

DOD debuts new B-21 Raider stealth bomber

Associated Press

PALMDALE, Calif. — America's newest nuclear stealth bomber made its debut Friday after years of secret development and as part of the Pentagon's answer to rising concerns over a future conflict with China.

The B-21 Raider is the first new American bomber aircraft in more than 30 years. Almost every aspect of the program is classified.

As evening fell over the Air Force's Plant 42 in Palmdale, the public got its first glimpse of the Raider in a tightly controlled ceremony. It started with a flyover of the three bombers still in service: the B-52 Stratofortress, the B-1 Lancer and the B-2 Spirit. Then the hangar doors slowly opened and the B-21 was towed partially out of the building.

"This isn't just another airplane," Defense Secretary

Lloyd Austin said. "It's the embodiment of America's determination to defend the republic that we all love."

The B-21 is part of the Pentagon's efforts to modernize all three legs of its nuclear triad, which includes silo-launched nuclear ballistic missiles and submarine-launched warheads, as it shifts from the counterterrorism campaigns of recent decades to meet China's rapid military modernization.

China is on track to have 1,500 nuclear weapons by 2035, and its gains in hypersonics, cyber warfare and space capabilities present "the most consequential and systemic challenge to U.S. national security and the free and open international system," the Pentagon said last week in its annual China report.

"We needed a new bomber for the 21st century that would allow us to take on much more complicated threats, like the

threats that we fear we would one day face from China, Russia," said Deborah Lee James, the Air Force secretary when the Raider contract was announced in 2015.

While the Raider may resemble the B-2, once you get inside, the similarities stop, said Kathy Warden, chief executive of Northrop Grumman Corp., which is building the bomber.

"The way it operates internally is extremely advanced compared to the B-2, because the technology has evolved so much in terms of the computing capability that we can now embed in the software of the B-21," Warden said.

Other changes include advanced materials used in coatings to make the bomber harder to detect, Austin said.

"Fifty years of advances in low-observable technology have gone into this aircraft," Austin said. "Even the most so-

phisticated air defense systems will struggle to detect a B-21 in the sky."

Other advances likely include new controls for electronic emissions, so the bomber could spoof adversary radars and disguise itself as another object, and use of new propulsion technologies, several defense analysts said.

"It is incredibly low observability," Warden said. "You'll hear it, but you really won't see it."

Six Raiders are in production. The Air Force plans to build 100 that can deploy either nuclear weapons or conventional bombs and can be used with or without a human crew. Both the Air Force and Northrop also point to the Raider's relatively quick development: The bomber went from contract award to debut in seven years. Other new fighter and ship programs have taken decades.

Army to use old slogan to try bringing in new recruits

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

The Army will launch a new advertising campaign next year that uses an old slogan to attract young audiences to the service — "Be all you can be."

While that sounds familiar to anyone who watched television in the 1980s and 1990s, the slogan best relays the "possibilities" that await a new Army recruit, said Maj. Gen. Alex Fink, chief of Army enterprise marketing.

"We're not returning to 'Be all you can be' for nostalgia or old times' sake or because we think retro is trendy and cool. We're really reinventing it to reposition the Army and to inspire the next generation soldiers," Fink said.

The last "Be all you can be" ad ran on TV in January 2001, and most of the audience the

Army is trying to reach now weren't born then. The ads of the original campaign focused on pride and often included a voiceover of the soldier's creed.

Fink declined to discuss exactly what new television ads could be coming through the campaign, but he said the concept is meant to showcase possibility and opportunity that's available to those who choose to enlist, regardless of whether they want a full career in the Army or just enough time to leverage themselves into a college education or a specific civilian career field.

Young people today find the ideas of community, connection, purpose and passion to be important to them, Fink said, and the Army offers all of that. The Army's messaging, however, really hasn't shown it. Instead, it has focused on what people already know about the Army, which is that it takes cour-

age and toughness.

A television ad for the current Army recruiting campaign — "What's your warrior?" — features a wordless montage of pilots in combat, scientists splitting cells, snipers in ghillie suits, air defense systems and parachutists, all set to a bass-heavy remix of the band Chicago's "25 or 6 to 4." Most soldiers are shown isolated or working alone.

"We already get credit for all that stuff through the media through movie franchises," Fink said. "Let's lean into things that they don't know."

After doing audience testing and research on about 200 different taglines, "Be all you can be" was a clear winner with each demographic, Fink said. It appealed to young people, as well as those likely to influence a person's decision to join the Army, and veterans of the service.

Ex-diplomat: Taiwan bullying may trigger firm US reaction

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Chinese aggression toward Taiwan could spur the United States to be less ambiguous about American support for the island, a former deputy secretary of state told an audience here Thursday.

President Joe Biden, who in September said U.S. troops would defend Taiwan if China invaded, “has his heart in the right place,” Richard Armitage, 77, who served under President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2005, said at the Japan National Press Club.

The White House later walked back Biden’s comments. It did the same after the president made a similar statement while visiting Japan in May.

