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Analysis: Taiwan war unwanted, unpredictable

BY ERIK SLAVIN

Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — Chinese and Western security analysts tasked with imagining a Taiwan conflict generally start with a disclaimer — a war pitting the United States and China is unpredictable and a pretty bad idea under most circumstances.

A few scenarios begin with China developing an insurgency on Taiwan, which Beijing considers a breakaway province that must be reunited.

Others begin with miscalculations of the opposing side's intentions.

While multinational conflict over China's claims to the South China Sea has grabbed more attention in recent years, Taiwan's status as an unrecognized sovereign state with U.S. support has never been far from the minds of Asia-Pacific military strategists.

President-elect Donald Trump's talk with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and vague questioning of the "One China" policy that has underpinned U.S.-China relations for decades brought Taiwan's unsettled status back into the international spotlight.

"In a crisis, China may have a higher threshold for risk than the United States may be expecting, particularly when it comes to defending 'core interests' like territory and sovereignty claims," wrote the authors of a December report on China's military strategies by Rand Corp., a non-profit policy think tank. "This could lead Chinese leaders to do something that they would not consider escalatory but that the United States might."

There have been rumblings in Asia since Tsai and her pro-independence party swept into power in January.

China's strategic hand

The election win interrupted a cycle in which China offered Taiwan generous trade concessions and expanded economic opportunity in a bid to tie the island closer to the mainland.

Tsai's unwillingness to support a "one China, different interpretations" declaration first proposed in 1992 led the mainland to quickly suspend communication with Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council.

A Taiwanese declaration of independence would allow China to use "non-peaceful means" to secure Taiwan, according to China's 2005 anti-secession law.

However, there seems to be little appetite

on Taiwan for declaring independence.

Most polls indicate support for the status quo, in order to avoid conflict. Support for reunification generally hovers near 10 percent in domestic polls.

Any bid to forcibly annex Taiwan would depend on political and diplomatic support, according to Chinese and Western analysts.

China should "try to sway international opinion to isolate and attack our opponent," to "seek legitimacy to justify our action," according to Rand's translation of a 2013 essay in the state-sponsored China Military Science publication.

Beijing likely would cast a Taiwan invasion as a defensive war, according to J. Michael Cole, a security analyst and former Canadian intelligence official who wrote a 2015 essay for *The National Interest*, a publication that advocates a realist and often muscular foreign policy.

"China would position itself not as the aggressor, but rather as the victim, 'forced' by external circumstances to go on the offensive, however begrudgingly, to protect its 'vital' or 'core' interests," Cole wrote.

Cole and other analysts suggest China could use propaganda and allies on the island to manufacture provocation. China then would come to "rescue" of citizens.

Taiwan's military strength doesn't remotely match up with China's, according to Cole and others. Its primary strategy remains to dissuade China from attacking in the first place, relying on defensive measures that would exact enough pain on China's military if it did strike.

Taiwan then would rely on a promise of aid that the U.S. ambiguously declared in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act.

U.S. resolve and readiness could prove critical, should China ever view the time ripe to annex Taiwan.

"It may be relatively more inclined to consider the use of force if it believes that it could achieve its operational objectives before the United States could bring its forces fully to bear," according to Rand's U.S.-China Military Scorecard, a 430-page report and war simulation funded by the U.S. Air Force and published last year.

The latest study, one of four since 1996, evaluates the evolving balance of power as expected to shape up in 2017.

The military balance

The Scorecard, which gave the U.S. an

overwhelming edge when it first published in 1996, now states that the 2017 balance is now trending in the other direction.

It refrains from declaring an outright winner because so many variables are involved but outlines ways each side could prevail through its advantages.

Kadena Air Base on Okinawa would play a critical role in blunting an invasion, with its fighter jets in the best position to reach Taiwan quickly, according to the report.

It also would present China with a target for its advanced ballistic missiles, though at the potential cost of drawing Japan into war.

China's primary advantage lies in its geography.

"While the United States is limited to a handful of bases, most of which are distant from the conflict area, China has roughly 40 bases from which it can conduct unrefueled operations over Taiwan," according to the report.

For China to prevail, it would need simultaneous advantages in nearly all operational categories, the report said.

The U.S. maintains an advantage in penetrating Chinese airspace, fighting amphibious forces and other categories. However, China's improvements in missiles, cyberwarfare, anti-surface warfare and other areas increase risks to the U.S.

All of these assumptions are made on the premise that the conflict does not spiral into a nuclear doomsday scenario.

Despite planning for the worst on both sides, there are some encouraging signs. Several Chinese military documents and writers are focused on keeping conflict small, while acknowledging the inherent difficulty in doing so.

People's Liberation Army literature increasingly refers to ideas such as escalation control, deterrence and crisis management, according to the Rand report.

Deterrence, through U.S. military presence and dialogue with China, always has been central to U.S. strategy.

That must continue as China's military grows stronger, Ian Easton wrote earlier this year. He is a research fellow for the Project 2049 Institute, a nonpartisan public policy organization focused on the Asia-Pacific region.

"More can and should be done by America and allies to convince [China] that a war in the Taiwan Strait (or anywhere else) would be fruitless and financially crippling," he wrote.

Syria evacuation deal stalls as buses torched

Associated Press

BEIRUT — A delicately timed evacuation deal involving trapped civilians and fighters in war-ravaged eastern Aleppo and two Syrian villages was thrown into doubt Sunday when assailants torched six buses assigned to the operation.

