

Army says Gen Z vital to boosting recruitment

By **DOUG G. WARE**
Stars and Stripes

The Army's top civilian acknowledged Friday that there are serious challenges in recruiting new troops to the largest U.S. military branch, and she pointed to several possible fixes that begin with young Americans identified as Generation Z. WASHINGTON — The Army's top civilian acknowledged Friday that there are serious challenges in recruiting new troops to the largest U.S. military branch, and she pointed to several possible fixes that begin with young Americans identified as Generation Z.

Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said the service branch aimed to recruit 60,000 new members last year. It got 45,000.

"That's a pretty big shortfall," she said during an event with the left-leaning Center for a New American Security, a

Washington, D.C., think tank. "Some of the challenges in recruiting have been a long time coming. They are not new developments."

Earlier this year, Army leaders said they were aiming for a total force of 473,000 — including new recruits and existing troops — by the time fiscal 2022 ended Oct. 1. The service later cut that target by 12,000 and then another 6,000 by the summer. The Army said the total amount ultimately came in at roughly 465,000, still thousands of troops less than the number budgeted for 2022.

Some of the recruiting troubles, such as declining trust in military institutions, have been known for years, defense officials have said. Others, like the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, are new.

"Only 9% of young Americans are interested in serving in the military," Wormuth said, refer-

ring to a recent Defense Department survey that found only about 23% of young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 years old meet all eligibility requirements without a waiver. Nine percent is the lowest amount since 2007.

Wormuth, 53, who has been Army secretary since May 2021 and was formerly undersecretary of defense for policy under President Barack Obama, identified many problem areas — but also detailed a series of new changes that are intended to solve them.

A key component, she said, is refuting negative perceptions about the Army, particularly when it comes to Generation Z Americans, who were born between the latter half of the 1990s and the early 2010s. Last week, Maxwell Alejandro Frost became the first member of Generation Z to be elected to Congress. The 25-year-old Frost

will represent Florida's 10th District in the House.

"They want community. They want purpose. They want what they're doing to matter," said Wormuth, who was director of the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center before she became Army secretary. "I think we really need to reintroduce the Army to the country, to young people, to their parents, to influencers."

In September, officials from four military branches told a Senate panel that recruiting is becoming harder and they underscored the same challenges that Wormuth pointed out.

"We anticipate the recruiting environment to be even more challenging in 2023 and beyond," Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller, the Air Force's deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Harris to visit Philippine island facing sea feud

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Vice President Kamala Harris will underscore America's commitment to defending treaty ally the Philippines with a visit that started Sunday and involves flying to an island province facing the disputed South China Sea, where Washington has accused China of bullying smaller claimant nations.

After attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Thailand, Harris flew Sunday night to a red-carpet welcome in Manila. On Monday, she meets President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for talks aimed at reinforcing Washington's oldest treaty alliance in Asia and strengthening economic ties, said a senior U.S. administration official, who was not identified according to practice, in an online briefing ahead of the visit.

Harris said her trip to Thailand was "quite successful" as she reiterated the U.S. commitment to the region Sunday afternoon at a roundtable discussion on climate change.

The panel of climate activists, civil society members and business leaders focused on clean energy and the threat climate change is posing to the Mekong Riv-

er, which more than 60 million people in Southeast Asia use for food, water and transport. Harris announced the U.S. plans to provide up to \$20 million in funding for clean energy in the region via the Japan-U.S. Mekong Power Partnership.

Before her flight out, she stopped by a local market and perused a maze of shops, struck up conversations with shopkeepers and purchased Thai green curry paste.

On Tuesday she'll fly to Palawan province, which lies along the South China Sea, to meet fishermen, villagers, officials and the coast guard.

Once there, she'll be the highest-ranking U.S. leader to visit the frontier island at the forefront of the long-seething territorial disputes involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Stripes Lite returns

Stars and Stripes' compact news digest is back. Starting today, it will be available six days per week — Sunday through Friday. Those who are still interested in the digital version of the complete newspaper with fuller coverage and photos, can download the ePaper at: <https://epub.stripes.com>

Sentence thrown out for SEAL in Green Beret death

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

A military appeals court last week threw out the sentence for a Navy SEAL convicted last year of involuntary manslaughter and conspiracy charges in the 2017 death of a Green Beret who he choked during a drunken hazing incident in Mali.

The U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Court of Appeals vacated the January 2021 sentence for Chief Petty Officer Tony DeDolph of 10 years imprisonment, reduction in rank to E-1 and a dishonorable discharge for his role in the death of Army Special Forces Staff Sgt. Logan Melgar, according to a court opinion published Tuesday. Prosecutors failed to disclose to DeDolph's attorneys that one of their key witnesses — a Marine Raider also convicted for his role in Melgar's death — had asked the Navy to reduce his sentence after testifying against the SEAL, Marine Col. Peter Houtz, a military judge, wrote in the appellate court's decision.