“His team is a little frightened and that is why they keep walking back our president’s statements,” Armitage, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, told an audience of journalists, veterans and local dignitaries.

Tensions in the region spiked Aug. 3 when U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan on a broader Asian tour. The visit prompted China, which sees the self-governing island as a breakaway province that must be reunited with the mainland, possibly by force, to stage live-fire drills that encircled Taiwan.

U.S. officials might state some “clear U.S. red lines” if China continues bullying Tai-

wan, said Armitage, who arrived in a wheelchair but stood to acknowledge the audience.

Under the “One China” policy, the U.S. acknowledges Beijing’s view that it has sovereignty over Taiwan, which split from the mainland in 1949, but considers the island’s status as unsettled.

Washington switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. The U.S., however, has continued to supply arms to Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act.

The U.S. has maintained “strategic ambiguity” about what military actions it would take in the event China moved to take the island by force.

China cannot easily invade Taiwan, Armitage said.

Taiwan’s military is being modernized for asymmetrical warfare with drones, sea mines and capabilities to cut off Chinese communication and sensors in the event of conflict, he said.

Armitage was sending a strong message to Beijing to back off Taiwan, according to Ralph Cossa, president emeritus of the Pacific Forum think tank in Hawaii.

“The Chinese don’t seem to understand that the more they threaten or harass Taiwan, the more the international community feels compelled to come to its assistance and declare its support,” he said.

Japan speeds up defensive arms purchase review

BY ALEX WILSON
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Japan’s Ministry of Defense said last week it’s interested in spending more on defensive weaponry but declined to confirm reports that it may buy 500 Tomahawk cruise missiles from the United States.

Two Japanese media outlets, Mainichi Shimbun and Kyodo News, citing unnamed government sources, reported last week that Japan is considering buying the Tomahawks.

The missiles would be purchased over time until the 2027 fiscal year to enhance the country’s defensive and deterrence capabilities, according to the reports.

A Defense Ministry spokesman on Thursday told Stars and Stripes that the Japanese government is making progress evaluating various options to strengthen its defense capabilities, but he declined to say what options, including equipment, were being evaluated.

“To fundamentally enhance defense capabilities, the Ministry of Defense is speeding up the realistic examination process without excluding all options and is collecting various information,” the spokesman said by phone.

Some government officials in Japan customarily speak to the media on condition of anonymity as a condition of their employment.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said Wednesday he is aware of reports that Japan is considering buying Tomahawks as part of its efforts to acquire “counterstrike capability,” but also said no decisions have been made. He said Japan is still considering whether to acquire the ability to strike at its adversaries in case of a conflict. A policy document outlining Japan’s hopes to acquire the “counterstrike capability” to take out enemy missiles if attacked was presented Nov. 25 during a meeting between Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner, Ko-meito, Japanese media reported last week.

The ministry on Tuesday confirmed that discussion but declined to provide further details.

F-15 Eagles start exit from Okinawa

BY JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

The first contingent of F-15C/D fighters to permanently depart Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, lifted off Thursday, bound for service with the National Guard or storage in the Air Force boneyard.

The Air Force on Oct. 27 announced plans to replace the two units of F-15 Eagles positioned on Okinawa — the 44th and 67th Fighter Squadrons — with rotating units of more advanced, fifth-generation F-22 Raptor stealth fighters for the foreseeable future. About a dozen Raptors from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, touched

down at Kadena on Nov. 3.

The phase-out of the 48 Eagle fighters positioned 43 years on Okinawa is supposed to take place over two years with no gaps in fighter coverage.

A spokesman at Kadena, Staff Sgt. Kyle Johnson, on Friday declined to say how many F-15s departed Thursday or how many F-22s are expected. But the official Kadena Facebook page showed eight F-15s ready to taxi for take-off Thursday.

“Unfortunately, we don’t discuss details of inbound and outbound deployments due [to] operational security concerns,” an email from Johnson states.

Defense chief: Keep COVID shot mandate

Associated Press

ABOARD A U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he wants to keep the military's COVID-19 vaccine mandate in place to protect the health of the troops, as Republican governors and lawmakers press to rescind it.

This past week more than 20 Republican governors sent a letter to President Joe Biden asking that the administration remove the mandate, saying it has hurt the U.S. National Guard's ability to recruit troops.

Those troops are activated by governors to respond to natural disasters or unrest.

Congress may consider legislation this coming week to end the mandate as a requirement to gather enough support to pass this year's defense budget, which is already two months late.

Austin said he would not comment on pressure from the Hill.

"We lost a million people to this virus," Austin told reporters traveling with him Saturday. "A million people died in the

United States of America. We lost hundreds in DOD. So this mandate has kept people healthy."

"I'm the guy" who ordered the military to require the vaccine, Austin added. "I support continuation of vaccinating the troops."

Last year Austin directed that all troops get the vaccine or face potential expulsion from the military; thousands of active duty forces have been discharged since then for their refusal to get the shots.

