

Prevention push vowed amid assault rise

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alarmed by a dramatic increase in reported sexual assaults in the military, defense leaders said Thursday they want to beef up prevention, but they are struggling to find people to hire and are still developing programs they think can work, after nearly two decades of trying.

The idea of preventing a sexual assault before it happens isn't new. The military services have been casting about for ways to do it for years and appear to have made little progress. But this year, officials said they are bolstered by an infusion of \$479 million to hire as many as 2,400 personnel for a new "prevention workforce."

The latest assault numbers show how much prevention programs haven't worked. Overall, the number of reported sexual assaults involving members of the military jumped by 13% last year, driven by significant increases in the Army and the Navy.

At the same time, nearly 36,000 service members said in a confidential survey that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact — a dramatic increase over the roughly 20,000 who said that in a similar 2018 survey. The conclusion, said officials, is that more service members than at any time before are experiencing some type of unwanted sexual contact, and far fewer are reporting it.

"The decline in the reporting rate," said Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., "suggests trust and faith in the military is on the wrong trajectory." Speier, who heads the House Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee, said she plans to hold a hearing in the coming weeks on the issue.

The survey found that military units that have poor command climates or have instances of gender discrimination or sexual harassment are more likely also to see more serious sexual assaults. So one prevention effort is focused on better assessing military commanders at all levels, and using command climate surveys to weed out poor leaders.

Army leaders — who saw an increase of nearly 26% in reported assaults last year — said they realized last summer that the numbers were trending badly. Sergeant Major of the Army Michael Grinston said the service had been spending most of its energy on responding to assaults, rather than how to prevent them.

As a result, the Army is improving how it does command climate surveys, including randomly selecting soldiers to provide feedback and using those surveys in determining promotions.

"I expect our leaders to maintain positive command climates where our soldiers feel safe and can thrive," said Army Secretary

Christine Wormuth, adding that the Army is committed to focusing more on prevention and reforming the systems.

Another program the Army started involves more immediate training for younger recruits as they move to their first duty posts.

Grinston said the new training, done in the first 72 hours of a soldier's arrival, involves vignettes and role-playing to instruct troops on proper behavior and what to do if something bad starts to happen. He said that at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, where the program is in use, the number of sexual assault cases to date this fiscal year is about half of what it was last year.

Other bases, including Fort Hood in Texas, are doing similar training, teaching soldiers how to identify problems and react better and more quickly. Moving the training to earlier in a soldier's first job puts greater emphasis on it and is designed to set the tone for behavior going forward.

Building a new prevention workforce, however, is only slowly getting off the ground. A key challenge is the tight labor market, said Beth Foster, executive director of the Pentagon's office of force resiliency.

"That's been a challenge for us," said Foster. "It is difficult in the labor environment in this country right now to hire specialized personnel."

Iran briefly holds 2 American sea drones in Red Sea

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran's navy seized two American sea drones in the Red Sea before letting them go Friday as U.S. warships neared, officials said, in the latest maritime incident involving the Navy's new drone fleet in the Mideast.

Iranian state television aired footage it said came from the deck of the Iranian navy's Jamaran destroyer, where sailors examined two Saildrone Explorers. They tossed one overboard as another warship could be seen

in the distance.

State TV said the Iranian navy found "several unmanned spying vessels abandoned in the international maritime routes" on Thursday.

"After two warnings to an American destroyer to prevent possible incidents, Jamaran seized the two vessels," state TV said. "After securing the international shipping waterway, the Naval Squadron No. 84 released the vessels in a safe area."

It added: "The U.S. Navy was warned to avoid repeating simi-

lar incidents in future."

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the incident before the military offered a formal statement, identified the seized drones as Saildrone Explorers.

Two American destroyers in the Red Sea, as well as Navy helicopters, responded to the incident, the official said.

Initially, the Iranian sailors tried to cover the drones with tarps and deny they had them, the official said, adding that the drones are now in U.S. custody.

This marks the second such incident in recent days as negotiations over Tehran's nuclear deal hang in the balance.

The earlier incident involved Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, not its regular navy, and occurred in the Persian Gulf. The Guard towed a Saildrone Explorer before releasing it as an American warship trailed it. Iran had criticized the U.S. Navy for releasing a "Hollywood" video of the incident, only to do the same Friday in the Red Sea incident.

UN on site at nuke plant as fight rages

Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — Fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces raged Friday near Europe's biggest nuclear power plant in a Russian-held area of eastern Ukraine, as experts from the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency assessing damage sought to prevent even the slightest leak of radioactive material.

Local Russian-appointed authorities said Friday that staff at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant restarted a key reactor just hours after a shelling attack a day earlier forced it to shut down. Ukraine's nuclear energy operator, Energoatom confirmed on its Telegram channel that the reactivated reactor had been plugged back into the power grid.