The buses were to take part in the evacuation of over 2,000 wounded and sick Syrians from Foua and Kfarya, two rebel-besieged villages that have remained loyal to the government in an area under opposition control in the northwest Idlib province, activists and government media reported.

The bus burnings could scuttle a wider deal to evacuate thousands of vulnerable civilians and fighters from the opposition's last foothold in Aleppo and to return the city entirely to government control.

Evacuations from Aleppo had been halted amid mutual recriminations Friday after several thousand trapped civilians had already been moved from the city. The suspension of the evacuations had thrown an Aleppo deal brokered by Russia and Turkey last week into disarray.

That deal marked a turning point in the country's war. With the opposition leaving Aleppo, President Bashar Assad effectively has reasserted his control over Syria's five largest cities and its Mediterranean coast nearly six years after a national movement to unseat him took hold.

The opposition's Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the al-

Qaida-affiliated Fatah al-Sham Front was behind Sunday's assault on the buses. The insurgent group had been dragging its feet over approving the evacuation deal.

Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant group fighting alongside Syria's government, said the buses were burned during fighting between Fatah al-Sham and a rebel group that supported the evacuations.

Most residents of the two villages are Shiite Muslims, while the most powerful anti-government groups in Idlib are hard-line Sunnis.

The identity of the group behind the attack remains unclear. A video showing armed men circling the burning buses did not reveal their affiliation.

"The buses that came to evacuate the apostates have been burned," declared the narrator of the video, as celebratory gunshots rang through the air. He warned that no "Shiite pigs" would be allowed to leave the towns.

The video could not be verified independently, but was in line with AP reporting from the area.

A coalition of rebel groups disavowed the bus burning as a "reckless attack," saying it endangered tens of thousands of Syrians trapped in Aleppo. No group has claimed responsibility for burning the buses.

Earlier in the day, dozens of buses and ambulances were poised to enter eastern Aleppo to resume evacuating rebel fighters and civilians from the opposition's remaining districts, pro-Syrian government media

said. But the evacuations remained on hold at nightfall.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which has overseen the Aleppo evacuations, had no comment Sunday on their possible resumption. The agency has said thousands of people, among them women, children, the sick and the wounded, remain trapped in besieged areas of the city, waiting in freezing temperatures for the evacuations to resume.

Also on Sunday, the U.N. Security Council was expected to vote on a resolution demanding immediate and unconditional access for the United Nations and its partners to besieged parts of Aleppo and throughout Syria to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The council began consultations Sunday on the French-drafted resolution followed by an open meeting in which members are expected to vote.

The draft resolution calls on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to immediately re-deploy U.N. humanitarian staff already on the ground to carry out "neutral monitoring" and "direct observation and to report on evacuations."

It stressed that evacuations of civilians must be voluntary and to the destinations of their choice.

Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said Friday he would examine the draft, but was skeptical that monitors could be deployed quickly.

Rights group: Iraqi militia slew captured fighters

Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq — A militia backed by the Iraqi government killed suspected Islamic State fighters captured during the operation to retake Mosul, Human Rights Watch said Sunday.

The Hashed al-Jabour militia, made up of Sunni tribal fighters, killed four men it had captured in a village north of Mosul in November, according to a report published by the New York-based group. The report cited witnesses who said the men were shot in the presence of Iraqi security forces without any judicial proceedings.

The militia is part of the Popular Mobilization Forces,

a group of mainly Shiite militias sanctioned by the government who have been accused of abuses during past campaigns against the Islamic State, a Sunni extremist group.

Iraqi government spokesman Saad al-Hadithi said authorities were unaware of the incident, but were committed to arresting and trying anyone suspected of human rights violations.

"Generally speaking, retaliations could happen in some areas by the locals (in the PMF) who had family members and relatives killed by Daesh before the entering of government security forces," al-Hadithi said, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group. "Such

acts are totally rejected by the Iraqi government and are fully investigated, and those behind it face trials."

In comments broadcast on state television Saturday, Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said he had not received any "complaints" about the Popular Mobilization Forces. He said the Mosul fight was "clean," and moving forward at a "good pace."

The Mosul offensive involves tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers and police, as well as Kurdish fighters, Shiite militias and Sunni tribesmen. Iraqi forces have seized about a quarter of the city — the country's second-largest — since

the operation began Oct. 17.

The International Organization for Migration said Sunday that at least 103,872 people have fled their homes since the operation began. The city was still home to more than a million people when the offensive began two months ago.

Human Rights Watch has previously accused Sunni militias participating in the Mosul operation of recruiting boys younger than 18 for the fight. The group also has accused the Shiite militias operating under the PMF of abuses against civilians in majority-Sunni towns and cities. The prime minister's office has investigated individual militiamen after past allegations.

Communication woes slow return of North Koreans

BY KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea—Eight North Korean fishermen spent weeks lost at sea. Now they're adrift in a diplomatic limbo.

The fishermen all said they wanted to go home after being rescued by South Korean maritime police last week, but Seoul has been unable to reach the other side to arrange their return, officials said.

The case offers an unusual glimpse into the communication methods used between the two enemies, which are divided by the world's most heavily fortified border and remain technically at war.

When the North Koreans didn't pick up the phone, the South resorted to a form of shouting: broadcasting the request across the Demilitarized Zone via loudspeakers.

