

## FACING VIOLENCE, MEXICAN WOMEN LEARNING TO FIGHT

**ECATEPEC:** The slender, 24-year-old Mexican female nurse faces off with a much bigger gun-toting man, twists his hand to snatch the weapon, points it at her attacker and pulls the trigger. Fabiola Arteaga is not being threatened on the streets, but is taking part in a practice bout at a martial arts academy in a sprawling Mexico City suburb. Arteaga is among a growing number of women and teenage girls taking self-defense classes at several training centers in Ecatepec, a crime-ridden city of 1.6 million where killings of women have surged in recent years. Students learn techniques such as disarming a man with a gun or a knife, kicking him, breaking his nose, escaping a chokehold, or twisting his arm when he tries to grab them from behind.

Some 600 women have been murdered in the State of Mexico, which nearly surrounds Mexico City, in the past four years, with most homicides taking place in Ecatepec, according to the non-governmental National Citizen Observatory of Femicides. The bodies of women turn up every week in the rough suburbs of the capital. They are abandoned at the foot of hills or dumped in canals. The corpses are often burned or bear the scars of abuse.

The State of Mexico now competes with Ciudad Juarez, the city bordering the United States that became infamous for its spate of femicides, for the grim title of the most dangerous place for women in the country. "These are crimes that are clearly filled with hatred" against the victims because they are women, said Maria de la Luz Estrada, head of the observatory.

### 'Always be prepared'

Determined not to join the grim list of victims, Arteaga has been learning tang soo do, a Korean martial art, for the past five years at the Xtreme Martial Arts academy, in a poor and dimly lit neighborhood of Ecatepec. Her community is plagued by "extreme violence, with women raped and killed," she said, recalling that one of her nieces was killed at age 15.

The classes have taught her to "always be prepared and observe everything," Arteaga said. "Stepping back is useless," the instructor, Mario Ramirez, shouted at a teenage girl as a young would-be assailant tried to stab and hit her. "There's no law in Ecatepec," he said, shouting again: "They don't know that we know how to defend ourselves!"

Fabiola Zamora, a 15-year-old tang soo do green belt, had a stark reason to take the classes. "I saw how girls were taken away at my school, so I thought that I had to defend myself in one way or the other," she said. Zamora was not the youngest taking a class. At the tender age of nine, Kenya already knows about the dangers lurking in her city. She already fears being "kidnapped and cut to pieces." She has been learning self-defense moves for the past year "so that I don't get kidnapped," Kenya said. She could have been taking ballet lessons. Instead, she watches as women learn to fend off assailants, hoping she can also learn ways to "stay alive" amid the "bang" of fake guns being fired. At least 47 percent of women 15 and older have suffered some sort of attack in the country of nearly 120 million people, according to the National Public Security System.

### 'Gender alert'

In the State of Mexico, the prosecutor's office in charge of investigating femicides has opened 254 cases since 2011, but only 72 have ended in sentences so far, said the head of the unit, Dilcia Garcia. The problem is too big for the suburb and the 5,000 police officers patrolling the vast streets are not enough, Garcia said.—AFP



**MEXICO CITY: A female student (R) learns self-defence techniques against an attacker, during a class in the dangerous municipality of Ecatepec. — AFP**



**UTAH: In this March 19, 2016, file photo, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, from left, Republican presidential candidate, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, wave during a rally.— AP**

## CRUZ OUTMANEUVERING TRUMP IN HAND-TO-HAND DELEGATE FIGHT

DELEGATE GAME COUNTERING TRUMP'S HEADLINE GRABBERS

**DENVER:** While the focus of the Republican presidential campaign shifts eastward to the New York primary, Texas Sen Ted Cruz is pivoting west, where he is quietly trying to chip away at Donald Trump's lead in the race for convention delegates.

Cruz won six pledged delegates during a pair of obscure, congressional-level Colorado GOP assemblies tomorrow. He is also poised to make gains in several other western Republican contests, including a possible sweep of Colorado's remaining assemblies, due to conclude tomorrow. Cruz's success in the complex delegate game is helping him counter Trump's headline-grabbing wins in big states and would give the Texas senator a tactical advantage should the party's presidential nomination come down to a rare contested convention.