The court ordered DeDolph must receive a new sentencing hearing in the case.

Houtz ruled defense attorneys were un-

able to question the full motives of the witness — former Staff Sgt. Kevin Maxwell — in front of the jury that decided DeDolph's fate without the knowledge of the clemency request. Maxwell, after he was convicted, asked the Navy to reduce his prison sentence and asked that a final decision be delayed until he had completed the requirements under his plea deal, which included testifying against DeDolph, according to court documents.

"We find that that there is a reasonable possibility that the outcome of the trial would have been affected by the disclosure of the clemency request," Houtz wrote, adding Maxwell might have been motivated "to exaggerate his testimony" against the SEAL in hopes his sentence would be reduced.

DeDolph, a decorated former member of the elite SEAL Team 6, pleaded guilty to his role in Melgar's death and elected to face sentencing by a military jury. The Navy must now reassign DeDolph's case to a new top Navy officer — known as a convening authority — who can then order a new sentencing trial.

S. Korea, Japan: Another missile launch by North

By DAVID CHOI
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

North Korea fired an intercontinental ballistic missile Friday that came down in seas less than 150 miles from Japanese territory, according to the South Korean and Japanese militaries.

The North's ICBM launched at 10:14 a.m. from a point near its western coast, according to a news release from the Japanese Ministry of Defense. No alert in Japan was issued since the missile was expected not to reach its territories, Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada said at a news conference Friday.

The missile was estimated to have flown eastward for 69 minutes before splashing down in the East Sea, or Sea of Japan, 124 miles west of Oshima-Oshima, an island off the southwestern tip of Hokkaido, at 11:23 a.m., Hamada said. He said the missile landed within the country's exclusive economic zone but that no damages to aircraft or ships were reported.

Based on its trajectory and initial estimates, the missile has a potential range of 9,320 miles, which is within range of the continental United States, Hamada said.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff also described the missile as an ICBM and that it was launched from the Sunan area of Pyongyang, site of the country's international airport, according to a message to reporters. The Joint Chiefs estimated the missile flew roughly 620 miles at a peak altitude of around 3,790 miles.

KCNA said Kim observed the launch with his wife Ri Sol Ju and their "beloved daughter" as well as senior officials, The Associated Press reported.

In response to the launch, South Korean and U.S. fighters demonstrated together over the East Sea, the Joint Chiefs said in a Friday afternoon news release.

Four South Korean F-35A Lightning II stealth fighters and four U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons flew in attack formation. According to the Joint Chiefs, an F-35A struck a simulated North Korean mobile missile launcher using a precision guided bomb at the Pilseung range in Gangwon province.

New \$128M pier completion marks 'historic moment' at Yokosuka base

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The largest U.S. naval base in Japan grew a little larger Friday with the completion of a \$128 million pier that expands the base's ship capacity, maintenance capabilities and its ability to host next-generation warships.

Located in Truman Bay in the southwest quadrant of Yokosuka Naval Base, the newly constructed Pier 5 supports up to three ships at a time and is the first small pier in Japan capable of supporting Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyers, Cmdr. Tyler Scharar told Stars and Stripes on Friday.

The newest pier at the homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet features 480-volt connections for Ticonderoga-class cruisers and Arleigh

Burke-class destroyers, Scharar said, but it also has 4,160-volt connections for Zumwalt-class ships. Outside of Yokosuka, the only piers capable of supporting that type of connection are larger piers that accommodate aircraft carriers.

The pier replaces a 70-year-old floating pier that was demolished in 2019.

On Friday, officials with the U.S. Navy, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and Penta-Ocean Construction gathered on the pier for a ribbon cutting. Base commander Capt. Les Sobol, Naval Forces Japan commander Rear Adm. Carl Lahti, NAVFAC Far East commander Capt. Lance Flood and Penta-Ocean Construction President and CEO Takuzo Shimizu were on hand.

Survey re-do pauses COLA cuts for troops

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Service branches in Hawaii are urging active-duty troops to complete a cost-of-living questionnaire by month's end that could adjust a drastic reduction in service members' cost-of-living allowances.

"The survey is a 're-do' of the living pattern survey conducted in February 2022, to reassess data that resulted in a 10-point decrease in COLA for most of the Hawaiian Islands," U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a news release as the monthlong survey period kicked off on Nov. 1.

"The decrease, which

amounted to several hundreds of dollars a month for many service members, is currently on hold pending new survey results, so everyone's input is vital," the news release stated.

The overseas cost of living allowance is intended to equalize purchasing power for both goods and services with what they would experience if stationed in the contiguous United States.

It is unclear whether the initial survey, conducted early this year, is considered to have been flawed or whether the current survey is being conducted differently.

The timing of the first survey coincided with a water

contamination crisis on Oahu that affected thousands of service members and their families, many of whom had to temporarily relocate to Waikiki Beach hotels for most of the winter.