Negotiators sometimes meet during times of crisis in the truce village of Panmunjom, which is in the buffer zone established after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice instead of a peace treaty. Otherwise, communication between the two sides is usually limited to blaring propaganda at each other across the no-man's land.

North and South Korea have established telephone lines to coordinate military and humanitarian matters, as well as to exchange information on pri-

vate airline traffic.

However, the lines were cut after South Korea closed the joint Kaesong Industrial Complex as tensions rose following North Korea's fourth nuclear test and a long-range rocket launch earlier this year.

The Unification Ministry, which oversees inter-Korean relations, said it tried calling the North Koreans via the hotlines, but nobody picked up. So the request was broadcast via loudspeakers at Panmunjom on Thursday afternoon, ministry spokesman Jeong Joon-hee told a news briefing.

He said it is believed the North got the message because soldiers were in the area to hear it.

Another official said South Korea never actually severed the phone lines, so it was able to place the calls. The hotline, which is maintained by the Red Cross, has limited hours, but those used by the military in the Yellow Sea are available around the clock.

"There has been no response from North Korea," Jeong said. "But as mentioned in the notice, we are planning to repatriate them at sea on Monday morning."

If a North Korean ship doesn't appear, the government will try to find another way to repatriate the men, including possibly using a land route, Jeong said.

China says it will return drone; Trump: 'Keep it'

BEIJING — China says its military seized a U.S. Navy unmanned underwater glider in the South China Sea, but that it will give it back. President-elect Donald Trump, however, says the Chinese government should be told, "We don't want the drone they stole back," and, "Let them keep it!"

This comes after U.S. officials confirmed that they "secured an understanding" for the return of the device. Trump's tweet Saturday evening could extend one of the most serious incidents between

the American and the Chinese militaries in years.

The Chinese navy on Thursday seized the drone, which the Pentagon said was being operated by civilian contractors to conduct oceanic research. The U.S. lodged a formal diplomatic complaint and demanded the drone back.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun issued a statement late Saturday saying that after confirming that the device was an American unmanned submerged device, "China decided to transfer it to the U.S. through appropriate means."

From The Associated Press

Okinawa official vows to resist base move

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND CHIYOMI SUMIDA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa—Okinawa Gov. Takeshi Onaga has released a 13-point plan to block the relocation of Marine Corps air operations on the island despite recent court losses over the issue.

After an MV-22 Osprey crashed into the sea off Nago last Tuesday night, the anti-base governor has ratcheted up resistance to what he sees as a disproportionate U.S. military presence on the southern Japanese prefecture.

The majority of options Onaga identified can only slow the relocation process; however, three involve permits that soon could cross his desk, setting the stage for more showdowns with Tokyo and its allies in Washington.

The U.S. and Japan agreed on the relocation plan in 1996 because of aircraft-safety concerns at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, a densely populated, urban area in central Okinawa. The plan calls for a new runway at Oura Bay at Camp Schwab in northern Okinawa that would facilitate Futenma's closure and would shift Marine air assets to the north.

Onaga has been trying to close Futenma and to move Marine air operations off Okinawa, though both Washington and Tokyo have said keeping air operations on the island is the best option.

"I will never allow construction of a new military base at Henoko," he said recently. "If the central government resumes construction, I will block it by employing every possible means." Onaga said he has several cards left to play. The first concerns a permit to break coral in the water where the new runway is being constructed.

The current permit — signed by his predecessor, Hirokazu Nakaima — expires in March.

Renewal likely is going to be necessary, according to a spokesman for Onaga's "Henoko New Military Base Construction Countermeasure Team."

The second is a permit likely needed to collect and transplant coral, and the third is a permit for a revision in the project's design. One was submitted by the defense minister while Nakaima was in office, but approval was not given before he left the post.

Administration officials also said Onaga could delay the project with surveys for buried cultural property and testing on soil coming in from outside the prefecture for landfill.

"Even if the court judges that the landfill permit was given lawfully, it goes without saying that a strict review is necessary to see if it meets requirements of the law involved; for instance, a permit for breaking coral reefs," Onaga said, according to the spokesman. "Naturally, permission cannot be given when the request for a permit to break coral reefs fails to meet the requirements of law."

The Japanese government pointed to the recent Osprey crash in renewing efforts to push forward with the project. Two Marines were seriously injured when they ditched their helicopter-plane hybrid in shallow water just off Camp Schwab — in the general area of the new runway — rather than risk flying over Okinawan homes en route back to Futenma.

The aircraft experienced problems after a nighttime refueling at sea when a C-130 severed a heavy hose and damaged the Osprey's propeller.

Both Marines are expected to recover.

The crash came on the heels of media reports that Onaga had failed in his bid to get a hearing before Japan's Supreme Court to try to block construction of the airfield off Schwab. A formal announcement is scheduled this week.

Warmer weather follows icy storm

The Associated Press

Temperatures in the nation's midsection and on the East Coast warmed up on Sunday after a bitterly cold few days.

A warm front passing through the region pushed temperatures into the mid- to upper 40s in New York, the National Weather Service said.

"Temperatures have soared into the 40s," meteorologist Jay Engle said. "Milder air is with us today but today only."

The temperature will take a slight dip Sunday night into Monday, but it won't be as cold as it has been across much of the country, Engle said. The past few days have been more than 10 degrees below normal for this time of year in many areas, he said.

With Christmas shopping underway and holiday travel gearing up, the nation's midsection and East Coast were hammered by a winter storm bearing snow, freezing rain and often bone-chilling temperatures.