Supreme Court justices to hear new election case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court is about to confront a new elections case, a Republican-led challenge asking the justices for a novel ruling that could significantly increase the power of state lawmakers over elections for Congress and the presidency.

The court is set to hear arguments Wednesday in a case from North Carolina, where Republican efforts to draw congressional districts heavily in their favor were blocked by a Democratic majority on the state Supreme Court because the GOP map violated the state constitution.

A court-drawn map produced seven seats for each party in last month's midterm elections in highly competitive North Carolina.

The question for the justices is whether the U.S. Constitution's provision giving state legislatures the power to make the rules about the "times, places and manner" of congressional elections cuts state courts out of the process.

"This is the single most important case on American democracy — and for American democracy — in the nation's history," said

former federal judge Michael Luttig, a prominent conservative who has joined the legal team defending the North Carolina court decision.

The Republican leaders of North Carolina's legislature told the Supreme Court that the Constitution's "carefully drawn lines place the regulation of federal elections in the hands of state legislatures, Congress and no one else."

Three conservative justices already have voiced some support for the idea that the state court had improperly taken powers given by the Constitution when it comes to federal elections. A fourth has written approvingly about limiting the power of state courts in this area.

But the Supreme Court has never invoked what is known as the independent state legislature theory. It was, though, mentioned in a separate opinion by three conservatives in the *Bush v. Gore* case that settled the 2000 presidential election.

If the court were to recognize it now, opponents of the concept have argued, the effects could be much broader than just redistricting.

tricting.

The most robust ruling for North Carolina Republicans could undermine more than 170 state constitutional provisions, over 650 state laws delegating authority to make election policies to state and local officials, and thousands of regulations down to the location of polling places, according to the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law.

Luttig, who advised former Vice President Mike Pence that he had no authority to reject electoral votes following the 2020 election, is among several prominent conservatives and Republicans who have lined up against the broad assertion that legislatures can't be challenged in state courts when they make decisions about federal elections, including congressional redistricting.

That group includes former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, law professor Steven Calabresi, a founder of the conservative Federalist Society, and Benjamin Ginsberg, a longtime lawyer for Republican candidates and the party.

Molten lava on Hawaii's Big Island could block main highway

Associated Press

HILO, Hawaii — Many people on the Big Island of Hawaii are bracing for major upheaval if lava from Mauna Loa volcano slides across a key highway and blocks the quickest route connecting two sides of the island.

The molten rock could make the road impassable and force drivers to find alternate coastal routes in the north and south. That could add hours to commute times, doctor's visits and freight truck deliveries.

"I am very nervous about it being cut off,"

said Frank Manley, a licensed practical nurse whose commute is already an hour and 45 minutes each way from his home in Hilo to a Kaiser Permanente clinic in Kailua-Kona.

If the highway closes, he anticipates driving two-and-a-half to three hours in each direction. Manley fears he might lose pay if an accident or other traffic disruption along an alternate route delays his arrival.

The lava is oozing slowly at a rate that might reach the road next week. But its path is unpredictable and could change course,

or the flow could stop completely and spare the highway.

The slow-moving flow was coursing about 2.7 miles from the road Friday, U.S. Geological Survey scientists reported.

There are more affordable housing options on the island's east side, home to the county seat, Hilo. But many jobs at beach resorts, in construction and other industries are readily available on the west side, where Kailua-Kona is located. Saddle Road, also known as Route 200 or Daniel K. Inouye Highway, connects the two communities.

Chief of US intel thinking positive for Ukraine forces

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — The head of U.S. intelligence says fighting in Russia's war in Ukraine is running at a "reduced tempo" and suggests Ukrainian forces could have brighter prospects in coming months.

Avril Haines alluded to past allegations by some that Russian President Vladimir Putin's advisers could be shielding him from bad news — for Russia — about war developments, and said he "is becoming more informed of the challenges that the military faces in Russia."

"But it's still not clear to us that he has a full picture at this stage of just how challenged they are," the U.S. director of national intelligence said Saturday at the Reagan National Defense Forum in Simi Valley, Calif.

Looking ahead, Haines said, "honestly we're seeing a kind of a reduced tempo already of the conflict" and her team expects that both sides will look to refit, resupply, and reconstitute for a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive in the spring.

"But we actually have a fair amount of skepticism as to whether or not the Russians will be in fact prepared to do that," she said. "And I think more optimistically for the Ukrainians in that timeframe."

On Sunday, the British Ministry of Defense, in its latest intelligence estimate, pointed to new signs from an independent Russian media outlet that public support in Russia for the military campaign was "falling significantly."

Meduza said it obtained a recent confi-

dential opinion survey conducted by the Federal Protection Service, which is in charge of guarding the Kremlin and providing security to top government officials.

The survey, commissioned by the Kremlin, found that 55% of respondents backed peace talks with Ukraine while 25% wanted the war to go on. The report didn't mention the margin of error.

Levada Center, Russia's top independent pollster, found in a similar poll carried out in November that 53% of respondents supported peace talks, 41% spoke in favor of continuing the fight, and 6% were undecided. That poll of 1,600 people had a margin of error of no more than 3.4%.