The head of Ukraine's powerful National Security Council said work was underway to ensure Ukraine's power supply in case connection to the Zaporizhzhia site is lost this winter. Oleksiy Danilov also said Ukrainian authorities weren't fully aware of the situation inside the plant for now — despite the presence of the team from the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency that went in Thursday.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Danilov — a key official in Ukraine's war effort — said Kyiv didn't know whether the plant may have been mined by the Russians, adding: "I want to emphasize that this is a challenge for the whole world, how to make this nuclear facility not dangerous."

Aleksandr Volga, the Kremlin-backed mayor of the Enerhodar, where the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is located, told the Interfax news agency Friday that the successful reactivation left the plant with two working reactors, out of a total of six.

Russia and Ukraine traded blame for the shelling attack which led to Thursday's temporary shutdown of the reactor by its emergency protection system. Energoatom said the shelling damaged a backup power supply line used for in-house needs, and one of the plant's reactors that wasn't operating was switched to diesel generators.

Britain's Defense Ministry said earlier Friday that shelling continued in the area near the power plant.

Biden to host Pacific Island summit with eye on China

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House announced Friday that President Joe Biden will host Pacific Island leaders in Washington later this month amid growing worries by the United States and Western allies about China's activity in the region.

Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement the meetings Sept. 28-29 "will demonstrate the United States' deep and enduring partnership with Pacific Island countries and the Pacific region."

Biden has invited Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Nauru, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tuvalu, Tonga, and Fiji to take part in the summit, according to the White House.

The announcement comes days after the Solomon Islands earlier this week asked countries to not send naval vessels to the South Pacific nation until approval processes are overhauled, amid concerns over a new security pact between the Solomons

and China.

The government made the request after the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Oliver Henry and the British navy patrol boat HMS Spey canceled planned port calls last week due to bureaucratic delays.

The United States and Britain are among countries concerned that a new security pact with Beijing could lead to a Chinese naval base being constructed less than 1,200 miles off Australia's northeast coast.

US bases on Okinawa buckle up as typhoon bears down

**BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND FRANK ANDREWS**

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — U.S. bases on Okinawa were preparing Friday ahead of Typhoon Hinnamnor, which is forecast to lash the island with 75-mph winds over the weekend and dump 7 to 8 inches of rain.

The most powerful storm in any hemisphere so far this year is projected to be a Category 2-equivalent typhoon when it passes 216 miles west of Kadena Air Base at approximately 11 a.m. Sunday, the 18th Wing Weather Flight said by email Friday.

U.S. military planners said they were keeping a sharp eye on the storm but weren't anticipating the need to relocate aircraft or send ships to sea.

"We're expecting some severe winds and that definitely has ramifications for safety, including your downed trees, branches, flying objects, possibly even broken windows, so you'll want to stay inside and make sure to prepare accordingly," Air Force Capt. William Hanson, weather flight commander, said by phone Friday.

Hinnamnor is projected to be as powerful as last year's Typhoon In-fa, which brought strong winds and rough seas, but it is unlikely to reach super typhoon strength as it approaches Okinawa, Hanson said.

In addition to cleaning up yards and securing their homes this week, service members and others stocked up Friday on food and water at the Camp Foster commissary.

At 3 p.m. Friday, Hinnamnor was 354 miles south-southwest of Kadena, the weather flight reported. The typhoon was moving northwest at 5 mph, packing 100 mph sustained winds and 120 mph gusts at the center.

U.S. bases on Okinawa entered Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness 1 at 6 p.m., meaning destructive winds were anticipated within 12 hours. Condition of Readiness 1-C, or sustained winds of 35-49 knots, was expected by around noon Saturday.

As Hinnamnor bore down Friday, the III Marine Expeditionary Force moved its aircraft into hangars and prepared tactical vehicles, spokesman 1st Lt. Zachary Voss wrote in an email Thursday. Nonessential activities were canceled.

Slow job gain could aid inflation fight

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's employers slowed their hiring in August in the face of rising interest rates, high inflation and sluggish consumer spending but still added 315,000 jobs.

The government reported Friday that last month's job gain was down from 526,000 in July and below the average gain of the previous three months. The unemployment rate rose to 3.7%, from a half-century low of 3.5% in July, as more Americans came off the sidelines to look for jobs.

Even though the job gain declined from July, the report still pointed to a resilient labor market and an economy that is not near recession. The number of people look-

ing for work jumped last month, which boosted the unemployment rate because not all of them found jobs immediately. The influx of job seekers may help employers fill a near-record number of openings in the coming months.

The smaller August gain will likely be welcomed by the Federal Reserve. The Fed is rapidly raising interest rates to try to cool hiring and wage growth, which have been consistently strong. Businesses typically pass the cost of higher wages on to their customers through higher prices, thereby fueling inflation.

Fed officials hope that by raising borrowing costs across the economy, they can reduce inflation from a near-40-year high.