Snow and freezing rain spawned a multitude of highway accidents, some serious. At least nine deaths were blamed on the slick roads. Authorities were investigating other traffic fatalities as possibly weather-related.

A tanker carrying gasoline skidded off a highway in Baltimore on Saturday and exploded. Two people died in the nearly 70-vehicle pileup on Interstate 95, authorities said. Baltimore fire Chief Roman Clark said it was too early to determine the cause of the crash.

There were dozens of crashes in Indiana — two of them with fatalities — due to freezing rain and ice. The roads were so slick that authorities had to move motorists stranded on an overpass with a ladder.

US says it will work with Duterte

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The United States said Sunday it will work with the Philippine president to address any concerns after he threatened to terminate a pact that allows U.S. troops to visit the Philippines.

President Rodrigo Duterte was enraged after a U.S. government aid agency deferred a vote on a renewal of a major development assistance package for the Philippines over concerns about extrajudicial killings in Duterte's war on illegal drugs, which has left thousands dead.

Although no decision on the aid package has been taken, Duterte on Saturday launched an expletive-laden tirade, telling the U.S. to "prepare to leave the Philippines, prepare for the eventual repeal or the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement."

He was referring to a 1998 accord that governs American forces visiting the Philippines for joint combat exercises. The pact has helped the Philippines contain a violent Muslim insurgency in the south and train and equip Filipino forces facing an assertive China in disputed South China Sea waters.

"You know, tit for tat ... if you can do this, so (can) we. It ain't a one-way traffic," Duterte said, adding, "Bye-bye, America."

The U.S. Embassy in Manila said in a statement overnight that Washington will work closely with the Duterte administration to address any concerns it may have. It did not elaborate.

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment, but spokesman Josh Earnest has said previously that the White House would not react publicly each time Duterte made an offhand remark.

Duterte, 71, who describes himself as a left-wing politician, has made similar threats before and after taking office in June, but he and his officials have walked back on many of his public statements, causing confusion.

While calling Americans "sons of bitches" and "hypocrites," Duterte on Saturday praised China as having "the kindest soul of all" for offering what he said was significant financial assistance. "So, what do I need America for?" he asked.

He also said Russia can be a very important ally. "They do not insult people, they do not interfere," he said.

The Philippines had been slated for another aid package after its previous five-year, \$434 million poverty-reduction program was successfully completed in May under Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino III.

A spokeswoman for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Laura Allen, said Thursday that it would continue to monitor events in the Philippines before the next board review in March 2017.

The U.S. decision is among the first signs of how concerns about the rule of law and human rights under Duterte could entail economic costs.

Trump: First lady's comment about past

Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — President-elect Donald Trump said first lady Michelle Obama "must have been talking about the past" when she said there's no sense of hope after his election.

Trump, speaking Saturday at the final rally of his post-election "thank you" tour, then resisted escalating the spat further, suggesting "she made that statement not meaning it the way it came out."

But as Trump praised the Obamas for treating him so nicely when he visited the White House shortly after the election, many in the Mobile, Ala., crowd booed the first family.

Michelle Obama, in an interview with Oprah Winfrey set to air Monday on CBS, said she was now certain that her husband's victory had inspired people because "now we're feeling what not having hope

feels like."

"What do you give your kids if you can't give them hope?" she added.

Trump's comment about Michelle and President Barack Obama was one of the few conciliatory notes he sounded during a victory tour in which he showed few signs of turning the page from his blustery campaign to focus on uniting a divided nation a month before his inauguration.

At each stop, the Republican gloatingly recapped his election-night triumph, reignited some old political feuds while starting some new ones and did little to quiet the hate-filled chants of "Lock her up!" directed at Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

At the tour's finale at the same football stadium in Mobile that hosted the biggest rally of his campaign, Trump saluted his supporters as true

"patriots" and made little attempt to reach out to the those — more than half of the electorate — who didn't vote for him.

"We are really the people who love this country," said Trump.

He reminisced about his campaign announcement and his ride down Trump Tower's golden escalator. His disputed a newspaper's account of the size of the crowd at one of his rallies and bashed the press as dishonest. And he joked that he had booked a small ballroom for his election night party so that if he lost, he "could get out!"

He paid homage to the August 2015 rally in the same stadium that he said jump-started his campaign. Though the crowd was not as large on Saturday, it was no less fervid, repeatedly chanting "Build the wall!" when Trump renewed his vow to build an impenetrable wall at the Mexican border.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Court upholds dismissal of sidewalk lawsuit

NE LINCOLN — The Nebraska Supreme Court has upheld without comment a lower court's dismissal of a lawsuit against the city of Lincoln by a jogger who fell on an uneven city sidewalk.

The high court's ruling Friday noted only that "an equally divided court" affirmed Lancaster County District Judge Andrew Jacobsen's dismissal last year of Dawn Amory's lawsuit.

Amory had been seeking more than \$19,000 for medical expenses she incurred after falling and breaking her pelvis five years ago. She argued the city should have found and fixed the sidewalk tile, that was raised about an inch.

Jacobsen had said Amory didn't show the city was neglecting the more than 1,500 miles of sidewalk it maintains, and that no one had complained about the problem before.

Detective who made racist remarks cleared

NJ MILLBURN — A police detective caught on video making racist remarks at the scene of a brutal home invasion has been cleared of criminal wrongdoing.