The British Defense Ministry noted that "despite the Russian authorities' efforts to enforce pervasive control of the information environment, the conflict has become increasingly tangible for many Russians since the September 2022 'partial mobilization.'"

"With Russia unlikely to achieve major battlefield successes in the next several months, maintaining even tacit approval of the war amongst the population is likely to be increasingly difficult for the Kremlin," it said.

In recent weeks, Russia's military focus has been on striking Ukrainian infrastructure and pressing an offensive in the east, near the town of Bakhmut, while shelling sites in the city of Kherson, which Ukrainian forces liberated last month after an 8-month Russian occupation.

Ukraine: Animals' eyes sent to some Europe embassies

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian embassies and consulates in six European countries have received packages containing animals' eyes in recent days, a Ukrainian official said Friday.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Oleh Nikolenko wrote on Facebook that the "bloody parcels" were received by the Ukrainian embassies in Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Croatia and Italy, as well as by consulates in Naples, Italy; Krakow, Poland and the Czech city of Brno.

He said that "we are studying the meaning of this message."

"It's a very strong signal," said the Ukrainian consul in Naples, Maksym Kovalenko, who confirmed his office received two letters containing fish eyes at around 10:30 a.m. Thursday.

Nikolenko said the parcels arrived after a package containing an explosive device sent to the Ukrainian Embassy in Madrid ignited upon opening on Wednesday and injured an employee.

That was one of multiple explosive parcels found in Spain last week.

In Poland, a spokesman for the police in Warsaw confirmed by email that a package arrived at the Ukrainian Consulate in the Polish capital on Thursday that "raised concern" from one of the employees. The police department for protecting diplomatic missions was notified and "we quickly eliminated the danger" spokesman Sylwester Marczak said. He provided no further details. Marczak said he was not aware of any such parcel arriving at the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw.

Indonesia's Mount Semeru unleashes lava river

Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesia's highest volcano on its most densely populated island released searing gas clouds and rivers of lava Sunday in its latest eruption.

Monsoon rains eroded and collapsed the lava dome atop 12,060-foot Mount Semeru, causing the eruption, according to National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari.

Several villages were blanketed with falling ash, blocking out the sun, but no casualties have been reported. Several hundred

residents, their faces smeared with volcanic dust and rain, fled to temporary shelters or left for other safe areas.

Thick columns of ash were blasted about 5,000 feet into the sky while searing gas and lava flowed down Semeru's slopes toward a nearby river.

Increased activities of the volcano on Sunday afternoon prompted authorities to widen the danger zone to 5 miles from the crater, said Hendra Gunawan, who heads the Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Center.

He said scientists raised the volcano's alert level to the highest and people were advised to keep off the southeastern sector along the Besuk Kobokan River, which is in the path of the lava flow.

Semeru's last major eruption was in December last year, when it blew up with fury that left 51 people dead in villages that were buried in layers of mud. Several hundred others suffered serious burns and the eruption forced the evacuation of more than 10,000 people. The government moved about 2,970 houses out of the danger zone.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Charges: Boy, 10, killed mom over VR headset

WI MILWAUKEE — A 10-year-old Milwaukee boy intentionally aimed a gun at his mother, then shot and killed her, because she would not buy him a virtual reality headset, prosecutors said.

The boy initially told police that the shooting was an accident, according to criminal charges obtained by the Journal Sentinel. But later he said he intentionally aimed at his mom before shooting her. The boy was charged as an adult with first-degree reckless homicide.

According to the complaint, the boy initially told officers he got the gun from his mother's bedroom and went to the basement where she was doing laundry. He said he was twirling the gun around his finger when it went off.

A day later, concerned relatives called police after the boy exhibited unusual behavior. Milwaukee police interviewed the boy again. This time, he told detectives he aimed the gun at his mom with two hands while in a shooting stance. He said he tried shooting a wall to "scare her" when she walked in front of him and he shot her, the complaint says.

FDA approves 1st fecal transplant treatment

DC WASHINGTON — U.S. officials have approved the first pharmaceutical-grade version of the fecal transplant procedures that doctors have increasingly used against hard-to-treat intestinal infections.

The Food and Drug Adminis-

tration approved Rebyota for adults who have trouble fighting off infections with *Clostridium difficile*, commonly referred to as C. diff, a bacteria that causes nausea, cramping and diarrhea. The infection is dangerous when it reoccurs and is linked to about 15,000 to 30,000 deaths a year.

For more than a decade, some U.S. doctors have used stool samples from healthy donors to treat the condition. The healthy bacteria from donors' guts has been shown to help recipients fight off C. diff bacteria. The procedure has grown more common as many patients no longer respond to traditional antibiotics.

The therapy from Ferring Pharmaceuticals Inc. is made from stool donations that are screened for dozens of infections and viruses. The therapy is delivered via the rectum by health professionals as a one-time procedure.