For many of those affected by fuel-contaminated water, those months were consumed with filling out paperwork, shuttling kids between Waikiki and schools and dealing with health-related issues arising from tainted water.

Indo-Pacific Command, which is overseeing the redo, referred questions about the survey to the Pentagon.

"The Department conducted a Living Pattern Survey in Ha-

waii from February through mid-March 2022 and the Retail Price Schedule data collection from March through June 2022," Cmdr. Nicole Schwegman, a spokeswoman for the Department of Defense, said in an email Thursday.

"After further discussions with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, we decided it would be appropriate to authorize an out-of-cycle survey," she said. "We will update the COLA rates when we have the results from the new data."

The Hawaii survey, which ends Nov. 30, is online at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Community/se/2511374531802B93.

Police: Multiple victims in Colorado nightclub shooting

Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — A 22-year-old gunman opened fire in a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs, killing five people and leaving 18 injured before he was subdued by "heroic" patrons and arrested by police who were on the scene within minutes, authorities said Sunday.

Two firearms, including a "long rifle," were found at Club Q after the Saturday night shooting, said Police Chief Adrian Vasquez.

Investigators were still determining a motive, and the attack was being investigated to see if it should be prosecuted as a hate crime, said El Paso County District Attorney Michael Allen.

Police identified the gunman as Anderson Lee Aldrich, who was in custody and being treated for injuries.

Authorities were called to the Club Q at 11:57 p.m. Saturday with a report of a shooting, and the first officer arrived at midnight.

"At least two heroic people" confronted the gunman and stopped the shooting, Vasquez said, adding: "We owe them a great debt of thanks."

Of the 18 people injured, some were in critical condition and at least two had been treated and released, officials said, adding that some were hurt trying to flee.

Attorney General Merrick Garland was briefed on the shooting, Justice Department spokesman Anthony Coley said. The FBI said it was assisting but said the police department was leading the investigation.

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, who became the first openly gay man in the United States to be elected governor in 2018, said the news was "sickening."

"My heart breaks for the family and friends of those lost, injured, and traumatized in this horrific shooting," Polis said. "Colorado stands with our LGBTQ community and everyone impacted by this tragedy as we mourn."

Massive snowfall buries cars, keeps falling in western NY

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Piles of snow, in some places taller than most people, buried parts of western and northern New York as a lake-effect storm pounded areas east of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario for a third straight day Saturday, with possibly even more to come.

Snowfall totals as high as 77 inches were reported in the Buffalo suburb of Orchard Park, home to the NFL's Buffalo Bills. Partway across the state, the town of Natural Bridge, near the Fort Drum Army base, reported just under 6 feet.

The snowfall in some spots ranked among the highest ever recorded in the area, rivaling the eye-popping amounts that fell during similar storms in 2014 and 1945.

The snowfall totals, which began accumulating Thursday night in some spots, "would be on the order of historic not only for any time of year but for any part of the country," said National Weather Service

meteorologist Frank Pereira, at NWS headquarters in College Park, Md.

The lake-effect storm, caused by cold air picking up moisture from warmer lakes, created narrow bands of wind-blown snow that dumped feet of snow in some communities, while leaving towns a short drive away relatively unscathed.

It wreaked havoc on some roadways, as trucks that took to smaller backroads to avoid a closure on parts of an interstate in the area ended up in mass gridlock that Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz described on social media as "tractor-trailer demo derby day."

The snowfall forced the National Football League to move Sunday's game between the Bills and Cleveland Browns to Detroit.

Partial sunshine and a break from the snow came in some of the hardest-hit areas south of Buffalo's center Saturday as the snow bands shifted north.

Turkey strikes in Syria a week after bombing

Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Turkey launched airstrikes over northern regions of Syria and Iraq, the Turkish Defense Ministry said Sunday, targeting Kurdish groups that Ankara holds responsible for last week's bomb attack in Istanbul.

Warplanes attacked bases of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and the Syrian People's Protection Units, or YPG, the ministry said in a statement, which was accompanied by images of F-16 jets taking off and footage of a strike from an aerial drone.

The ministry cited Turkey's right to self

defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter in launching an operation it called Claw-Sword late Saturday. It said it was targeting areas "used as a base by terrorists in their attacks on our country."

Turkey said it was seeking to prevent attacks, secure its southern border and "destroy terrorism at its source."

The airstrikes came after a bomb rocked a bustling avenue in the heart of Istanbul on Nov. 13, killing six people and wounding over 80 others.

Turkish authorities blamed the attack on the PKK and its Syrian affiliate the YPG. The Kurdish militant groups, however, have

denied involvement.

Ankara and Washington both consider the PKK a terror group, but disagree on the status of the YPG. Under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces, the YPG has been allied with the United States in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria. The PKK has fought an armed insurgency in Turkey since 1984. The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people since then.

After the strikes, the Defense Ministry posted a photo of an F-16 fighter plane with the phrase, "Payback time! The scoundrels are being held to account for their treacherous attacks."