Essex County prosecutors announced their findings regarding Millburn detective Colin McMillan in a statement issued Friday. They have sent the matter back to Millburn police, who will decide whether McMillan will face any departmental charges.

The remarks were captured by a home-security video camera.

Authorities said Shawn Custis severely beat and robbed a woman in 2013 while she sat with her daughter watching cartoons.

Custis, who is black, argued

during his trial that McMillan's comments had tainted the investigation.

Custis was convicted on numerous charges, including aggravated assault, child endangerment and robbery, but was acquitted of attempted murder. He was sentenced to life in prison.

Owners want famed hot dog shop's recipes

OH TOLEDO — A feud over recipes from an Ohio hot dog eatery made famous on the TV series "M*A*S*H" is back in court.

The owners of Tony Packo's, in Toledo, have filed a complaint against one of the restaurant chain's former owners, who testified over a year ago that he had a notebook with the eatery's chili soup and hot dog sauce recipes.

The owners who bought Tony Packo's in 2012 amid a family feud over ownership said the purchase included the company recipes.

The Blade newspaper reported that the new owners filed a complaint in court Wednesday.

Actor Jamie Farr made Tony Packo's famous in the 1970s when he portrayed a homesick U.S. soldier in the Korean War who longed for their hot dogs.

City cites itself over run-down properties

PA PITTSBURGH — The city of Pittsburgh has cited itself for owning run-down properties, and a local judge isn't letting the city withdraw some citations, which officials say were mistakenly filed.

The city's Department of Permits, Licenses and Inspections has ramped up citations against owners of eyesore properties in hopes landlords will repair them.

PLI Director Maura Kennedy said the eight citations were

filed by mistake. District Judge Richard King has allowed the city to withdraw five citations but said the city must deal with the others because property owners often complain about the condition of city-owned properties when they get cited for not maintaining theirs.

Mayor Bill Peduto's spokesman, Tim McNulty, said the city doesn't have enough money to maintain the more than 6,000 derelict properties it owns and won't tear down some because of their architectural significance.

Winter ban on manure spreading takes effect

VT MONTPELIER — Vermont farmers must wait until spring to spread manure onto fields.

The state's annual winter manure-spreading ban went into effect on Thursday and runs through April 1.

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture says farmers must have storage structures to hold all manure produced during that period or be able to stack it in a way that will not lead to water-quality impacts.

Pipe-armed man chases two Christmas thieves

FL LAKELAND — Two Florida men are spending the holidays in jail thanks to observant neighbors who spotted them taking Christmas gifts from a nearby home and another homeowner who chased them with a metal pipe.

The Polk County Sheriff's Department announced that a Lakeland resident heard a loud noise Wednesday morning and called another neighbor, who looked outside and saw the men taking gifts from a nearby home. The neighbor yelled and they fled in a car.

Lakeland police and sheriff's deputies tracked them down.

They bailed from the car and ran into a home, but the homeowner chased them out with a metal pipe.

Authorities arrested James Davis, 18, and Antonio Thomas, 21. They face multiple charges.

Prison worker admits stealing from inmate

NY BUFFALO — A New York state prison employee has admitted stealing a \$300 money order that was sent to an inmate.

The state inspector general's office said Carole Kozak, 59, of Perrysburg, was working as a mail clerk at the Gowanda Correctional Facility outside Buffalo in January when she intercepted the money order sent by an inmate's father. Investigators said Kozak altered the money order and used the money to pay a credit card bill.

Kozak pleaded guilty in Erie County Court Thursday to a misdemeanor count of criminal possession of a forged instrument. Sentencing is set for Feb. 22.

Driverless car injures officer after pursuit

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Authorities in Salt Lake City said a police pursuit of a vehicle ended with an officer struck by the car and the man who had been driving it taken into custody.

Police said the officer was knocked unconscious when the still-running car struck him after the driver got out and ran at the end of a pursuit that began Friday evening in Taylorsville.

According to police, other officers then located the man behind the building and used a stun gun to subdue him.

The injured officer was reported in fair condition at a hospital.

From wire reports

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Moore tosses 4 TDs as Miami cruises past Jets

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Matt Moore's first game as Ryan Tannehill's replacement was the best of his career.

The nine-year veteran stepped in Saturday night by throwing for four touchdowns in keeping the Miami Dolphins' playoff hopes very much alive with a 34-13 rout of the New York Jets.

In his first start since Jan. 1, 2012 — a Dolphins victory over the Jets, with current New York coach Todd Bowles serving as interim Miami coach — Moore picked apart the mistake-prone hosts.

He hit Dion Sims for a pair of 1-yard TDs and Kenny Stills for 52 yards and Jarvis Landry for 66 yards in Miami's eighth win in its last nine games. The Dolphins (9-5) clinched their first

winning season since 2008, the last time they won the AFC East.

Should Moore (12-for-18 for 236 yards) continue such strong play, they certainly can be optimistic about playing in the postseason.

"There were some nerves and maybe it showed a little early," said Moore, whose wife gave birth to son Wyatt on Monday. "We started slow, but got in the groove in the middle part. Once we got going, that negative stuff wore off and I got on a roll."

The Jets (4-10) have lost as many games as they won in 2015, Bowles' first season in charge. They also lost second-year quarterback Bryce Petty on the first play of the fourth quarter after he was squashed by Ndamukong Suh and Cameron Wake and injured his chest.

Faber goes out with win

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Sporting his traditional look of cornrowed hair and movie star smile that made him one of the sport's most popular figures, Urijah Faber proved he can still get it done in the octagon.