Terrell Owens says man he hit threatened him

CA INGLEWOOD — Retired NFL star Terrell Owens said a fight caught on camera in which he punched a man in a CVS parking lot was the result of an "aggressor" threatening him and a fan at the store.

Owens, 48, said he acted in self-defense when the man "made offensive gestures and threatening statements" to him and a fan who approached Owens.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame wide receiver said the man approached him and the fan in the store, and in an attempt to de-escalate the situa-

tion, he walked outside, where the man followed.

Owens said the man "swung at me first" before he "felt obligated to prevent the aggressor from becoming more violent."

Man accused of biting off someone's nose

MS BAY ST. LOUIS — A Mississippi man is out on bond after being accused of biting a person's nose off.

The incident occurred in the parking lot of the Hollywood Casino in Bay St. Louis. Police officers responded to a complaint of an assault and arrived to find a victim with a disfiguring facial injury.

"The investigation determined that suspect, Mark Curtis Wells, bit the nose off of the victim," Bay St. Louis Police Chief Toby Schwartz said in a news release.

According to the release, officers learned an argument had ensued prior to the incident between Wells and the victim over a golf game played at a neighboring golf course. The argument continued throughout the day until it culminated in the casino parking lot.

Wells initially fled the scene in a dark-colored Tesla, but later turned himself in.

Ex-con gets 18 years in severed head case

NV LAS VEGAS — An ex-convict who led police on a chase before officers found the severed head and dismembered body of his friend in a truck he was driving was sentenced to at least 18 years in prison.

Eric John Holland said he was "truly remorseful" for killing Richard P. Miller, whose remains were found in coolers in the bed of a pickup last December. Authorities found that Miller had been shot several times, including at least once in the head, before his body was carved up.

Holland pleaded guilty to a reduced charge and avoided trial on an open murder charge that could have resulted in a life sentence behind bars.

Holland, 58, has an extensive criminal history, mostly for forgery and embezzlement.

Holland was friends with Miller, 65, who lived on a houseboat at Lake Mead, the Colorado River reservoir about a 30-minute drive from Las Vegas. Miller was reported missing in November 2021, and investigators later determined he was killed during an argument with Holland.

Tesla delivers electric semis to PepsiCo

MI DETROIT — Tesla delivered its first electric semis to PepsiCo, three years after Elon Musk said his company would start production.

The Austin, Texas, company formally delivered the trucks at a factory near Reno, Nev.

Musk drove one of three Tesla Semis in front of a crowd inside the factory. One was white, one was painted with a Pepsi logo and another with Frito-Lay colors.

PepsiCo is taking part in a zero-emissions freight project at a Frito-Lay facility in Modesto, Calif.

— From wire reports

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US reaches end of road at World Cup

Associated Press

AL RAYYAN, Qatar — Christian Pulisic covered his face as he walked off. Tyler Adams, Weston McKennie and Kellyn Acosta gathered for a group hug. Tim Weah, DeAndre Yedlin and Sean Johnson sat on the field in a small circle with their cleats off.

“It hurts after a tough loss like that when we feel like we could have had more,” Pulisic said, managing a voice only just above a whisper. “We don’t want to feel like this again.”

The United States’ return to the World Cup ended with a 3-1 loss to the Netherlands on Saturday in the round of 16. While the Oranje extended their unbeaten streak to 19 games and advanced to a quarterfinal with Argentina, the Americans contemplated how far they came and how short they fell.

Defensive lapses gave the Dutch a treat as Memphis Depay scored in the 10th minute and Daley Blind in first-half stoppage time.

U.S. hope revived when Pulisic’s cross hit the trailing foot of second-half substitute Haji Wright and popped over goalkeeper Andries Noppert and into the net in the 76th. But Denzel Dumfries, named after actor Denzel Washington, scored on a volley in the 81st after assisting on the first two goals.

“The American public should be optimistic,” said Gregg Berhalter, the first person to play for and coach the U.S. team at a World Cup. “When you look at the way we wanted to play and did play, it should be positive.”

The U.S. hasn’t reached the quarterfinals since 2002 and was eliminated in the first knockout round, just like in 2010 and 2014.

After the American failure to qualify for 2018, Yedlin was the only holdover on a roster that was the tournament’s second-youngest, averaging just over 25 years.

“Now they know that feeling of what it’s like to lose after put-

ting so much into it,” the 29-year-old defender said, “and the feeling of defeat from the past can only fuel success in the future.”

The U.S. is winless in 12 games against European opponents at the World Cup since 2002 and has won once and lost seven in knockout rounds since the championship launched in 1930.

“This tournament has really restored a lot of belief, restored a lot of respect to U.S. soccer and to soccer in our country,” McKennie said. “I think we’ve shown that we can be giants eventually. Maybe we may not be there yet, but I think we’re definitely on our way.”

Before a crowd of 44,846 at the renovated Khalifa International Stadium, Pulisic had a chance to put the U.S. ahead in the third minute. McKennie knocked a poor clearance back into the penalty area, but Noppert blocked his point-blank shot with his left thigh.