DOJ names special counsel for probes related to Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Merrick Garland named a special counsel on Friday to oversee the Justice Department's investigation into the presence of classified documents at former President Donald Trump's Florida estate as well as key aspects of a separate probe involving the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection and efforts to undo the 2020 election.

The appointment of veteran prosecutor Jack Smith, announced just three days after Trump formally launched his 2024 candidacy, is a recognition of the unmistakable political implications of two investigations that involve not only a former president but also a current White House hopeful. It installs a new chain of command over sensitive probes seen as likely to accelerate now that the midterm elections have concluded,

with Garland citing Trump's entry into the race and President Joe Biden's stated intention to run again as reasons for Smith's sudden appointment.

"The Department of Justice has long recognized that in certain extraordinary cases, it is in the public's interest to appoint a special prosecutor to independently manage an investigation and prosecution," Garland said from the Justice Department's podium.

Trump addressed the news Friday night at an America First Policy Institute gala at Mar-a-Lago, slamming what he described as the "appalling announcement today by the egregiously corrupt Biden administration and their weaponized Department of Justice."

He called it a "horrendous abuse of power" and "the latest in a long series of witch hunts," and said he'd "done nothing wrong,"

Smith, who led the Justice Department's public integrity section in Washington and later served as the acting chief federal prosecutor in Nashville, Tenn., during the Obama administration, is set to begin his work immediately, Garland said. He has been serving since 2018 as chief prosecutor for the special court in The Hague, Netherlands, that is tasked with investigating international war crimes.

The Justice Department described Smith as a registered independent, an effort to blunt any attack of perceived political bias. Trump is a Republican, and Biden is a Democrat.

"Throughout his career, Jack Smith has built a reputation as an impartial and determined prosecutor who leads teams with energy and focus to follow the facts wherever they lead," Garland said.

Nuclear agency warns of renewed shelling at Ukrainian plant

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Powerful explosions from shelling shook Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, the site of Europe's largest nuclear power plant, the global nuclear watchdog said Sunday, calling for "urgent measures to help prevent a nuclear accident" in the Russian-occupied facility.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said multiple explosions near the plant — on Saturday evening and again on Sunday morning — abruptly ended a period of relative calm around the nuclear facility that has been the site of fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces since

Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

The fighting has raised the specter of a nuclear catastrophe ever since Russian troops occupied the plant during the early days of the war.

In renewed shelling both close to and at the site, IAEA experts at the Zaporizhzhia facility reported hearing more than a dozen blasts within a short period Sunday morning and could see some explosions from their windows, the agency said.

Several buildings, systems and equipment at the power plant — none critical for the plant's nuclear safety — were damaged, the IAEA said, citing plant management.

Still, Grossi called reports of the shelling "extremely disturbing," and appealed to both sides to urgently implement a nuclear safety and security zone around the facility.

"Whoever is behind this, it must stop immediately," he said. "As I have said many times before, you're playing with fire!"

The weekend strikes damaged the system that would enable power units 5 and 6 to start producing electricity again for Ukraine, the power operator said.

It listed chemical desalinated water storage tanks and a steam generator purge system as being damaged Sunday, although the full extent of the damage was still being assessed.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Deputy gun discharges, shoots student in class

IN CLINTON — An Indiana high school student was shot and wounded Thursday when a sheriff's deputy's gun accidentally discharged in a classroom as students were taking part in law enforcement vocational training, officials said.

The wounded South Vermillion High School student was taken to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries after the morning shooting, the school district said in Facebook post. The high school senior was grazed by the bullet. He said the male student described his pain level as a "sting."

Chapman said the shooting occurred in a popular vocational law enforcement class that's taught by deputy sheriffs from the Vermillion County Sheriff's Office, WTO-TV reported.

"During the course of instruction today, they were going through some drills, and during the course of that drill, the deputy's service revolver was accidentally discharged, hitting one of our students," he said.

Indiana State Police said Deputy Tim DisPennett, a 19-year veteran of the Vermillion County Sheriff's Department, had been placed on administrative leave as they investigate the shooting.

Man with ax and sword tried to enter newsroom

NY NEW YORK — A man with an ax and a sword went into the lobby of the New York Times building on Thursday and asked to speak with the political section, authorities said, then handed over his weapons and waited for emer-

gency personnel when he was denied entry.

The New York Police Department said officers responded to the Times' building in midtown Manhattan shortly after noon after getting a 911 call about a man with a knife.

When police officers arrived, building security told them the man had the two weapons, and made the request to speak with the specific part of the newspaper staff. He was taken to the hospital for evaluation.

Foot found in national park hot pool identified

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — A foot found floating in a Yellowstone National Park hot pool last summer belonged to a 70-year-old man from Los Angeles, park officials said Thursday.

It still isn't clear how the man, Il Hun Ro, ended up in the spring, but investigators don't suspect foul play, park officials said.

