power to pass legislation, the House can wield its appropriations veto fully and effectively all by itself, without any coordination with or cooperation from the Senate.”

Schumer forces vote on ACA action. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer went to the Senate floor on Tuesday to [force a procedural vote](#) on legislation that would block the Justice Department from supporting litigation to overturn the Affordable Care Act. On Thursday, the Senate voted 51-43 against invoking cloture (meaning the procedural move failed and the bill does not advance, since 60 votes are required to do so). Of note, [six Republicans voted with the Democrats](#): Lisa Murkowski, Susan Collins, Joni Ernst, Cory Gardner, Martha McSally, and Dan Sullivan. All of those Senators except Murkowski are in extremely tight races this election.

DNI releases unverified intelligence. On Tuesday afternoon, Senator Lindsey Graham released a letter from Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe declassifying (over the objections of some career intelligence officials) an [unverified Russian intelligence assessment](#) on the 2016 Hillary Clinton campaign. That evening, Ratcliffe arranged a last-minute briefing for some Members of Congress on Tuesday evening. During the briefing, Ratcliffe noted that the U.S. intelligence community “does not know the accuracy of this allegation or the extent to which the Russian intelligence analysis may reflect exaggeration or fabrication.” The information is the same unverified intelligence that was evaluated and rejected by both the Senate Intelligence Committee and special counsel Robert Mueller.

Hearings this week. NASA Administrator Bridenstine testified before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee (*find our notes [here](#); a transcript of the hearing is available [here](#)*). The House Armed Services Committee held a hearing to discuss changes in U.S. forces in Europe (*our summary can be read [here](#)*).

The next pandemic relief package. On Thursday night, the House passed a \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief measure in the Democrats’ latest bid to pressure Republicans into a massive bipartisan deal before the election. While the House Members continue to wait to leave town to go home to campaign for the rest of the month, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Speaker Nancy Pelosi negotiated during at least two [extended discussions](#) this week, including the [first in person meeting](#) in nearly two months. By mid-day on Thursday, Speaker Pelosi told the House that she was pessimistic about the chances of reaching a deal with the Administration on another [coronavirus relief package](#). The House approved the package without a single GOP vote, and roughly 20 Democrats voted against the bill, many of whom have vocally urged Pelosi to seek a compromise with the GOP, even if it does not meet the party’s full demands. Lawmakers on both sides of the Capitol have grown increasingly anxious and frustrated at the prospect of heading back to their districts empty-handed. On Thursday night, Pelosi and Mnuchin said they plan to continue to talk and exchange offers on paper into Friday, which is the final day the House is slated to be in Washington before returning home to campaign until the election on Nov. 3. Democratic leaders have made it clear they will keep lawmakers in Washington through the weekend if they believe a deal is imminent.

The obstacles remain the same ones that derailed talks for the GOP: The size and scope of any package and funding for state and local governments, which Democrats are adamant about including. According to a person familiar with the talks, the White House’s latest proposal tops out at \$1.6 trillion — up from \$1.5 trillion, marking a \$600 billion difference in the proposals. Roll Call reported on Thursday night that the deal also

includes \$250 billion for state and local governments and \$400 per week in enhanced unemployment benefits. If no deal is reached by the end of the week and lawmakers go back to their districts, negotiators indicate they could continue talks into next week and call members back to Washington with 24-hours-notice before a vote. Even if an agreement is secured, Senate Republicans [may not support any deal](#) because of the price tag. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has not been part of direct negotiations and told reporters that the two sides are “very, very far apart” on a deal. On Thursday, when Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley was asked if he would support the \$1.6 trillion deal, he said, “No.” Other Republicans have said they’ll wait to see what’s in the legislation, but noted it would be difficult to support additional spending.

FY2021 NDAA. The conference process for the NDAA to work out an agreement between the House and Senate versions of the bill has not yet officially begun. The House and Senate passed their competing bills by wide margins in July and must now form a joint conference committee to reconcile their differences. Though staffers have begun informal talks, neither chamber has voted yet to formally begin the conference process and name lawmakers to the panel. The conference process is unlikely to formally kick off until Congress returns after the November election. Despite the delay, House and Senate Armed Services leaders say they’re optimistic a deal on the NDAA can be struck quickly in the lame duck session.