Some economists fear, though, that the Fed is tightening credit so aggressively that it will eventually tip the economy into recession.

Average hourly pay rose 10 cents to \$32.36 in August, an increase of 5.2% from a year ago. That is still higher than Fed officials want to see. Some have said they would prefer for wages to be rising at a pace closer to 3% to help rein in rising prices.

Most industries added workers last month, with the biggest increases in professional and business services, which gained 68,000 jobs. That sector includes architects, engineers and some tech workers. Health care added 61,500 jobs, retailers 44,000.

Progress made as Mississippi water woes continue

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — Mississippi officials set up emergency distribution centers for handouts of water and hand sanitizer Thursday in the capital city of Jackson, as efforts to restore a flood-impaired, long-troubled water system continued.

Jackson's residents were already under a boil-water order before flooding from the Pearl River exacerbated long-standing problems at one of the city's two water treatment plants.

Officials said they made progress overnight in refilling tanks, treating water and increasing pressure at the O.B. Curtis Water Plant, the facility at the root of the latest water

woes. Residents closer to the facility had pressure approaching normal levels, the city said in a news release, but added that many in the city still had little or no water pressure.

"It's quite unnerving," Jackson resident Shirley Harrington said Thursday. "It's like playing Russian roulette. You don't know if you're going to wake up with water, don't know if you got water, don't know what condition the water is in. There's so many statements: 'Do not drink,' 'Do not use,' 'You can use, but don't drink,' so you're like, 'What do I really do?'"

At a midday news conference with Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba and other officials, Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves announced the

opening of seven sites for distributing drinking water, non-potable water and hand sanitizer. He said 600 National Guard members were aiding the response. The seven new "megasites" follow smaller scale distribution efforts at city fire stations, churches, nonprofits and businesses.

"To everyone in the city: I know that you are dealing with a profoundly unfair situation," Reeves said. "It's frustrating, it's wrong and it needs to be fixed."

The governor and Mississippi Emergency Management Agency director Stephen McCraney promised that the state would look for long-term solutions to the city's water problems.

Aid pours into flood-ravaged Pakistan; death toll rises

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Planes carrying fresh supplies are surging across a humanitarian air bridge to flood-ravaged Pakistan as the death toll surged past 1,200, officials said Friday, with families and children at special risk of disease and homelessness.

The ninth flight from the United Arab Emirates and the first from Uzbekistan were the latest to land in Islamabad overnight as a military-backed rescue operation elsewhere in the country reached more of the 3 million people affected by the disaster.

Two more planes from U.A.E and Qatar with aid were to arrive in Pakistan later Friday, and a Turkish train carrying relief

goods for flood victims was on its way to the impoverished nation, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Meanwhile, a Turkish delegation headed by Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to convey his condolences to him over damages caused by floods. Multiple officials blamed the unusual monsoon and flooding on climate change, including U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who earlier this week called on the world to stop "sleepwalking" through the deadly crisis.

Guterres will visit Pakistan on Sept. 9 to tour flood-hit areas and meet with officials.

In a statement Friday, the U.N. refugee

agency said although the outcome of Tuesday's funding appeal from the U.N. was "very encouraging," more help is needed.

UNHCR spokesman Matthew Saltmarsh said they were quickly releasing tents, as well as blankets, plastic sheets, buckets and other household items for flood victims.

"Our staff in the country report that the scale of the devastation that people face is unimaginable," he said.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Friday that the planes brought food items, medicine and tents. Sharif had planned to travel to UAE on Saturday, but he postponed the trip to visit flood-hit areas at home.

DOJ: New info in Trump search inventory

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — FBI agents who searched former President Donald Trump's Florida home last month found top-secret records in an office and storage room, along with empty folders with classified banners on them and more than 10,000 government records without any classification markings at all, according to a more detailed inventory of the seized material made public on Friday.

The inventory disclosed by the Justice Department reveals in general terms the contents of 33 boxes and containers taken from an office and a storage room at Mar-a-Lago during the Aug. 8 search.

Though the inventory does not describe the content of the documents, it shows the extent to which classified information — in-

cluding material at the top-secret level — was stashed in boxes at the home and commingled among newspapers, magazines, clothing and other personal items.

It also makes clear for the first time the volume of unclassified government documents maintained at the home even though such records were to have been turned over to the National Archives and Records Administration, which had tried unsuccessfully for months to secure their return.

The Justice Department has said there was no secure space at Mar-a-Lago for sensitive government secrets, and has opened a criminal investigation focused on their retention there and on what it says were efforts in the last several months to obstruct that probe. It is also investigating potential violations of a separate statute that crimi-

nizes the mutilation or concealment of government records, classified or not.

Lawyers for Trump did not immediately return an email seeking comment Friday.

The inventory was released as the Justice Department undertakes a criminal investigation, as intelligence agencies assess any potential damage caused by the apparent mishandling of the classified information and as a judge weighs whether to appoint a special master — essentially an outside legal expert — to review the records.