Park staff found Ro's partial foot inside of a shoe in Abyss Pool in the park's West Thumb Geyser Basin in August.

Investigators concluded that whatever happened to Ro occurred on the morning of July 31, but that nobody saw it. They identified Ro through a DNA analysis, officials said.

6 hurt when car crashes into LA street carnival

CA LOS ANGELES — A Mississippi man was arrested on suspicion of felony hit-and-run after authorities said he drove through a crowded weekend street carnival while being pursued by police in South

Los Angeles, injuring six people.

Steven Weems, 23, was arrested late Saturday, hours after the Porsche Cayenne crashed through a cement rail and into the carnival. Police said officers were trying to pull the Porsche over when it veered through the barrier.

Six people between 30 and 50 years old were struck and taken to hospitals with non-life-threatening injuries, Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman Nicholas Prange said Saturday. Los Angeles police Officer Melissa Podany said Sunday that all the injuries were minor.

Wildlife official jailed in monkey smuggling case

FL MIAMI — Federal prosecutors have charged eight people with smuggling endangered monkeys, including a Cambodian wildlife official who was arrested in the United States while traveling to a conference on protecting endangered species.

The official plus a colleague in that country's wildlife agency and six people connected to a Hong Kong-based company were involved with breeding long-tailed macaques for scientific and academic research, supplying them to labs in Florida and Texas. But the group is accused of illegally purchasing wild macaques for the business when they lacked supply from their breeding operations.

Long-tailed macaques, sometimes known as crab-eating macaques, are protected under international trade law and special permits are required to import the animals into the U.S.

Masphal Kry, the deputy director of Wildlife and Biodiver-

sity in Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, was arrested Wednesday at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. Kry, 46, was traveling to Panama to attend an international meeting on regulating trade in endangered species, officials said.

The macaques were taken from national parks and other protected areas in Cambodia to breeding facilities where they were provided false export permits, officials said. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries officials received cash payments of \$220 each in exchange for a collection quota of 3,000 "unofficial" monkeys.

Temporary bridge built over giant sinkhole

WV HINTON — Highway crews are building a temporary bridge over a giant sinkhole in southern West Virginia that has overtaken a road and threatened a nearby police department's building.

The 125-foot temporary bridge was started Friday along state Route 20 in Hinton until permanent repairs can be made to a 90-year-old drainage structure that collapsed underneath it, the Department of Transportation said in a news release.

The bridge will be long enough to span the existing hole, even if it gets bigger before contractors can replace the drainage structure, highways district engineer Joe Pack said. Traffic will be detoured while the bridge is built.

The sinkhole opened in June, when it was about 6 feet wide and 30 feet deep but is exponentially bigger now.

— From wire reports

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Eight-year World Cup wait over for US

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — Gio Reyna, Joe Scally and Yusuf Musah were 11 years old the last time the United States took the field in a World Cup match. On the 3,066th day after that loss in Brazil, the Americans return to soccer's showcase with a new-look team dreaming lofty goals and hoping for actual ones.

Filled with novelty, nerves and naivety, this young American team takes the field against Wales on Monday night in a match a growing fanbase back home has been pining for since 2014.

"Three years, four years of just working up to this moment, I think all the guys are ready to go," midfielder Weston McKennie said.

A Friday match against England follows and group play ends Nov. 29 against Iran, which famously eliminated the U.S. from the 1998 World Cup in France.

Only DeAndre Yedlin, a 29-year-old defender, remains

from the American team eliminated by Belgium in the second round eight years ago. Yedlin, Christian Pulisic, Kellyn Acosta and Tim Ream are among just four holdovers from the group that flopped to the field in anguish after the crushing loss at Trinidad in CONCACAF qualifying in October 2017 that ended the streak of U.S. World Cup appearances at seven.

McKennie debuted a month later in a 1-1 friendly draw at Portugal along with Tyler Adams and Cameron Carter-Vickers. A total of 118 players were tried over 68 matches in a World Cup cycle interrupted by a pandemic, including 91 after Gregg Berhalter was hired as coach in December 2018. He gave debuts to 56 players and took the second-youngest roster to the tournament at an average age of just over 25 years, older than only Ghana.

Some are already looking ahead to 2026, when the U.S. co-hosts the tournament and the core group this year figures to

be in its prime.

"We want to build a ton of momentum going into 2026, but it all starts now," Berhalter said.

Berhalter becomes the first American to play and coach at a World Cup — his 50th minute shot from Claudio Reyna's corner kick struck German defender Torsten Frings' arm on the goal line but was not called a hand ball in 2002's 1-0 quarter-final loss.

"I was in my mom's belly," quipped Gio Reyna, Claudio's son, who was born that November.

Berhalter has installed a high-pressing style and led the Americans to a 36-10-10 record that included titles in the 2021 CONCACAF Gold Cup and Nations League.