We have a CR. Just after midnight on October 1, President Trump signed a continuing resolution ([HR 8337](#)) into law, averting another shutdown and keeping the government funded through December 11. This was after the Senate voted earlier in the day on Wednesday (September 30) 84 to 10 in favor of the clean measure to keep the government funded into FY2021 at FY2020 levels. All 10 Senators who voted against the bill were Republicans.

Next appropriations steps. With regard to FY2021 spending, according to comments made this week by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, “We have a commitment from the appropriators on both sides of the aisle, both sides of the Capitol that they will work very hard to have an omnibus ready” by the time the new CR expires on December 11. As a reminder, Senate Appropriations Chairman Shelby has already said that it may not be necessary for the Senate Appropriations Committee to mark up its own FY2021 spending bills before beginning to negotiate with the House. Specifically, from *Politico* earlier this week: “No bills? No problem — The Senate hasn’t marked up one spending bill this year, but Appropriations Chair Richard Shelby suggested last week that the upper chamber wouldn’t have to release its own set of fiscal 2021 funding measures in order to kick off discussions with the House on a bipartisan spending package. A refresher — the House already marked up and passed nearly all of its appropriations bills in two bundles, [H.R. 7608](#) and [H.R. 7617](#).”

For those tracking the FY2021 requested program funding numbers, [here](#) is where the Congress is in approving funds for the programs you and we care most about. (Let us know what funding lines of interest to you we are missing from this list, and we will add them!)

Future defense spending. There’s speculation about what would happen if the Democrats sweep the White House and both chambers of Congress. On Thursday, House Armed Services Committee Chair Adam Smith (D-WA) said that one area where Democrats might see some internal disagreements is over defense spending. Progressives would use the control of the government to push for deep [cuts in defense spending](#). “There will be a fight, no question. There will be those Democrats who want to substantially cut the defense budget... I don't believe it is the majority of my party and I know it is not the position of the Biden-Harris ticket,” Smith said. He noted that there are proposals to cut the defense budget by 10-percent and 20-percent. “I do disagree that we can cut the budget by that much. What we have to do, Republican and Democrat alike, is make sure that money's spent wisely.”

FY2021 Intelligence Authorization. We expect the House to move its intelligence bill to the floor as a standalone measure sometime this fall. We do not expect many amendments to be considered when the bill comes to a floor, and it is very possible that the two chambers could opt to include the intelligence bill as an addendum to the conference legislation for the NDAA.

NASA Authorization. The House Science Committee has not scheduled a time for consideration of the [NASA authorization bill](#). As a reminder, the Senate Commerce Committee marked up and reported out [its version of the bill](#) in November 2019. Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson continues to vote by proxy from Texas, and the committee has indicated that they do not intend to mark up this bill remotely. Therefore, at this point in the legislative year, we do not believe there is much likelihood that this bill will see any more movement during this Congress.

Personnel changes

The nomination for Chad Wolf, the acting Secretary of Homeland Security, to that position full time advanced out of committee on Wednesday on a 6-3 party line vote. His nomination heads to the Senate floor next, though no vote has been scheduled.

Lora Shiao is moving from the National Counterterrorism Center, where she has been deputy director since April of this year, to become the chief operating officer at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, replacing Deidre Walsh who left the DNI earlier this year for a senior position at Ball Aerospace.

On Wednesday, the Senate confirmed several military promotions, including Lt. Gen. David Allvin, who is currently the director for strategy, plans and policy on the Joint Staff, to be Air Force vice chief of staff, and Lt. Gen. D.T. Thompson, to be the first Vice Chief of Space Operations. Both will also be promoted to four-star generals.

On Thursday, President Trump re-nominated Maj. Gen. John E. Shaw as a two-star general and for the position of Deputy Commander, United States Space Command. During his tenure it is expected the Department of the Air Force will make a final basing decision for the location of the new combatant command. Of note, we have heard communities bidding for the command were all asked their latitude and longitude by the basing team.