The inventory shows that 43 empty folders with classified banners were taken from a box or container at the office, along with an additional 28 empty folders labeled as "Return to Staff Secretary" or military aide. Empty folders of that nature were also found in a storage closet.

Biden sounds newly strong alarm on Trumpism

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — President Joe Biden charged in a prime-time address that the "extreme ideology" of Donald Trump and his adherents "threatens the very foundation of our republic," as he summoned Americans of all stripes to help counter what he sketched as dark forces within the Republican Party trying to subvert democracy.

In his speech Thursday at Philadelphia's Independence Hall, Biden unleashed the trappings of the presidency in an unusually strong and sweeping indictment of Trump and what he said has become the dominant strain of the opposition party. His broadside came barely two months before Americans head to the polls in bitterly contested midterm elections that Biden calls a crossroads

for the nation.

"Too much of what's happening in our country today is not normal," he said before an audience of hundreds, raising his voice over pro-Trump hecklers outside the building where the nation's founding was debated. He said he wasn't condemning the 74 million people who voted for Trump in 2020, but added, "There's no question that the Republican Party today is dominated by Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans," using the acronym for Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan.

"Equality and democracy are under assault" in the U.S., Biden charged, casting Trump and his backers in the GOP as a menace to the nation's system of government, its standing abroad and its citizens' way of life.

Trump and the MAGA Republicans "promote authoritarian leaders and they fan the flames of political violence," he said. They "are determined to take this country backwards."

The president appealed for citizens to "vote, vote, vote" to protect their democracy. "For a long time, we've reassured ourselves that American democracy is guaranteed. But it is not."

Biden harked back to the 2017 white supremacist protest in Charlottesville, Va., which he said brought him out of political retirement to challenge Trump. Biden argued that the country faces a similar crossroads in the coming months, and he cast defending the "soul of the nation" as "the work of my presidency — a mission I believe in with my whole soul."

Ex-NYPD officer given record sentence for Jan. 6 riot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A retired New York Police Department officer was sentenced on Thursday to a record-setting 10 years in prison for attacking the U.S. Capitol and using a metal flagpole to assault one of the police officers trying to hold off a mob of Donald Trump supporters.

Thomas Webster's prison sentence is the longest so far among roughly 250 people who have been punished for their conduct during the riot on Jan. 6, 2021. The previ-

ous longest was shared by two other rioters, who were sentenced separately to seven years and three months in prison.

Webster, a 20-year NYPD veteran, was the first Capitol riot defendant to be tried on an assault charge and the first to present a self-defense argument. A jury rejected Webster's claim that he was defending himself when he tackled Metropolitan Police Department officer Noah Rathbun and grabbed his gas mask outside the Capitol on Jan. 6.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta sentenced Webster, 56, to 10 years in prison plus three years of supervised release. He allowed Webster to report to prison at a date to be determined instead of immediately ordering him into custody.

Federal prosecutors had recommended a prison sentence of 17 years and six months. The court's probation department had recommended a 10-year prison sentence. Mehta wasn't bound by the recommendations.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Boy stole truck, fled officers at 100 mph

GA MIDWAY — Georgia authorities say an 11-year-old boy stole his stepfather's pickup truck and fled pursuing officers at high speeds before the vehicle veered into mud and got stuck.

Police were called after bank employees saw the truck bump into an ATM machine, Liberty County Sheriff's Capt. Dennis Poulson said.

The underage driver evaded an attempted traffic stop, hit another vehicle and led officers on a chase at speeds of up to 100 mph, authorities said.

Trooper David Laff of the Georgia State Patrol said the chase ended after several miles when the boy tried turning onto Interstate 95 but missed the on-ramp. He said the vehicle came to a stop in the mud.

No one was injured in the chase. Poulson said the boy was released to his mother and is being charged with theft by receiving stolen property, fleeing, not wearing a seat belt and driving without a license.

Sheriff: 2 pot grows busted, 12 arrested

OR DAYTON — Two large, unlicensed, unpermitted marijuana grows have been busted in a rural area of Yamhill County, according to law enforcement officials.

The Yamhill County Sheriff's Office said that multiple complaints about two properties in Dayton led them to start investigating and serve search warrants.

One of the operations had 46 greenhouses, nearly 6,700 pot

plants and over 10,000 pounds of drying or dried marijuana, officials said. Twelve people were arrested at the site ranging in age from 19 to 60. Most were arrested on suspicion of unlawful manufacture of marijuana and unlawful marijuana possession.

The second grow had 53 unpermitted greenhouses with more than 15,000 plants, according to sheriff's officials.

Fraternity suspended over hazing reports

WV MORGANTOWN — West Virginia University suspended a fraternity over reported hazing incidents, the school said.

The interim suspension of Pi Kappa Phi bars it from all recruitment activities along with participating in or attending social functions, WVU said.