"Cruz is ahead of everyone on this," Republican election lawyer Ben Ginsberg said, describing Cruz's aggressive but quiet delegate strategy as "equally important" to the actual votes. Cruz has racked up some outright popular vote victories, most recently by soundly winning Wisconsin's primary Tuesday and squeezing Trump's narrow, but achievable, path to the nomination. Still, Trump is heavily-favored in the upcoming round of northeastern primaries, especially in the billionaire's home state of New York on April 19.

That's why Cruz's team has been busy at work in states like North Dakota, where convention delegates are selected directly by party officials. These tedious, complicated and insider-heavy events are key to the party's organizational structure, a concept new to Trump but not to Cruz, who rose to prominence in Texas through the GOP's grassroots.

### Zero endorsements

Trump's campaign did not respond to a request for comment, but he has previously complained that caucuses

are unrepresentative, and said that delegate fights are tricks to subvert the voters' will. Cruz has outmaneuvered Trump in all the caucus states, beginning in Iowa. In North Dakota last week, he scooped up endorsements from delegates selected at the party's state convention tomorrow.

All 28 of North Dakota's delegates will go to the national convention free to support the candidate of their choice. But in interviews, 10 said they are committed to vote for Cruz at the convention. A few others said they are leaning toward Cruz, though they weren't ready to commit. None has endorsed Trump so far. In Colorado, Cruz is taking advantage of an unusual change to the state's nominating process. Rather than selecting delegates according to a statewide vote, as it has in the past, Colorado is holding a series of rolling caucuses this week in each of its seven congressional districts, then culminating with a statewide convention on Saturday where Trump and Cruz are expected to speak.

Colorado Republican operatives say that, just by winning the congressional gatherings, Cruz could lock down a majority of the 34 delegates up for grabs, even before Saturday's convention. "Cruz has the big upper hand here," said Ryan Lynch, a Colorado-based Republican consultant unaffiliated with any of the presidential campaigns. "They're the only ones really organized."

That was apparent on Saturday when a slate loyal to Cruz swept the first two congressional district assemblies. A slate is a group of candidates that run in multi-seat elections on a common platform. Members of the slate had strategized with Rep. Ken Buck, Cruz's Colorado chairman and a veteran politician well-connected among the state's Republican primary electorate.

### 'Organized state'

The Cruz campaign sent out emails

on their behalf to delegates who had been selected at earlier precinct-level meetings, and slate members worked the phones and lobbied those delegates further for support. "It was kind of like running a classic campaign—talking to as many people as possible, working it," said state Rep Justin Everett, one of Cruz's delegates. "We're probably only a \$500 investment. We didn't see much from the Trump campaign in terms of an investment."

Cruz has not had a heavy paid-staff presence in Colorado. Instead, a pro-Cruz volunteer network has been coordinating closely, said former Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler. "Cruz has an organized slate. But you can't beat the shoe leather aspect of it," said Gessler, a Cruz delegate from Denver. "I made about 250 phone calls. I don't know if I'd have won if I hadn't made those phone calls."

The remainder of Colorado's delegates will be chosen at district conventions Friday and the state convention Saturday in Colorado Springs. Cruz's delegate strategy stretches beyond North Dakota and Colorado. He campaigned through swing regions of Wisconsin long before Trump set foot there. He also locked up support from almost all of Milwaukee's conservative talk radio personalities, giving him a free mouthpiece aimed at roughly 40 percent of the state GOP's primary voters.

Likewise, Cruz supporters are organizing in Iowa this week. Cruz won the proportionally binding caucuses on Feb 1, but stands to gain delegates in the Iowa GOP's district conventions on Saturday. While Trump remains the closest to the 1,237 delegate target for now, he's not taking it for granted. His campaign announced last week the hiring of Paul Manafort to run his convention effort, including delegate strategy. Likewise, Trump said he would open a convention-planning office in Washington, DC, to also house its delegate-selection team. — AP