“I thought I was way offside

when it happened, but I still hit it and he made a good save,” Pulisic said.

The Dutch went ahead when Cody Gakpo played the ball to Dumfries on the right flank. Depay sprinted into the penalty area as Adams failed to track him, and Dumfries one-timed a cross that Depay redirected inside Matt Turner’s far post for the first goal against the U.S. during the run of play in the tournament.

Blind scored in the first minute of stoppage time. Following a throw-in, Dumfries got a cross around Adams and Blind beat a late-arriving Sergiño Dest to the ball at the penalty spot for his first international goal in eight years.

Wright entered in the 67th and scored his second international goal on the unusual touch from 3 yards out, sparking U.S. hopes. But Dumfries was left unmarked by Tim Ream and Antonee Robinson and scored off Blind’s cross from 6 yards for his sixth goal.

No surprises in final College Football Playoff rankings

Associated Press

Georgia, Michigan, TCU and Ohio State were chosen Sunday to play in the College Football Playoff, giving the Big Ten multiple teams in the four-team field for the first time.

The defending national champion and top-ranked Bulldogs and fourth-seeded Buckeyes will meet Dec. 31 at the Peach Bowl in Atlanta. The second-seeded Wolverines and third-ranked Horned Frogs, the lone first-timer in the final four, will play at the Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, Ariz., the same day.

The national championship game is Jan. 9 at Sofi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif., and it could be a rematch of rivals Ohio State and Michigan in what will soon be Big Ten country as the conference expands.

The Buckeyes and Wolverines have never played outside of their annual regular-season game in a bitter rivalry that dates to 1902.

With some drama, but not much controversy, the CFP selection committee’s top four fell into place over championship weekend. The most interesting part of the unveiling was whether the committee would pair Michigan and Ohio State in the semifinals and whether Alabama might be able to slip in as the first two-loss playoff team.

In the end, the committee sprung no surprises.

Committee chairman Boo Corrigan, the athletic director at North Carolina State, said Ohio State’s wins against Penn State and Notre Dame helped push the Buckeyes in over Alabama.

“As we looked at the total body of work, the committee was comfortable with Ohio State at No. 4 and Alabama at 5,” he said in an interview with ESPN. Corrigan also said the committee did not make any special effort to avoid having a rematch of Ohio State and Michigan in a semifinal.

Georgia (13-0) won the Southeastern Conference championship game in a rout and Michigan (13-0) similarly took the Big Ten title.

TCU (12-1) suffered its first loss of the season in the Big 12 championship, falling in overtime to Kansas State. The loss made for an uneasy night for Heisman Trophy contender Max Duggan and the Horned Frogs, but in the end they had already built enough equity during their improbable season to stay in the top four.

Ohio State (11-1) was given a second life in the playoff race when Southern California lost the Pac-12 championship game Friday night. A week after star quarterback C.J. Stroud and the Buckeyes lost at home to coach Jim Harbaugh and Michigan, they slipped into the final playoff spot, the best of a flawed batch of contenders.

Alabama (10-2) was fifth in the committee rankings, missing the CFP for just the second time in its nine-year history.

Devils set club mark with 11th straight road win

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jack Hughes, Dawson Mercer and Fabian Zetterlund scored, and the New Jersey Devils set a club record with their 11th straight road victory, beating the Philadelphia Flyers 3-2 on Saturday night.

Miles Wood added two assists for the Devils, who are a win away from tying the NHL record for consecutive road victories. New Jersey lost its first road game of the season at the Flyers on Oct. 13 and hasn't dropped one away from home since. The Devils' next road game is Dec. 12 at the Rangers.

"I think that's a big accomplishment," Mercer said. "Road games are hard, and to come away with that many, it's a special thing."

The Devils, who recently had a 13-game winning streak, have won four of their last five and 17 of 19 overall. New Jersey managed to continue its surge despite being outplayed for the first two periods.

"It really was a challenge," New Jersey coach Lindy Ruff said. "I thought as a team we were flat. We had nobody that

was carrying the play and skating well. We dug a little deep at the start of the third, and we created a little energy. We found a way to win."

Travis Konecny and Lukas Sedlak scored for the Flyers, who have lost 12 of 13.

Bruins 5, Avalanche 1: David Pastrnak and Trent Frederic scored two goals apiece, Linus Ullmark stopped 25 shots and host Boston improved to an NHL-record 14-0 at home.

Jake DeBrusk scored his 100th career NHL goal, making it 5-1 late in the third period just 10 seconds after Frederic gave the Bruins a three-goal lead.

Blackhawks 5, Rangers 2: Patrick Kane had a goal and two assists and Max Domi scored twice as visiting Chicago snapped an eight-game losing streak.

Reese Johnson and Taylor Raddysh also scored as the Blackhawks won for the first time since Nov. 12 at Anaheim. They had won just two of their previous 16.

Lightning 4, Maple Leafs 3 (OT): Alex Killorn scored from the right circle 33 seconds into

overtime and host Tampa Bay beat Toronto.