"The final determination of this group," he said, "will be at the World Cup. That's how generations are measured. We can all be talking — that's great, we beat Mexico three times. Or we won the Gold Cup or the Nations League. But the real mea-

suring stick for this group is certainly going to be how you perform in Qatar."

Wales is back in the World Cup for the first time since 1958, led by 33-year-old Gareth Bale and 31-year-old Aaron Ramsey. The Dragons advanced to the 2016 European Championship semifinals before losing to eventual champion Portugal and made it to the second round of last year's Euros before a 4-0 wipeout against Denmark. The lack of World Cup experience has the Welsh as guarded as the Americans heading into the match at Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, a renovated 44,000-seat venue west of the capital.

"They're intense, they're athletic, they move the ball quick and they're really attacking," Wales defender Ben Cabango said of the U.S. "So we've got to make sure we're in a good shape and just get in a good defensive position. And then, obviously, on a counter we can hit any team with the quality we have."

Host Qatar opens tournament with loss to Ecuador

Associated Press

AL KHOR, Qatar — Qatar's first ever World Cup match ended in dismay for an overmatched team and with a place in unwanted soccer history.

The controversy-laced tournament opened Sunday with Qatar getting outplayed and embarrassed in a 2-0 loss to Ecuador in front of 67,372 fans at Al Bayt Stadium.

In 92 years of soccer's biggest event, a host team had never lost its opening game.

The first World Cup in the Middle East is a chance for Qatar, a tiny Arab country jutting out into the Persian Gulf, to showcase itself to the wider world. Its soccer team, playing at this level for the first time by virtue of hosting the tournament, couldn't live up to the moment as Ecuador captain Enner Valencia scored both goals in the first half.

The match took place after a colorful 30-minute opening ceremony — fronted by

Oscar-winning actor Morgan Freeman and attended by powerful dignitaries including Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — that promoted inclusivity and mankind living "under one tent."

For many, that would jar with this World Cup being hosted by an emirate where homosexual acts are illegal, one that has come under strong criticism for how migrant workers have been treated building stadiums and tournament infrastructure since Qatar won the scandal-shrouded vote in 2010.

Other games

The first full day of competition includes a Group B match between heavily-favored England against Iran at Khalifa International Stadium, and the Netherlands against Senegal at Al Thumama Stadium in Group A.

England is one of the favorites and was a semifinalist four years ago in Russia, plus a

runner-up at last year's European Championship. But the Three Lions came to Qatar winless in their last six games, hoping their strong track record in recent major tournaments turns the team around.

Where's the beer?

The question of where to get a drink, a fixture at sporting events around the world, in the conservative Islamic country has been top of mind for many fans since Qatar banned the sale of beer in stadiums on Friday in a stunning about-face. As a result, many of Doha's bars and nightclubs — one of the rare places fans can get alcohol — were packed with crowds and had their tables fully booked on Sunday as the tournament kicked off with the match between the host country and Ecuador.

The rush on Doha's bars reflects the tensions tearing at the Muslim country and challenges facing the tiniest host of the world's biggest sporting event.

CFP contenders wobble but survive

Associated Press

College Football Playoff contenders lived on the edge in Week 12, with the top four teams all teetering to varying degrees and at various points. Then No. 5 Tennessee went down with a thud.

For No. 4 TCU, it was just another Saturday.

"It looks more frantic than it is," TCU coach Sonny Dykes said about the game-winning play. He could have been describing the Horned Frogs' season.

TCU and No. 3 Michigan both needed field goals in the final second to stay unbeaten.

No. 1 Georgia slogged through a road game against Kentucky, never seriously threatened but never truly comfortable.

No. 2 Ohio State trailed at the half against Maryland, and had the Terps bearing down in the fourth quarter before closing them out.

While it looked a little shaky at times, Michigan (11-0) against Ohio State (11-0) for the right to go to the Big Ten championship is set. Hopefully, the Wolverines will have star tailback Blake Corum (knee) close to 100%.

"What more could you ask for?" Buckeyes defensive end Zach Harrison said.

The big upset came under the lights in Columbia, S.C. The Gamecocks, a team that lost 38-6 at Florida last week and was averaging 20 points per game in Southeastern Conference play coming in, took apart Tennessee.

No unranked teams had ever scored more points against a top-five team. Spencer Rattler, the Oklahoma transfer, threw for 438 yards and six touchdowns and Tennessee's Heisman contender Hendon Hooker went out in the fourth quarter with a leg injury.

"For us to grow as a program, we need to look at this opportunity and understand what happened," Vols coach Josh Heupel said.

With the Vols' loss, several weeks of chatter about multiple SEC teams making the playoff pretty much goes out the window. It could still happen if LSU beats Georgia in the SEC title game. But good luck with that, Tigers.

As for TCU, the Hypnotoads don't have to worry about anybody else. The final chapter of one of the best stories of the season has yet to be written.

The Frogs have won eight games by 10 points or fewer. By comparison, Georgia,

Ohio State and Michigan have a combined four victories by 10 points or fewer. The Buckeyes have none.