National security update

Future of Defense Task Force Releases Final Report. On Tuesday, House Armed Services Committee's bipartisan Future of Defense Task Force released an 87-page report with 14 recommendations on ways to compete with China and Russia. (*Read the full report [here](#) and find our notes from an event discussing the report [here](#).*) Reps. Seth Moulton (D-MA) and Jim Banks (R-IN) co-chaired the task force. They called the report a road map, and [recommended](#) that each military service spend at least one-percent of their overall budget on integrating new technologies. The task force also [recommended](#) prioritizing investments in science and technology research, with Pentagon-level S&T investments making up 3.4-percent of the overall defense budget and expanded funding for DARPA and defense labs. The task force called for a tenfold increase in spending for organizations including the Defense Innovation Unit, AFWERX, and Army Futures Command, along with additional efforts to leverage private sector innovation. The task force also called for the extension of New START while negotiating a follow-on agreement with Russia.

New START and nuclear consequences. In an effort to push the Russians into renegotiating now instead of waiting for the outcome of the November election, the Trump administration is looking at how fast it could pull [nuclear weapons out of storage](#) if New START expires in February. The idea would be to immediately

strengthen the available U.S. nuclear force. “It’s a clear signal that the costs for not negotiating before the election are going to go up,” Politico quoted an administration source. The Trump administration is “trying to create an incentive, and it’s a real incentive, for the Russians to sit down and actually negotiate.” There is concern from some experts that the gambit is risky because it may send the message that the U.S. is fine with having no limits on nuclear forces, which could [jump start an arms race](#).

Space Force in space. There was a little bit of a stir this week when Maj. Gen. John E. Shaw, head of the Space Force’s Space Operations Command and part of U.S. Space Command leadership, [said](#), “At some point, yes, we will be putting humans into space...They may be operating command centers somewhere in the lunar environment or someplace else.” He did note that it wouldn’t happen any time soon, but the comments were seen as potentially causing some confusion on what the role of the Space Force is. The subject came up at a Defense One event with Gen. D.T. Thompson, the Space Force Vice Chief of Space Operations (*read our notes from the event [here](#)*). He was asked if the Space Force would deploy boots on the Moon (and yes, that question does sound like echoes of the Netflix show) and responded, “No idea. Certainly not in my career.” Thompson [firmly countered expectations](#) that the Space Force is “preparing to send Space Force units into space in any way other than through the NASA astronaut program.”

Countering China. The federal government is requesting information via the new Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States from U.S. tech startups about deals that [involve Chinese investors](#), which indicates that the Treasury Department may be considering action against additional companies in the same vein as TikTok and WeChat. The government is also raising awareness about the potential for Chinese espionage in a [new film](#) titled “The Nevernight Connection” created by the FBI and the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. The film is based on the true story of former CIA officer Kevin Mallory who was recruited over a social media platform and later convicted of giving national defense information to China.

And on Wednesday, the House Intelligence Committee [released a report](#) on how the U.S. intelligence community is failing to keep pace with China. The report, which included 36 public recommendations and more than 100 classified recommendations, noted that some intelligence agencies are better prepared to handle a focus on China than others. The report calls for actions such as a formal review of the governance of open-source intelligence within the clandestine community and a broader and more formal effort by leadership to mentor the next generation of China analysts. It also states, “Absent a significant realignment of resources, the U.S. government and intelligence community will fail to achieve the outcomes required to enable continued U.S. competition with China on the global stage for decades to come, and to protect the U.S. health and security.” You can read the redacted summary of the report [here](#).

Life finds a way. Being part of an event planning committee can be a tough job, but it gets even tougher when you’re not allowed to have the usual in-person events. The 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, didn’t let the pandemic stop them from finding a way to celebrate the Air Force’s birthday. They switched things up from the traditional ball, making it a [drive-in ball](#) with no admission cost and families invited to attend while keeping some of the important traditions from past Air Force balls.