The suspension will remain in place while an investigation and review process continue. WVU did not provide details of the alleged incidents in its statement.

No injuries after helo lands in parking lot

HI HONOLULU — There were no injuries or reports of damage after a helicopter landed in the parking lot of a Hawaii stadium, officials said.

The helicopter made a "precautionary landing" at Aloha Stadium near Honolulu, said Jai Cunningham, spokesperson for the state Department of Transportation.

It was not known why the helicopter needed to land at the stadium, which is the states' largest outdoor arena.

Paramedics responded but there were no injuries, said

Shayne Enright, spokesperson for Honolulu Emergency Medical Services.

Officials: Boy, 7, took 2 guns, ammo to school

AZ COCHISE — A second-grade student at a southeastern Arizona elementary school is facing charges for allegedly bringing two guns and ammunition to school, authorities said.

Cochise County Sheriff's officials said they were called to Cochise Elementary School on reports that a 7-year-old student had a weapon.

Deputies met with school officials and the student and said a handgun and ammunition were found in his backpack and a second gun also was discovered.

Authorities contacted the student's parents and gave the boy a juvenile referral for charges of misconduct with a weapon and a minor in possession of a firearm.

A sheriff's spokeswoman said it was unlikely that the boy's parents will face charges in the incident, which remains under investigation.

Police: THC lab reports may be inaccurate

MI LANSING — The Michigan State Police say about 3,250 lab reports on THC toxicology samples in prosecutions may be inaccurate because of a technical issue.

The state police Forensic Science Division said that the problem may impact cases that occurred as far back as March 28, 2019.

It's not clear whether any convictions may be overturned

as a result.

As a result of the discovery of the problem, the Forensic Science Division said it has temporarily halted the disposal of blood samples to preserve the evidence should re-analysis be required. It has started validating a new cannabinoid confirmation method that will distinguish CBD from THC. And it started the process to establish a contract with a private laboratory for processing THC samples for the time being before the new method is validated.

THC is the compound that gives marijuana its high.

Skyscraper fire sends smoke from rooftop

GA ATLANTA — A fire broke out on the rooftop of a skyscraper under construction in Atlanta, bringing dozens of firefighters to the site near Centennial Olympic Park.

Flames were visible on the roof of the 32-story tower, sending a dark column of smoke into the sky as more than 20 construction workers spilled out onto the surrounding streets.

Atlanta Assistant Fire Chief Greg Gray told reporters the fire was confined to the roof and was put out within 40 minutes of being reported.

No injuries were reported and the cause of the fire was under investigation.

"We are investigating the extent of the damage but based on what we know at this time we do not expect any material damage to the building," said Kelly Gray, a spokesperson for developer Landmark Properties of Athens.

— From Associated Press

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No. 5 Irish open with No. 2 Buckeyes

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman won't get a gimme in his first season opener, no tasty cupcake served up at home so the Fighting Irish can tune up and send everyone away happy.

Instead, Freeman must take No. 5 Notre Dame and a new starting quarterback into Ohio Stadium amid a crush of hype and over 100,000 inhospitable fans to play the No. 2 Buckeyes.

If Freeman, 36, can engineer an upset of heavily favored Ohio State on Saturday night, he will become an instant legend at a place that deals in legends. If not, at least he will come away with a decent idea of how the Irish measure up.

"Any competitor, you want an opportunity to go and play against the best," Freeman said. "There's no better way to see where we're at as a football team."

The former Ohio State linebacker insisted this week he was "pretty emotionless" about

his return to the Horseshoe for the first time as a head coach. No time for that. He's consumed with getting the Irish ready.

"You spend time wondering what do you have to do to make sure the team is prepared. That's where my focus is," said Freeman, who was elevated to the top job at Notre Dame in December after Brian Kelly left for LSU. "It's all in the preparation."

The Buckeyes, still edgy from a loss to Michigan that blew up their championship hopes last November, get a prime-time opportunity to show off a loaded, high-scoring offense led by Heisman Trophy contender C.J. Stroud, and find out whether a new coordinator has resolved some of the defensive issues that showed up in big games last season.

"I think coming off of last year, there are no big heads," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. "I mean, this team is hungry. This team has been hungry. It's been great. We've got to win this

first game. They know that. We've got a lot to prove.

"The nation," he said, "will be watching."

Eye on quarterbacks

Stroud, in his second year as Ohio State starter, is a projected first-round NFL Draft pick who hopes to pick up where he left off with top receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba and running back TreVeyon Henderson, both Associated Press preseason All-Americans.

"He's been there, done that," Smith-Njigba said of the quarterback. "He's ready. We have confidence in him."

Tyler Buchner gets his first career start for Notre Dame. He's a dual-threat guy who in his first year split time with Jack Coan, often in packages that utilized him as a ball-carrier. Buchner will no doubt be looking for Michael Mayer, one of the best tight ends in the country.