Fight on

Lincoln Riley's portal all-stars at Southern California are now at the center of the college football universe.

The seventh-ranked Trojans beat No. 16 UCLA in exactly the type of back-and-forth point spree that was expected.

Caleb Williams, the quarterback who followed Riley from Oklahoma to USC, had 502 total yards. The Trojans had a season-high 648 yards of total offense.

Williams and the Trojans have rolled through a soft schedule, getting a few big-stage games before Saturday. The Pac-12 showdown in the Rose Bowl between the future Big Ten schools was the first of what could be three straight that could determine a playoff spot and the Heisman Trophy.

If USC can beat No. 18 Notre Dame next week and then win the Pac-12 title game, it'll be hard to keep the Trojans out of the playoff at 12-1 and the brilliant Williams from becoming the eighth Southern Cal player to win the Heisman.

Fofana helps Navy knock off No. 17 Central Florida

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Fullback Daba Fofana rushed for 114 yards, and Navy beat No. 17 UCF 17-14 on Saturday without completing a pass.

Navy (4-7, 4-4 American Athletic) possessed the ball for nearly 40 minutes and gained 248 yards, all on the ground. Xavier Arline threw an incomplete on the team's only passing attempt.

The loss dropped UCF (8-3, 5-2) out of first place in the AAC and all but eliminated the Knights' chances of playing at home in the conference championship game.

"It's frustrating, but we've got to play football no matter if we're home or away," defensive tackle Ricky Barber said. "Nobody can point fingers. Our plan is to win out at USF, and then no matter where we end up, we've got to put the ball down and

play."

Mikey Keene replaced quarterback John Rhys Plumlee in the second half and immediately led the Knights to their only touchdown of the game.

Keene completed his first three passes for 79 yards, including a 28-yard touchdown pass to Javon Baker. Plumlee then passed to Baker for the two-point conversion, tying it at 14 early in the third quarter.

John Marshall forced Keene's fumble on the Knights' next possession. It was recovered by Colin Ramos at the UCF 34, and Bijan Nichols' 45-yard field goal lifted Navy to a 17-14 lead with 8:22 left in the third.

Army 34, Connecticut 17: At West Point, N.Y., Braheam Murphy ran for 124 yards and a touchdown to lead the Black Knights past the Huskies.

Murphy ran along the left hashmark and bolted 75 yards untouched into the end zone to give Army a 20-17 lead midway through the third quarter. Quarterback Tyhier Tyler's 4-yard touchdown run stretched the Black Knights' lead to 27-17 late in the third.

UConn's last possessions ended with two punts and two interceptions.

Tyler attempted just one pass and finished with 70 yards rushing for Army (4-6). He scored on a 2-yard run in the fourth.

Victor Rosa rushed for 105 of his 111 yards in the first half and scored a touchdown for UConn (6-6).

Army's Miles Stewart returned a blocked punt 19 yards into the end zone just two minutes into the game.

Air Force 24, Colorado State 12: Brad Roberts rushed for 184

yards and a touchdown and the host Falcons piled up 359 yards of offense — all on the ground — in a victory over the Rams.

DeAndre Hughes ended a 15-play, 80-yard drive with an 11-yard touchdown run to give Air Force (8-3, 4-3 Mountain West Conference) a 7-0 lead after one quarter.

Roberts scored on a 34-yard run in the second quarter and Matthew Dapore kicked a 44-yard field goal on the final play to give the Falcons a 17-0 lead at halftime.

John Lee Eldridge III had a 4-yard touchdown run to finish off a 72-yard drive in the third quarter and Air Force led 24-0.

From there, Clay Millen threw touchdown passes to Tory Horton covering 28 yards and a 21-yarder to Jordan Williams for Colorado State (2-9, 2-5).

Devils top Sens for 12th straight win

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario — Akira Schmid made 25 saves and the New Jersey Devils beat the Ottawa Senators 5-1 on Saturday for their 12th straight victory.

Yegor Sharangovich and Michael McLeod each had a goal and an assist, and Erik Hauula, Nathan Bastian and Jesper Boqvist also scored for New Jersey. The Devils are one win away from matching the longest streak in franchise history, set Feb. 26-March 23, 2001.

The Devils jumped out to a 3-0 lead early in the second period, and then pulled away again after the Senators got on the scoreboard later in the middle period.

"We were just resilient," Hauula said. "There were a couple holes in our game, I thought, where we got a little bit comfortable and that's when they kind of took it to us a little bit and got some chances, but overall, good for Schmid, great game from him, and 12 in a row, we've got to feel good about this one."

Derick Brassard scored for the Senators.

Bruins 6, Blackhawks 1: David Pastrnak scored twice and Boston tied the NHL record for most consecutive home wins to open a season with 11.