Events this week. On Thursday, WorldBoston hosted Lt. Gen. William Liquori to talk about the Evolution of the Space Force (*find our notes [here](#)*). Also on Thursday, following Gen. Thompson’s remarks, Defense One hosted a panel discussion about the Space Force (*read our summary [here](#)*).

Civil and commercial update

Commercial weather data RFI. On Thursday, NOAA released a Request for Information seeking information on existing and planned commercial environmental data and related capabilities that will be available in the

FY2021 through FY2027 timeframe. The goal of the RFI is to inform future Requests for Proposal for commercial data for both terrestrial and space weather. You can find the RFI [here](#). NOAA also held a community meeting this week to discuss user engagement and their strategic objectives (*find our notes from the event [here](#)*).

A certified Dragon. This week, NASA and SpaceX discussed the upcoming Crew-1 mission to the ISS scheduled for the end of October. After the Demo-2 flight of the Dragon capsule, SpaceX made some [minor changes](#) to the spacecraft, including to the heatshield and with parachute deployment. Kathy Lueders, NASA Associate Administrator for Human Exploration and Operations said, “We’re just in the process of finalizing the last few pieces of our documentation needed to close our human rating certification plans.” Lueders noted that she expects the certification process to be completed in the next week to 10 days, with the final certification coming at the flight readiness review about a week before the launch.

2020 Election update

Technically, there are 39 days to the election, but in nine states, early voting has already started and 25 states have started to mail out absentee ballots. Here’s the bottom line on what you need to know this week.

President Trump tests positive for Covid-19: Overnight it was reported that both President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump tested [positive](#) for Covid-19, following the news Thursday night that White House aide Hope Hicks had tested positive for the virus. Other world leaders such as the Prince of Wales, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and numerous Members of Congress have previously tested positive for the virus – all surviving. The President and First Lady are self-isolating. The president’s physician, Sean P. Conley announced Trump and his wife “are both well at this time, and they plan to remain at home within the White House during their convalescence.” It is expected Trump will continue his constitutionally required activities virtually from the White House family quarters. Vice President Pence and his wife have both tested negative. Because of his interactions with the President at the debate earlier this week, former Vice President and current presidential candidate Joe Biden was to be tested this morning. Not yet known is what other White House staff may have interacted with the President and the First Lady, and will also need to quarantine over the next two weeks, or what impact this development will have on the next presidential debate scheduled for October 15 in Miami, Florida.

Debates: We think the banner at the top of The Washington Post online immediately following the end of the debate summed it all up: “Well, that was rough.” The first presidential debate was held on Tuesday, and the only thing everyone can agree on is that it wasn’t a particularly good experience for anyone, especially moderator Chris Wallace and the American people. There was very little in-depth discussion of policies in the chaotic 90 minutes. On Wednesday, the Commission on Presidential Debates announced that they would add “additional structure” to the remaining debates. While no specific formal changes have been proposed yet, one thing apparently under consideration is giving the moderators the ability to cut off the mics of the candidates. On Thursday, the White House pushed back on any potential changes, calling for fair rules and a fair contest. For some media coverage, you might read [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), or [here](#). We expect the vice presidential candidates’ debate next Wednesday (October 7) to be a little more collegial and hopefully more substantive.

Polls.

Presidential. Battleground states like Florida, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin remain within the margin of error in presidential polling. The aggregate of polls found on [Real Clear Politics](#) showed Biden leading Trump by seven-points. CNBC/Change Research survey taken directly after the Tuesday night debate and released on Thursday showed 53-percent of the respondents said that Biden out-performed Trump in the debate, while 29-percent said Trump did better on Tuesday night.

Senate. According to some polls, senate races continue to show an uptick for Democrats running for the Senate. [Roll Call](#) has moved Susan Collins (Maine) and Thom Tillis (North Carolina) from Toss-up to Tilt Democratic, and South Carolina from Lean Republican to Tilt Republican as Jamie Harrison is now tied with Lindsey Graham for that Senate seat. But, as we all know, the only poll that matters is on Election Day.