Buchner insisted he's got enough experience in big games

to not be intimidated by the atmosphere.

"I like to have the idea that my confidence will stay the same no matter the external factors," he said. "I try to keep it level at all times, try not get too high or too low. But I'd say, honestly, since spring ball, through camp and to now, my confidence has just gone up and up. I feel like I'm in a good spot."

New coordinators

There will be an element of the unknown with both defenses operating under new coordinators.

Jim Knowles was brought in from Oklahoma State to overhaul Ohio State's defense, which was problematic in the team's two losses last season. The calling card of the salty 57-year-old veteran coach is disguise and surprise.

Al Golden, who spent the past two seasons coaching linebackers for the Cincinnati Bengals, steps into the role held by Freeman last year.

Georgia defense eager to show it hasn't lost a step

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A significant chunk of Georgia's defense for the ages has moved on to the NFL.

Can we expect a major drop-off in 2022?

Don't count on it.

The reigning national champions still have plenty of talent on that side of the line, led by massive lineman Jalen Carter, linebacker Nolan Smith, and defensive backs Kelee Ringo and Christopher Smith.

They'll get a chance to claim the spotlight when No. 3 Georgia opens the season Saturday against No. 11 Oregon in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

"I've been a Georgia fan all my

life," Nolan Smith said. "That's one thing that's always been great around here, the Georgia defense. So I'm 100% not worrying about a drop-off. It's a standard. Just because we had a lot of guys leave last year, it's a standard of Georgia defense that we play at a high level."

Five players off Georgia's defense were drafted in the first round, including top overall pick Travon Walker. Three other defensive standouts were selected in the later rounds.

In all, Georgia had 15 players taken in the draft — a record since the NFL went to a seven-round format.

The guy on the opposite sideline is certainly familiar with Georgia's ability to shut down opponents.

Dan Lanning served the last three years as Smart's co-defensive coordinator. Now, he's making his head coaching debut against a team he knows so well, having succeeded Mario Cristobal.

"There's definitely some feelings of excitement for me to go play a team that I care about and was a big part of for a long time," Lanning conceded.

Georgia coach Kirby Smart, who agreed over the summer to a 10-year contract extension worth more than \$110 million, downplayed the significance of facing a former member of his staff.

He's already done it with two other ex-assistants, beating Arkansas' Sam Pittman twice as well as knocking off South Carolina's Shane Beamer.

"Neither Dan nor I will be worried about each other during the game," Smart said. "It's not about that."

Eyes on the QB

Lanning declined to name a starting quarterback, but the Bulldogs have a pretty good idea who they'll be facing.

Bo Nix transferred to Oregon after starting the past three seasons at Auburn, one of Georgia's biggest Southeastern Conference rivals.

There are no uncertainties about Georgia's QB.

Coming off a storybook season in which he was picked as offensive MVP in both playoff victories, former walk-on Stetson Bennett is back for his sixth college season.

Pitt rallies past WVU in Backyard Brawl

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh cornerback M.J. Devonshire spent part of the summer watching highlights of old Backyard Brawls wondering what it might be like to make one of the iconic plays in a series whose history stretches to the 19th century.

He doesn't have to wonder anymore.

Devonshire snagged a pass that caromed off the hands of West Virginia wide receiver Bryce Ford-Wheaton and raced 56 yards to the end zone with 2:58 remaining as the Panthers rallied for a 38-31 victory Thursday night in the return of the Brawl following a 10-year hiatus.

"This is one of the greatest rivalries in college football and I just did something crazy I'm going to get to tell my kids about," Devonshire said.

The Panthers had just tied it on a 24-yard touchdown pass from Kedon Slovis to Israel Abanikanda with 3:41 to go. Four plays later, West Virginia

quarterback JT Daniels found a wide-open Ford-Wheaton only to see the ball smack off the receiver's hands and settle into Devonshire's awaiting arms.

The Pittsburgh-area native who started his college career at Kentucky before coming home in 2021, felt his old punt returner skills come flooding back as he weaved his way through traffic to give Pitt its second score in 43 seconds to turn a seven-point deficit into a lead the Panthers didn't relinquish.

"I just knew I had to run as fast as I could," Devonshire said.

The Mountaineers drove deep into Pitt territory in the final minute and Daniels hit Reese Smith on a fourth-down pass that appeared to put the ball at the Pitt 1.

Briefly, anyway. Replays showed the ball skimmed the turf before Smith could bring it in and the crowd of 70,622 — the largest to attend a sporting event in the city's history — erupted.

"They've got a really good

football team and I respect them a lot, I really do," West Virginia coach Neal Brown said. "But we made a bunch of mistakes, too."

Pitt turned two Mountaineer turnovers into touchdowns.