The California Kid also showed he has a pretty good chin, too.

Faber survived being knocked down in the third round and beat Brad Pickett by unanimous decision to win in the final fight of his career at UFC Fight Night on Saturday night.

The 37-year-old Faber, who announced his retirement earlier this year, repeatedly took Pickett to the mat throughout the fight and scored with crisp, hard head shots that opened a gaping cut on the Englishman's left eye before Pickett landed a sharp straight left that put Faber down with 1:22 left in the third.

Faber (34-10) quickly got to his feet and smiled before chasing Pickett (26-13) down and trying for a final submission attempt as a raucous, near-sell-out crowd at GoldenOne Center roared.

All three judges scored the fight 30-26.

Michelle Waterson (14-4) won with a rear-naked choke over Paige VanZant in the first round of their scheduled five-round fight in the main event.

Waterson, No. 11 in the strawweight division, took VanZant down midway through the round and quickly got both of her arms locked around VanZant's neck.

VanZant (7-3) tried to work free and at one point had one of Waterson's arms away before Waterson got it locked in again to win at 3:21 after VanZant's hands went limp and she fell unconscious.

In the co-main event Mickey Gall (4-0) submitted up-and-coming Sage Northcutt in the second round of their welterweight bout to stay unbeaten.

Monk leads Kentucky over UNC

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Malik Monk scored a Kentucky freshman record 47 points and hit the go-ahead three-pointer with 16.7 seconds left to lead the sixth-ranked Wildcats past No. 7 North Carolina 103-100 on Saturday in a thrilling showdown of traditional powers.

No. 2 UCLA 86, Ohio State 73: At Las Vegas, Aaron Holiday and Bryce Alford each scored 20 points as UCLA (12-0) continued their best start since being 14-0 in 2006-07.

No. 3 Kansas 89, Davidson 71: Josh Jackson and Frank Mason III scored 18 points apiece, helping Kansas overcome a sluggish, first half to beat Davidson at Sprint Center.

No. 4 Baylor 82, Jackson State 57: Al Freeman scored a season-high 19 points and made a career-best five three-pointers and Baylor returned to Fort Hood with a victory over Jackson State.

No. 18 Butler 83, No. 9 Indiana 78: Kelan Martin scored 28 points and Kamar Baldwin added a season-high 14 for Butler in the Crossroads Classic.

No. 10 Creighton 66, Oral Roberts 65: Marcus Foster scored 22 points and host Creighton (11-0) rallied to beat Oral Roberts.

No. 11 Louisville 87, E. Kentucky 56: Donovan Mitchell scored 15 points, Quentin Snider added 13 and host Louisville used a 20-0 run to close the first half for its fifth straight victory.

No. 12 West Virginia 112, UMKC 67: Coach Bob Huggins earned his 800th win as host West Virginia used a 37-4 first-half run to cruise to the win.

No. 13 Virginia 79, Robert Morris 39: Devon Hall matched his career high with 13 points for host Virginia.

No. 15 Purdue 86, No. 21 Notre Dame 81: Caleb Swanigan had 26 points and 10 rebounds, Vincent Edwards finished with 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Purdue got its first win in the Crossroads Classic in Indianapolis.

No. 16 South Carolina 77, South Florida 66: PJ Dozier scored 11 of his 23 points in the closing minutes for visiting South Carolina.

No. 17 Xavier 69, Wake For-

est 65: Trevon Bluiett scored 20 points and host Xavier (9-2) held off Wake Forest.

No. 19 Arizona 67, Texas A&M 63: Dusan Ristic tied a season-high with 18 points and Arizona had to hold off a furious rally in Houston by Texas A&M for its fourth straight win.

No. 22 Oregon 83, UNLV 63: Dillon Brooks had 20 points, including 16 in the second half, and host Oregon won its eighth straight.

No. 23 Florida St. 83, Manhattan 67: Dwayne Bacon scored 16 points and Florida State dominated inside to earn its seventh consecutive victory in the opening game at the Orange Bowl Classic.

No. 24 Southern California 82, Troy 77: Jordan McLaughlin scored 19 points, including a go-ahead floater in the lane with 48 seconds left, and host Southern California (10-0) rallied to remain undefeated.

No. 25 Cincinnati 119, Fairleigh Dickinson 68: Senior Kevin Johnson scored a career-high 18 points as host Cincinnati rolled to the highest-scoring game of coach Mick Cronin's 11-year career.

San Diego State's Pumphrey breaks career rushing record

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Donnel Pumphrey seemed nowhere near as excited about the chance to become the NCAA career rushing record as his San Diego State teammates during the week leading up to his final game.

Fittingly, when he broke the record on a 15-yard toss sweep to the right early in the fourth quarter, Pumphrey ended being pushed out of bounds on the sideline where he could be immediately swarmed by his friends and coaches.

Pumphrey finished with 115 yards rushing and a touchdown in San Diego State's 34-10 victory over Houston in the Las Vegas Bowl.

Pumphrey passed former Wisconsin star Ron Dayne's mark of 6,397 yards and wrapped up his sensational career in his Nevada hometown with 6,405 yards, earning the game's most valuable player honors.

Pumphrey's senior total of 2,133 yards rushing ranks in the top 10 for an FBS player.

"It means the world to me," Pumphrey said on the field immediately after the game as his father wiped away tears before hugging him.

It means just as much to his teammates.