Nikita Kucherov, Ross Colton and Vladislav Namestnikov also scored for the Lightning. Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 36 shots.

Panthers 5, Kraken 1: Carter Verhaeghe scored twice 26 seconds apart in the first period, Matthew Tkachuk scored his 12th goal and had an assist, and visiting Florida snapped Seattle's seven-game winning streak.

The longest active winning streak in the league came to an end as Seattle couldn't solve Florida goalie Spencer Knight other than Jared McCann's goal early in the second period. Knight made 36 saves and the Panthers won consecutive games for the first time in nearly a month.

Penguins 6, Blues 2: Kasperi Kapanen scored his second career hat trick to lift host Pittsburgh.

Bryan Rust had a goal and three assists, Jason Zucker had a goal and two assists, Sidney Crosby also scored and Evgeni Malkin added three assists to help the Penguins win their second straight and seventh in the last nine. Tristan Jarry stopped 26

shots for the Penguins, who are 9-2-2 in their last 13.

Wild 5, Ducks 4 (SO): Kirill Kaprizov and Matt Boldy scored in the shootout, helping host Minnesota beat Anaheim.

Oilers 5, Canadiens 3: Connor McDavid had two goals and two assists, Leon Draisaitl had a goal and three assists and host Edmonton beat Montreal.

Golden Knights 4, Red Wings 1: Jack Eichel scored just over a minute into the game, and visiting Las Vegas never relinquished the lead.

Senators 5, Sharks 2: Claude Giroux had two goals and an assist to lead host Ottawa to its second straight win.

Canucks 3, Coyotes 2 (OT): Bo Horvat scored his second goal of the game at 4:09 of overtime, and struggling Vancouver beat road-weary Arizona.

Hurricanes 4, Kings 2: Martin Necas had a goal and an assist, and visiting Carolina won its fourth straight.

Flames 5, Capitals 2: Andrew Mangiapane scored twice, Adam Ruzicka had a goal and two assists and host Calgary beat Washington.

Colorado hires Sanders to turn football program around

Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Deion Sanders is taking over as head coach at Colorado, bringing his charisma and larger-than-life persona to a beleaguered Pac-12 program that's plunged to the bottom of college football.

The deal was announced Saturday night by CU athletic director Rick George.

The Pro Football Hall of Famer has been at Jackson State, a historically Black college that plays in the NCAA's second tier of Division I, since 2020. Sanders led the Tigers to consecutive Southwestern Athletic Conference titles.

The Tigers beat Southern in the SWAC championship game Saturday in Jackson, Miss., and a few hours later, Colorado announced he was coming to Boulder.

Sanders told his team after the game that he had accepted another job, but intended to

coach Jackson State (12-0) in the Celebration Bowl for historically Black colleges on Dec. 17 in Atlanta against Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference champion North Carolina Central.

"In coaching you either get elevated or you get terminated," Sanders told his team. "There ain't no graveyard for coaches where they die at the place. They either going to run you off or you going to walk off."

Sanders talked about the dearth of Black head coaches at the highest levels of college football and trying to be a catalyst for change.

The Tigers went 27-5 in the Sanders era and he was named SWAC coach of the year the past two seasons.

Known as "Prime Time" during his NFL career, the 55-year-old Sanders prefers "Coach Prime" these days. Colorado will prove a challenge for the magnetic Sanders,

who inherits a program coming off a 1-11 season. But he brings instant name recognition and a track record of being able to recruit top-level talent.

"There were a number of highly qualified and impressive candidates interested in becoming the next head football coach at Colorado, but none of them had the pedigree, the knowledge and the ability to connect with student-athletes like Deion Sanders," George said in a statement. "Not only will Coach Prime energize our fanbase, I'm confident that he will lead our program back to national prominence while leading a team of high quality and high character."

The Buffaloes have turned in just one full-length winning season since joining the Pac-12 in 2011. They dismissed Karl Dorrell in October and interim coach Mike Sanford finished out the season that culminated with a 63-21 blowout loss to No. 12 Utah at home.

Sabonis scores 24, leads Kings' romp

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Domantas Sabonis scored 24 points on 10-for-11 shooting and the Sacramento Kings handed the undermanned Los Angeles Clippers their worst loss of the season, 123-96 on Saturday.

Sabonis set the tone with 15 points in the opening quarter, and the Kings' bench kept it going in the second, building a 28-point lead. They led by 29 in the third and by 31 in the fourth.

"While everyone warms up, I'm always ready," Sabonis said. "I feel like that's where I can take advantage."

Sabonis made both of his two three-point attempts in the game and hit two of three free throws. He had six assists and five rebounds despite five fouls.

Keegan Murray added 23 points and D'Aaron Fox had 14 points for the Kings, who won their second straight.

The Clippers were again without Paul George (right hamstring tendon strain) and Kawhi Leonard (right ankle sprain), as well as Luke Kennard and Norman Powell. George and Leonard are expected to join the team on their upcoming road trip.