Transition teams. The Biden transition team announced its [ethics plan](#) on Wednesday (and if you're wondering why there is a transition team already, it's customary for both candidates to have a transition team in place before the election to help make for a smoother process in the event of a win or a loss, in the case of the incumbent). The new ethics rules prevent people who have worked as registered lobbyists or foreign agents in the past year from working on the transition team unless they are granted a waiver from the transition team's general counsel, Jessica Hertz (who was previously at Facebook). The Biden transition team also announced several high-profile members to the board of the transition team, including Cindy McCain, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, Pete Buttigieg, former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, former national security adviser Susan Rice, and former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates.

Media roundup of election stories:

The Washington Post: [Here are five big things election experts are really worried about](#)

Minnesota Public Radio: [Trump rakes in money, stirs up supporters in Minnesota trip](#)

Politico: [Pelosi begins mustering Democrats for possible House decision on presidency](#)

NPR: [NASA Astronaut Will Vote From Space](#)

Axios: [Democrats on Trump tax story: "This is a national security question"](#)

Nature: [What a Joe Biden presidency would mean for five key science issues](#)

The Washington Post: [Biden campaign to begin door knocking after criticizing the Trump campaign for doing the same during the pandemic](#)

2020 Election tracking. Velocity has put together an election update – [available here](#) – with all sorts of fabulous details about the 2020 Senate, House, and Presidential races, complete with pundit predictions and polls. This is a living document, and we are keeping it updated throughout the campaign season, and until the last race is called. (*For example, we just updated it after this week's debate.*) Let us know if there are races not listed here that you would like us to track, and we will add them!

Podcasts we love

In October 1972, a Cessna 310 carrying two U.S. congressmen crashed while flying through a rain storm in Alaska. But the cause and even the location of the crash site are still a mystery. The [Missing in Alaska](#) podcast takes a new look at this old mystery. For those who love mysteries and political stories of old, this one is a winner.

And the [DefAero Report Daily Podcast](#) talks with Edward Ferguson, the minister counsellor defense at the British Embassy in Washington about defense cooperation between Britain and the United States and the UK government's integrated defense and security review.

And now for some cool space news

Finding water on Mars isn't really news any more. We've found evidence of past water, of present permafrost, and tantalizing signs of liquid water under the planet's surface. In 2018, planetary scientists reported that they found evidence of a large saltwater lake under the ice at Mars' south pole. As you know, though, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, and now it looks like we have that [evidence](#). Using a broader and more recent data set, scientists have confirmed evidence of a lake... and three others around surrounding it. Not

everyone is convinced it's liquid water, and even if it is, it would have to be extremely salty to remain unfrozen (so finding any kind of life is unlikely). Still, it's more evidence that there's more to discover on Mars.

Upcoming conferences and other events of interest

- 10/4 to 10/10, World Space Week (more information [here](#))
- 10/6, 10am-12:30pm, Seeking Strategic Advantage: How Geopolitical Competition and Cooperation are Playing Out In Space, hosted by the Wilson Center (more info and registration [here](#))
- 10/6, 15th Annual Future Leaders Celebration, Space & Satellite Professionals International (more info [here](#))
- 10/6 to 10/7, Stanford-NVCA Venture Capital Symposium (more info and registration [here](#))
- 10/7, Vice presidential debate in Salt Lake City, UT; Moderator: Susan Page, USA Today
- 10/7, 10am, The Heritage Foundation Webinar: The New Race for Space: Success and challenges in the Final Frontier." (more info [here](#))
- 10/12 to 10/14, virtual International Astronautical Congress (more info [here](#))
- 10/13 to 10/15, Planet Labs Explore 2020 Virtual Conference (more [here](#))
- 10/15, Second presidential debate in Miami, FL; Moderator: Steve Scully, CSPAN
- 10/22, Third presidential debate in Nashville, TN; Moderator: Kristen Welker, NBC News
- 10/26 to 10/28, [2020 AMS Washington Forum](#) (live virtual format)
- 10/26 to 10/28, 2020 AAS von Braun Memorial Symposium (live virtual format) (more info [here](#))
- 11/3 – election day
- 11/16 to 11/19, Ascend, hosted by AIAA (live virtual format, more info [here](#))
- 12/2 to 12/3, Space Resiliency Summit, Alexandria, VA (more info [here](#))
- 1/31/21 to 2/4/21, AAS/AIAA Space Flight Mechanics Meeting, Charlotte, NC (more info [here](#))
- 1/10/21 to 1/14/21, American Meteorological Society 101st Annual Meeting (registration info [here](#))
- 6/4/21, National Space Club's Goddard Memorial Dinner
- 8/22/21 to 8/26/21, [36th Space Symposium – rescheduled](#) from late October 2020