Southern California transfer Slovis threw for 308 yards and a touchdown in his debut with the Panthers in the opener for both teams. Rodney Hammond ran for 74 yards and two touchdowns before leaving in the fourth quarter because of a right leg injury that appeared serious.

Daniels, looking to revive his career following stints at USC and Georgia, completed 23 of 39 passes for 214 yards with two touchdowns to Ford-Wheaton and the pick that Devonshire turned into Pitt's first victory over its longtime rival since 2008.

Fourth-down jitters

The Mountaineers piled up 190 yards on the ground, but fourth-year coach Neal Brown didn't feel confident enough in his running game to go for it on

fourth-and-1 at the Pitt 48 midway through the fourth with his team up 31-24.

Daniels lined up in an effort to draw the Panthers offside and when he didn't, the Mountaineers punted.

Pitt didn't waste the opportunity. Slovis led the defending ACC champions 92 yards in seven plays, the last on a flip to running back Israel Abanikanda in which he slipped through three tackles for a 24-yard touchdown.

Brown said afterward he would punt again, pointing to the chance to give the Panthers a long field and the way West Virginia had stuffed Pitt on its previous series, sacking Slovis twice in the process.

"If I had to do it again, I would do that same decision," Brown said.

Poll Implications

The Panthers will stick in the poll for a second straight week and could rise a bit depending on results elsewhere this weekend.

Sanders helps Cowboys' Gundy get 150th career win

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy deflected credit when he reached a career milestone.

Spencer Sanders passed for a career-high 406 yards and accounted for six touchdowns as No. 12 Oklahoma State beat Central Michigan 58-44 on Thursday night to give Gundy his 150th coaching victory.

Gundy improved to 150-69 in his 18th season at his alma mater.

"Cool deal," he said. "Like I told the team, it takes a lot of really, really quality people and good young men for a guy to stay in one place long enough to win 150 games. I'm just lucky enough to be along for the ride."

Sanders matched a career high with four TD passes and set a career mark with two rushing scores in the opener for both teams.

"Knock on wood, he's really good," Gundy said. "He understands our concepts. He understands second nature where to go with the ball. And it's a big advantage for us."

Braydon Johnson had career highs of six catches for 133 yards and Brennan Presley added five catches for 83 yards.

Daniel Richardson passed for a career-high 424 yards and threw four touchdown passes for Central Michigan.

Lew Nichols III, the nation's leading rusher last year, ran for 72 yards and two touch-

downs on 26 carries.

Sanders passed for 313 yards and three touchdowns in the first half and ran for two scores to help the Cowboys take a 44-15 lead.

The Cowboys led 51-15 less than a minute into the third quarter before Central Michigan climbed back into the game. Jalen McGaughy's 54-yard TD pass from Richardson cut it to 58-44 with 3:15 remaining. McGaughy had six catches for 126 yards and two scores.

"As I said from the beginning, I really like our football team," Central Michigan coach Jim McElwain said. "We're going to win a lot of games. And those kids are going to learn from this video and we're going to get a little bit better."

Central Michigan outscored Oklahoma State 29-14 in the second half and outgained the Cowboys 281 yards to 138 after the break.

No. 22 Wake Forest 44, VMI 10: Mitch Griffis threw for 288 yards and three touchdowns in his first career start as the Demon Deacons beat the visiting Keydets.

Griffis started with Sam Hartman sidelined indefinitely by a non-football medical issue. Hartman — who guided the Demon Deacons to last year's Atlantic Coast Conference championship game — was on the sideline in his black jersey, black shorts and a black cap to watch his understudy lead an easy victory over a Championship Subdivision opponent.

Braves' Strider fans an Atlanta-record 16

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Spencer Strider struggled to understand why his Braves teammates started talking to him about John Smoltz when he completed the eighth inning against Colorado.

The rookie had no idea he broke an Atlanta record held by the Hall of Famer.

Strider struck out 16 batters — the most by any Braves pitcher since the team moved to Atlanta in 1966 — while allowing two hits in eight innings to lead the Braves to a 3-0 win over the Colorado Rockies on Thursday night.

Strider fanned his last two batters with two runners on base in the eighth — with his fastball still hitting 98 mph — to complete his masterful 106-pitch outing.

Austin Riley and rookie Michael Harris II hit solo home runs for Atlanta.

Strider threw only 42 pitches through his first four innings, setting a pace that allowed him to log his longest career start. He did not walk a batter.

Smoltz struck out 15 in a game twice — against Montreal

on May 24, 1992 and against the New York Mets on April 10, 2005. Hall of Famer Warren Spahn holds the overall Braves record with 18 strikeouts against the Chicago Cubs on June 14, 1952, when the team played in Boston.

Orioles 3, Guardians 0: Rookie Kyle Bradish held Cleveland to two harmless singles in seven innings and Cedric Mullins homered on Shane Bieber's first pitch to lead visiting Baltimore.

Bradish (3-5) had his second straight dominant performance. He hasn't allowed a run in 15 straight innings after going more than three months without a win.