Patrice Bergeron, Jake DeBrusk, Taylor Hall and David Krejci also scored to help Boston equal the season-opening home mark set by the Blackhawks in 1963-64 and matched by the Florida Panthers last season. It was the sixth straight victory for the Bruins (16-2-0).

Oilers 4, Golden Knights 3 (OT): Connor McDavid scored 1:17 into overtime to lead slumping Edmonton at home.

Warren Foegele, Leon Draisaitl and Zach Hyman also scored for the Oilers, who had lost five of seven overall and three straight at home.

Lightning 3, Predators 2 (OT): Steven Stamkos scored a power-play goal in overtime to give visiting Tampa Bay its fourth straight win.

In overtime, Stamkos beat Nashville goalie Juse Saros with a slap shot from the high slot on a 4-on-3 power play to secure the come-from-behind win.

Wild 2, Hurricanes 1 (OT): Alex Goligoski scored 1:12 into overtime to help host Minnesota snap a three-game skid.

Sebastian Aho scored for the second straight game for Carolina, which lost for the first time in six games when leading after two periods.

Kraken 3, Kings 2 (OT): Jordan Eberle scored at 2:23 of overtime to lift host Seattle.

Jared McCann and Daniel Sprong also scored for the Kraken, who have played in three straight overtime games — winning the last two.

Phillip Danault and Trevor Moore scored for the Kings.

Flames 5, Panthers 4 (SO): Rasmus Andersson scored in the fifth round of the shootout to lead visiting Calgary.

Adam Ruzicka had two goals and an assist for Calgary.

Canadiens 5, Flyers 4 (SO): Nick Suzuki

scored the only goal of the shootout to lift host Montreal.

Cole Caufield scored his second goal of the game with 3 seconds left to force overtime, and Christian Dvorak and Mike Matheson also scored for the Canadiens.

Rangers 2, Sharks 1: Julien Gauthier broke a scoreless tie late in the third period and visiting New York beat San Jose.

Adam Fox also scored and Igor Shesterkin had 21 saves to help the Rangers win for the 21st time in five games (3-1-1).

Penguins 3, Jets 0: Tristan Jarry stopped all 32 shots he faced for his 12th career shutout as visiting Pittsburgh beat Winnipeg.

Avalanche 4, Capitals 0: Cale Makar and Nathan MacKinnon scored, Alexandar Georgiev made 32 saves and visiting Colorado got its second straight win.

MacKinnon also had an assist for the Avalanche, who have won six of seven games despite missing several injured regulars.

Stars 5, Islanders 2: Jamie Benn scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period and had two assists to lead host Dallas.

Blues 6, Ducks 2: Pavel Buchnevich had two goals and two assists as host St. Louis won its sixth straight game.

Red Wings 6, Blue Jackets 1: Filip Hronek scored twice in the second period, and Detroit got its second straight road win.

Maple Leafs 5, Sabres 2: William Nylander scored twice, Matt Murray made 32 saves and host Toronto handed Buffalo its eighth straight loss.

Timberwolves hang on to beat 76ers for third straight win

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Against another short-handed team, the Timberwolves again came up big on the road.

Anthony Edwards scored 25 points, D'Angelo Russell had 19 and the Minnesota Timberwolves survived a late scare and won their third straight game, 112-109 over the undermanned Philadelphia 76ers on Saturday night.

"We took a lot of bad shots, I definitely did, but we got the win, though," Edwards said of a 7-for-21 effort.

The 76ers have already played without James Harden for two weeks because of a right foot tendon strain, and they added starting guard Tyrese Maxey to the injured list with a broken left foot suffered Friday.

P.J. Tucker suffered an unspecified injury against the Timberwolves and Joel Embiid injured his left ankle/foot following a late-game collision with a teammate.

Embiid, the reigning NBA scoring champion, said he was still in pain and he hobbled off the platform after his press conference.

"Hopefully, somehow it feels better, but we'll see," Embiid said.

Hawks 124, Raptors 122 (OT): Trae Young threw a long pass to A.J. Griffin for a wide-open layup at the overtime buzzer to give host Atlanta a win over Toronto.

Young had 29 points and 10 assists for the Hawks.

The Raptors led 108-101 with 2:36 to go in the fourth quarter. The Hawks went on a 10-point run in a 90-second span to take a 111-

109 lead on Young's two free throws with 59 seconds to go.

Pacers 114, Magic 113: Aaron Nesmith made two free throws with 9.6 seconds left and host Indiana came up with a final defensive stop to beat Orlando.

In the last seconds, the Magic's Franz Wagner drove to the basket, but his layup attempt was long off the backboard and Mo Bamba was unable to tip in the rebound.

Jazz 118, Trail Blazers 113: Jordan Clarkson scored 28 points, including eight straight in the final 1:48, to help visiting Utah over Portland.

Clippers 119, Spurs 97: Paul George scored 21 points, hitting five of the Clippers' season-high 21 three-pointers, and host Los Angeles routed slumping San Antonio.