"It's emotional," running back Rashaad Penny said. "To watch that guy do what he do and accomplish so many goals, it's amazing."

"We're just as fired up as he is," linebacker Calvin Munson said. "All of our defensive guys hate him in practice because he is good and he gets us better. He couldn't have done it without the O-line, the fullbacks, the offense."

"I'm just trying to take some credit for you," Munson joked, with a smiling Pumphrey sitting next to him.

Head coach Rocky Long turned to Munson and responded: "You don't block anybody."

Ron Smith returned an interception 54 yards for a touch-

down, Curtis Anderson caught a 28-yard touchdown pass from Christian Chapman, Juwan Washington ran for a touchdown, and John Baron kicked two field goals for the Aztecs (11-3). They overcame a 10-0 first-quarter deficit against the Cougars (9-4) to turn their second consecutive bowl win into a laugh.

New Mexico Bowl

New Mexico 23, Texas-San Antonio 20: At Albuquerque, N.M., Richard McQuarley had two short touchdown runs as the Lobos won a bowl for the second time in a half-century, topping the Roadrunners.

New Mexico's only win since taking the 1961 Aviation Bowl had been a 2007 victory over Nevada in the New Mexico Bowl.

Lamar Jordan ran for 81 yards and threw a 34-yard pass to Dameon Gamblin that set up McQuarley's 1-yard burst for a 23-13 lead in the fourth quarter. The Lobos (9-4) gave coach Bob Davie his first bowl win — he lost three times at Notre Dame and also last year with New Mexico in this bowl.

Jarveon Williams ran for 125 yards for the Roadrunners (6-7). They lost in the first bowl appearance in the program's six-year history.

Autonation Cure Bowl

Arkansas State 31, UCF 13: At Orlando, Fla., Justice Hansen threw three touchdown passes to Kendall Sanders to help the Red Wolves beat the Knights.

Hansen completed 12 of 26 passes for 205 yards, hooking up with Sanders for touchdown strikes of 12, 75 and 17 yards. The biggest plays of the night came from Arkansas State's special teams. They scored on a blocked punt and produced two turnovers that were turned into touchdowns.

The Red Wolves (8-5) sealed the victory when they went

up 31-13 on Sanders' 17-yard scoring reception early in the fourth quarter.

That touchdown was set up after UCF returner Chris Johnson mishandled a punt and it was recovered by Logan Morgagne at the Knights 37.

Camellia Bowl

Appalachian State 31, Toledo 28: At Montgomery, Ala., Marcus Cox rushed for 143 yards and a touchdown and Michael Rubino kicked the go-ahead 39-yard field goal to lift the Mountaineers past the Rockets.

Appalachian State (10-3) won the game in Alabama's capital city on a late field goal for the second straight year, this one with 5:14 left.

Cox became the ninth FBS player with four 1,000-yard seasons and the 22nd to top 5,000 in his career. Game MVP Taylor Lamb passed for 119 yards and a touchdown and ran for 126 yards and a score.

Kareem Hunt covered 42 yards on four straight rushes to propel Toledo (9-4) down the field after the field goal. Damon Jones-Moore was stopped on third down.

New Orleans Bowl

Southern Mississippi 28, Louisiana-Lafayette 21: At New Orleans, Allenzae Stagers set New Orleans Bowl records with 11 catches for 230 yards and also scored a touchdown to help the Golden Eagles beat the Ragin' Cajuns.

Nick Mullens, the Southern Miss all-time leader in yards passing and passing touchdowns, finished his distinguished career by throwing for 346 yards and two TDs.

One of Mullens' TD tosses was a 6-yarder to running back Ito Smith, who also rushed for 138 yards and two scores. However, Mullens' turnovers helped the Ragin' Cajuns keep the game competitive despite the Golden Eagles (7-6) outgaining ULL (6-7) 481 yards to 252.

Gophers ending boycott

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The University of Minnesota football team's boycott started with a bold demand for apologies and a threat to skip a bowl game if 10 teammates suspended after a sexual assault investigation weren't reinstated.

It ended less than 36 hours later, the university leadership never blinking, and the players backing down amid pressure from many who read details of the allegations.

The Golden Gophers players announced Saturday morning that they planned to play in the Holiday Bowl, rescinding their boycott after two exhausting days of meetings with attorneys, school President Eric Kaler and athletic director Mark Coyle.

"As a team we understand that what has occurred these last few days and playing football for the University of Minnesota is larger than just us," receiver Drew Wolitarsky said.

The school declined the players' request to reinstate the suspended players. The team will now go ahead with its Dec. 27 game against Washington State in San Diego after getting assurances that those accused will get a fair hearing next month.

Wolitarsky, reading from a statement, said after many hours of team discussion and speaking with Kaler, "it became clear that our original request of having the 10 suspensions overturned was not going to happen."

And many of the players who made the initial stand Thursday had not read the university's 82-page report detailing the woman's specific allegations. The university kept the details private under federal law, but players saw it after KSTP-TV published it Friday. The details fractured the group's resolve, according to a person with knowledge of the situation.

Stars end Flyers' 10-game streak

Associated Press

DALLAS — The bouncing puck helped the Dallas Stars end the Philadelphia Flyers' long winning streak.

Adam Cracknell scored the tiebreaking goal on a rebound early in the third period to lead the Stars to a 3-1 victory Saturday, snapping the Flyers' 10-game win streak.