Nationals 7, Athletics 5 (10): Joey Meneses hit a game-winning three-run homer in the 10th inning to cap his first four-hit game and host Washington rallied past Oakland.

Meneses, a 30-year-old rookie, homered to right-center off Oakland rookie Norge Ruiz (0-1), raising his average to .354.

Red Sox 9, Rangers 8: Rob Refsnyder hit a game-ending

single in a four-run ninth inning to complete host Boston's rally past Texas.

The Red Sox trailed 8-3 in the eighth and 8-5 entering the ninth. Boston promptly loaded the bases with none out against Jonathan Hernández (1-1). Rafael Devers hit a two-run double and Kiké Hernández followed with an RBI single to tie the game before Refsnyder completed the comeback with a drive to left.

Mariners 7, Tigers 0: Julio Rodriguez and Ty France hit back-to-back home runs in the third inning and visiting Seattle completed a three-game sweep of Detroit.

Logan Gilbert (11-5), who had gone winless in his previous nine starts, held Detroit to two hits and a walk while striking out nine in six innings. Three Mariners relievers completed the four-hitter.

White Sox 7, Royals 1: Andrew Vaughn and A.J. Pollock each cracked a two-run homer and singled, and host Chicago beat Kansas City.

Leury Garcia and Elvis Andrus added two hits and an RBI

apiece for the White Sox, who won their second straight following a five-game slide.

Diamondbacks 5, Brewers 0: Christian Walker hit a two-run homer, Merrill Kelly (12-5) pitched seven stellar innings and host Arizona beat Milwaukee for its sixth win in seven games.

Walker hammered his 31st homer to deep left in the first inning off Milwaukee's Brandon Woodruff, giving the D-backs a 2-0 lead. Geraldo Perdomo's RBI single in the third pushed the advantage to 3-0 and Josh Rojas smashed a two-run double high off the center-field wall in the fifth to make it 5-0.

Mets 5, Dodgers 3: Edwin Díaz struck out Gavin Lux on a 102.8 mph fastball to escape a jam in the eighth inning, and host New York beat major league-best Los Angeles.

Francisco Lindor hit a tying double in the sixth against Chris Martin (4-1) and scored the go-ahead run on a sacrifice fly by Darin Ruf after the Mets were held to one hit in five innings by Clayton Kershaw, who made his first start since Aug. 4.

Swiatek winning quietly as spotlight falls on Serena

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Iga Swiatek is winning easily — and quietly.

At this U.S. Open, even the world's No. 1 player is a distant No. 2 as long as Serena Williams is still around.

"Yeah, that's kind of her time right now," Swiatek said. "I'm just, you know, playing and focusing on that, and that's the most important thing for me."

The two-time French Open champion beat 2017 U.S. Open winner Sloane Stephens 6-3, 6-2 on Thursday in the second round for her WTA Tour-leading 50th victory this season.

A day after Williams eliminated No. 2 seed Anett Kontaveit, with No. 3 Maria Sakrari losing earlier Wednesday, Swiatek perhaps looms as an even bigger threat to win a seventh title this year, something no woman has done since Williams in 2014. Past U.S.

Open champions Naomi Osaka and Emma Raducanu have also been eliminated, along with 2021 runner-up Leylah Fernandez.

No. 6 Aryna Sabalenka remained the only women's semifinalist from last year in the field — barely — by coming back from 5-1 down in the second set and erasing two match points before edging Kaia Kanepi 2-6, 7-6 (8), 6-4. But fourth-seeded Paula Badosa was knocked out with a 6-7 (5), 6-1, 6-2 loss to Croatian Petra Martić.

Twenty-two time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal accidentally bloodied himself on the bridge of the nose with his racket early in the fourth set of a 2-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-1 victory over Fabio Fognini.

Nadal hit a backhand and, on the follow-through, his racket ricocheted off the court and smacked him in the face, cutting his nose. Nadal laid down on his back on the sideline while a trainer treated him, bandag-

ing the injury.

Other winners Thursday included No. 8 Jessica Pegula, No. 9 Garbiñe Muguruza, No. 13 Belinda Bencic and No. 26 Victoria Azarenka, who didn't get a handshake from Marta Kostyuk after beating the Ukrainian player.

Azarenka is from Belarus, which helped Russia launch its invasion of Ukraine.

No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz tied for the season lead in victories on the men's tour with his 46th by beating Federico Coria of Argentina 6-2, 6-1, 7-5.

No. 7 Cam Norrie, No. 9 Andrey Rublev, No. 11 Jannik Sinner and No. 15 Marin Cilic, the 2014 U.S. Open champion, advanced, but No. 25 Borna Ćorić was upset by American Jenson Brooksby 6-4, 7-6 (10), 6-1. Brooksby reached the fourth round at Flushing Meadows as a 20-year-old last year.