What we're reading

- Sept. 22, *National Defense*: [Air Force Chief Wants to 'Break Barriers' for Small Businesses](#)
- Sept. 22, *SatNews*: [Momentus Signs Smallsat Launch Agreements With Pixxel + GP Advanced Projects](#)
- Sept. 23, *National Defense*: [Companies Vie to Design New Weather Satellite](#)
- Sept. 25, *Air Force Magazine*: [Fourth GPS III Satellite Heads to Space](#)
- Sept. 25, *Air Force Magazine*: [ABMS Goes to the Pacific in 'Valiant Shield'](#)
- Sept. 25, *Defense News*: [DoD seeks legislative help for ICBM replacement construction costs](#)
- Sept. 25, *Defense News*: [13 lawmakers: Don't kill the Pentagon's chief reform job](#)
- Sept. 25, *New York Times*: [At Pentagon, Fears Grow That Trump Will Pull Military Into Election Unrest](#)
- Sept. 25, *Breaking Defense*: [Longer-Range Missiles & More AI: Project Convergence 2021](#)
- Sept. 25, *C4ISRNET*: [Starting in 2021, SpaceX may reuse boosters for US Space Force launches](#)
- Sept. 25, *Defense News*: [Amentum to acquire DynCorp International](#)
- Sept. 25, *The Drive*: [Area 51 Has A Huge New Hangar Facility That Points To A Drone Swarm Future](#)
- Sept. 25, *Reuters*: [SpaceX handed loss in challenge over Air Force contract](#)
- Sept. 25, *The Hill*: [Democrats push to limit transfer of military-grade gear to police](#)
- Sept. 25, *The Drive*: [General Atomics' Sparrowhawk Drone-Launched Drone Breaks Cover](#)
- Sept. 25, *IHS Jane's 360*: [Pentagon seeks 'dynamic' solutions for 5G mid-band spectrum operations](#)
- Sept. 25, *Axios*: [Exclusive: U.S. and U.K. announce AI partnership](#)
- Sept. 25, *Popular Mechanics*: [The Air Force's Secret New Fighter Jet May Not Even Be a Fighter at All](#)
- Sept. 25, *National Defense*: [The Rise of Skyborg: Air Force Betting on New Robotic Wingman](#)
- Sept. 25, *Bloomberg*: [Pelosi, Mnuchin Resume Talks on U.S. Fiscal Stimulus With Call](#)
- Sept. 25, *C4ISRNET*: [Inside the Army's futuristic test of its battlefield artificial intelligence in the desert](#)
- Sept. 25, *War on the Rocks*: [Defense Innovation is Falling Short](#)

Sept. 25, *Foreign Affairs*: [The United States Is Not Entitled to Lead the World](#)
Sept. 26, *The Hill*: [Centrist Democrats got their COVID bill, now they want a vote](#)
Sept. 26, *Task and Purpose*: [Newly resurfaced video shows Biden jokingly calling troops 'stupid bastards'](#)
Sept. 27, *The Hill*: [Trump, Pentagon collide over anti-diversity training push](#)
Sept. 28, *Omaha World Herald*: [New generation of ICBMs means Nebraska will continue to be 'nuclear sponge,' warn nuke skeptics](#)
Sept. 28, *Via Satellite*: [10 Ways AI is Making a Difference in the Satellite Industry](#)
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