Radek Faksa and Jordie Benn also scored for the Stars and Antti Niemi stopped 31 shots, including three during a Flyers power play in the closing minutes.

Flyers defenseman Ivan Provorov also hit a goalpost during the late power play for the second time in the third period.

"When we went down by one, we had confidence to make plays," Flyers coach Dave Hakstol said. "We didn't get a positive bounce on any of those plays."

"I don't think I learned anything (about the team) through the winning streak. I think it was just a continuation of our group showing up and working hard."

Cracknell broke a 1-1 tie at 2:27 of the

third. Flyers goalie Steve Mason stopped a shot by John Klingberg, but the puck rebounded to Cracknell's feet and he put it on his stick and sent a wrist shot into the net for his fourth.

"He really does the little things," said Tyler Seguin, who also had an assist on Cracknell's goal. "He's always making smart plays."

Canadiens 2, Capitals 1: Carey Price bounced back from getting pulled the night before, making 20 saves as Montreal snapped host Washington's six-game winning streak.

Rangers 2, Predators 1 (SO): Rookie Jimmy Vesey and Mats Zuccarello each scored in the shootout as New York beat Nashville and the NHL's best road team added another win to its record.

Blackhawks 6, Blues 4: Vinnie Hinostroza scored a late tiebreaking goal and Patrick Kane broke out of a 10-game goal-scoring drought to help visiting Chicago beat St. Louis.

Maple Leafs 2, Penguins 1 (OT): Jake Gardiner scored 2 minutes into overtime as host Toronto beat Pittsburgh to end a three-game losing streak.

Red Wings 6, Ducks 4: Tomas Tatar got his first career hat trick to help host Detroit break out of a slump with a win over Anaheim.

Wild 4, Coyotes 1: Darcy Kuemper stopped 27 shots in his first start in nearly three weeks as host Minnesota beat Arizona for its seventh straight win.

Hurricanes 2, Sabres 1 (SO): Lee Stempniak and Sebastian Aho scored on Carolina's first two shootout attempts to lift the host Hurricanes over Buffalo.

Senators 3, Devils 1: Derick Brassard scored the go-ahead goal early in the second period and Mike Condon stopped 29 shots as host Ottawa beat New Jersey to snap a season-high three-game losing streak.

Oilers 3, Lightning 2 (SO): Connor McDavid scored the decisive goal in the shootout as host Edmonton beat Tampa Bay.

Westbrook strikes again in Thunder win

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Russell Westbrook had a career-high 22 assists in his 50th career triple-double to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 114-101 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Saturday.

"My teammates did a great job of spacing, catching and finishing, making some shots," he said. "My job is to be able to find those guys. The ball is in my hands a lot."

Westbrook also scored 26 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in his 13th triple-double of the season. He had gone three games without one, yet the league's leading scorer continues to average double figures in points, rebounds and assists.

Westbrook set up his teammates for much of the night, but he also showed why he averages more than 30 points per game. He scored 17 points on 5-for-9 shooting in the third quarter to help the Thunder push their lead out to 20 points.

"As the game goes on, I read

and kind of see what's open," he said. "And I can go back to different things that I see that's open and try to find ways to be assertive and when not to be. That's just something I've learned over the years."

Cavaliers 119, Lakers 108: LeBron James scored 16 points in the fourth quarter while Kyrie Irving matched a career high with 12 assists as refreshed Cleveland finally put away visiting Los Angeles in the fourth quarter.

Kevin Love had 27 points and a season-high 17 rebounds, leading the Cavs to their sixth win in seven games.

Hornets 107, Hawks 99: Marvin Williams and Marco Belinelli each scored 19 points as host Charlotte snapped a four-game losing streak.

Kemba Walker had 18 points and 10 assists for Charlotte, which grabbed control with a big second quarter. Cody Zeller finished with 16 points and 11 rebounds.

Pacers 105, Pistons 90: Paul George scored 26 points

and Jeff Teague added 19, helping Indiana to the road win.

The Pacers had six players score in double figures and shot 48 percent from the field while stopping a two-game slide. Glenn Robinson III had 12 points and 12 rebounds, and Thaddeus Young also scored 12 points on 6-for-8 shooting.

Rockets 111, Timberwolves 109 (OT): James Harden scored 10 of his 28 points in overtime as Houston rallied from 12 points down with just over two minutes to beat host Minnesota and win their 10th straight game.

Harden also had 13 assists and nine rebounds for the Rockets, who have not lost since Nov. 29. Ryan Anderson scored 28 points and Eric Gordon finished with 20.

Warriors 135, Trail Blazers 90: Kevin Durant scored 34 points and Stephen Curry added 19 points with five three-pointers as host Golden State pulled away for the easy win.

Durant shot 11-for-13 with

four threes in his seventh 30-point game and also pulled down 11 rebounds in nearly 31 minutes. Klay Thompson scored 16 points, Draymond Green had 12 rebounds and 11 assists, and reserve Ian Clark added 23 points in a lopsided rematch of the Western Conference semifinals won in five games by Golden State.

Nuggets 127, Knicks 114: Kenneth Faried scored 25 points and Emmanuel Mudiay had 22 as host Denver beat Carmelo Anthony and New York.

Anthony, who missed the Knicks' loss at Golden State on Thursday night with a bruised right shoulder, had 29 points against his former team but remained winless in five trips to Denver since he was traded to New York in 2011.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 22 points but New York concluded its five-game road trip with a third consecutive loss for its first three-game slide of the season.