Trail Blazers 116, Jazz 111: Anfernee Simons scored a career-high 45 points and blocked a potential three-pointer with 4.6 sec-

onds left to lead visiting Portland past Utah.

The Jazz led 111-110 after Kelly Olynyk's twisting jumper and then had a chance to tie it at 114, but Simons swiped the ball from Jordan Clarkson as he rose for a three-point attempt from the right angle.

Portland's Jerami Grant scored 13 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter as the Jazz swarmed Simons. Jusuf Nurkic had 15 points and 14 rebounds and Trendon Watford finished with a career-high 14 rebounds, too.

Mavericks 121, Knicks 100: Luka Doncic had a game-high 30 points and Tim Hardaway Jr. chipped in 28 points against his former team to lead visiting Dallas over New York.

Spencer Dinwiddie scored 17 points for Dallas, which outscored New York 69-41 in the second half for just its second win in seven games.

Bucks 105, Hornets 96: Bobby Portis scored 20 points and visiting Milwaukee eased past Charlotte, despite missing star forward Giannis Antetokounmpo.

Antetokounmpo, a two-time MVP, sat out with left knee soreness, one night after scoring 40 points in a home loss to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Raptors 121, Magic 108: O.G. Anunoby matched his season high with 32 points, Pas-

cal Siakam had 26 points and 10 rebounds and host Toronto handed short-handed Orlando its eighth consecutive loss.

Scottie Barnes scored 17 points and had a season-high 14 rebounds, and Fred VanVleet had 13 points as the Raptors won their third straight home game, improving to 9-2 north of the border.

Warriors 120, Rockets 101: Andrewiggins scored a season-best 36 points and matched his career high with eight three-pointers, leading host Golden State past Houston in the second game of back-to-backs for both teams.

Stephen Curry scored 30 points with eight threes of his own to go with 10 assists. Jordan Poole started in place of a resting Klay Thompson and added 21 points and five assists.

Thunder 135, Timberwolves 128: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 33 points in his return to action, and visiting Oklahoma City took advantage of Rudy Gobert's early ejection to post a chippy win over Minnesota.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the NBA's third-leading scorer with a 31-point average, sat out one game earlier this week with a bruised hip. But he had no trouble getting physical against Minnesota, making 10 of 17 shots and all 12 of his free throws.

No.1 Houston holds off Saint Mary's, stays unbeaten

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — J'Wan Roberts scored 15 points, Marcus Sasser added 13 and top-ranked Houston held on to beat Saint Mary's 53-48 on Saturday night.

The Cougars (8-0) won twice in their first week as the No. 1 team since the final poll of the 1982-83 regular season, when Clyde Drexler and Hakeem Olajuwon led high-flying Phi Slama Jama.

Logan Johnson scored 17 points and Aidan Mahaney had 14 for the Gaels (6-3), who lost their third in a row following a 6-0 start.

No. 3 Virginia 62, Florida State 57: Kihei Clark scored 18 points and the host Cavaliers overcame poor shooting to win their 15th straight Atlantic Coast Conference opener.

Virginia (7-0) trailed 22-21 after both teams shot under 30% in the first half. The Cavaliers started the second half with a 22-9 run to build a 43-31 lead.

Florida State (1-9) scored the next six points, and then didn't score again for five

minutes as the Cavaliers rebuilt their advantage.

Rutgers 63, No. 10 Indiana 48: Freshman guard Derek Simpson scored 10 straight points in a game-deciding run and the host Scarlet Knights beat the Hoosiers for the sixth time in a row.

Caleb McConnell had 16 points and 10 rebounds to lead Rutgers (6-2, 1-0 Big Ten).

Miller Kopp scored a season-high 21 points for Indiana (7-1, 0-1).

No. 11 Arkansas 99, San Jose State 58: Trevon Brazile scored 23 points and the host Razorbacks broke away in the second half.

Arkansas (7-1) led 40-35 at the break before erupting. Heralded freshman guard Nick Smith, Jr. contributed 16 points and five assists in his first career start in only his second game as a collegian.

No. 11 Alabama 78, South Dakota State 65: Freshman Noah Clowney's breakout game — 22 points, nine rebounds, four assists and a steal — helped the host Crimson

Tide recover from blowing a 20-point lead and beat the Jackrabbits.

Clowney shot 8-for-17, including 5-for-12 on threes, in his highest-scoring game of the season.

No. 17 Duke 75, Boston College 59: Mark Mitchell scored 15 points and Kyle Filipowski posted 13 points and 10 rebounds for the freshman's fifth double-double as the host Blue Devils won the Atlantic Coast Conference opener for both teams.

Duke (8-2), which shot 52.8% from the field, is unbeaten in six home games under first-year coach Jon Scheyer.

No. 25 Ohio State 96, St. Francis (Pa.) 59: Brice Sensabaugh led his team with 15 points and Bruce Thornton added 13 as the host Buckeyes surged in the second half to beat the Red Flash.

St. Francis got within eight points after the break. But Ohio State (6-2) held St. Francis (2-7) scoreless for about five minutes in the second half and at one point led by 39 points.