



JUPITER: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump arrives for a news conference at the Trump National Golf Club. —AP

GOP PLOTS TRUMP DEMISE AS HE EYES NEXT WIN IN ARIZONA

‘ESTABLISHMENT IS NOW LIKE A WOUNDED, CORNERED ANIMAL’

PHOENIX: Fearful of a Donald Trump nomination to lead the GOP, conservative leaders huddled privately in Washington on Thursday in search of a plan to stop the billionaire businessman. His Republican rivals braced for another Trump victory, this time in delegate-rich Arizona. The GOP has an eager alternative in Texas Sen Ted Cruz, yet some party leaders are exploring “other avenues” instead of rallying behind the fiery conservative, an ominous sign that Republican leaders’ deep dislike of Cruz complicates their overwhelming concern about Trump. “The establishment is like a wounded animal, now cornered,” said Mark Meckler, an early leader in the tea party movement. “They are terrified, irrational and flailing wildly.”

Even after being denied victory in five contests on Tuesday, Cruz insists he still has a path to the 1,237 delegates necessary to claim the Republican presidential nomination. But in a strategy memo obtained by The Associated Press, his campaign essentially cedes Arizona’s March 22 primary to Trump and acknowledges that Cruz must win 79 percent of the remaining delegates before the GOP’s July national convention. “This is the moment for all those who believe in a strong America to come together and craft a new path forward,” Cruz declared on Twitter while conservatives were meeting in downtown Washington to brainstorm ways to stop his party’s front-runner.

No true conservative

Organizers of the meeting included conservative commentator Erick Erickson and Christian conservative leader Bob Fischer. The goal, as stated in the invitation, was “to strategize how to defeat Donald Trump for the Republican nomination, and if he is the Republican nominee for president, to offer a true conservative candidate in the general

election.” The group released a statement after roughly four hours behind closed doors calling for a “unity ticket that unites the Republican Party.” While many in the room supported Cruz, they declined to endorse the Texas senator or the only other remaining presidential contender, Ohio Gov. John Kasich, and instead urged all former Republican presidential candidates to unite against Trump. They also embraced the possibility of a contested convention.

“Lastly, we intend to keep our options open as to other avenues to oppose Donald Trump,” they said, an apparent reference to a possible third-party candidacy that might stop Trump but likely sacrifice the Republican Party’s chances in the general election to Democrat Hillary Clinton. On Capitol Hill, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said he’d help Cruz raise campaign cash in the hope of stopping Trump’s march. Graham, who dropped his own presidential bid last month, called Cruz “a reliable Republican.” That was a sharp shift from Graham’s recent statement comparing the choice between Trump and Cruz to “the difference between poisoned or shot - you’re still dead.”

Republican chaos

Amid the Republican chaos, Democratic front-runner Clinton focused on fundraising as her campaign begins to look ahead to the general election. However, her rival, Bernie Sanders, continued to campaign aggressively ahead of the next batch of primary contests Tuesday in Arizona and Utah.

Arizona residents are far more likely to see commercials for Sanders than for any other candidate in either party, advertising tracker Kantar Media’s CMAG shows. Though trailing badly in delegates, he is spending about \$1.8 million on Arizona ads, triple Clinton’s media

plan. On the Republican side, so far only Cruz is advertising in the state, a relatively light \$256,000.

While none of the Republican candidates campaigned publicly on Thursday, Cruz was to appear in Arizona before shifting his attention to Utah, which his campaign identified in the strategy memo as a key state in his path forward.

Yet Kasich is running a television ad in Utah and has four public events scheduled there over the next two days. The Ohio governor also unveiled the endorsement of former Utah Gov Mike Leavitt, who praised “the temperament and the tone” of the Kasich campaign, an indirect jab at Trump. Trump this week warned of possible “riots” if he’s denied the GOP presidential nomination at the party’s national convention in July.

“This implicit acceptance of violence is the kind of rhetoric that’s pulling people apart,” Kasich wrote on Twitter. “A true leader urges peaceful debate over violence.” With a big delegate lead over Kasich, Cruz remains the Republican best-positioned to catch Trump. Even under a best-case scenario, however, Cruz’s campaign envisions a slim chance he can win enough delegates to claim the nomination before the convention. The campaign is predicting success Tuesday in Utah and upcoming contests in North Dakota, Wisconsin and Colorado.

The Cruz strategy also depends upon victories on the final day of primary voting, June 7, which features contests in California and New Jersey, among other states. In Arizona, experts believe about half of all Arizona voters have already cast their ballots - many of them for Trump. Bruce Merrill, a veteran Arizona pollster, ascribed the front-runner’s edge to his domination of the media and stance on illegal immigration. —AP

ISLAMIC STATE INSPIRED STUDENT IN STABBINGS

FRESNO: A California college student who went on a stabbing rampage that wounded four people before he was shot down by a campus police officer was inspired by the Islamic State group but acted alone, the FBI said.

Faisal Mohammad, 18, appears to have become self-radicalized, drawing motivation from terrorist propaganda that he found online before launching the Nov. 4 attack at the University of California, Merced, authorities said Thursday.

“Every indication is that Mohammad acted on his own,” Gina Swankie, a spokeswoman for the FBI’s Sacramento field office, said in a statement. “It may never be possible to definitively determine why he chose to attack people on the UC Merced Campus.”

Extremist websites

The knife attack happened a month before a gun-wielding husband-and-wife team in San Bernardino killed 14 people and wounded 21 others at a workplace holiday party. In that case, too, investigators said they were influenced by the Islamic State group, but not directly connected to it. Like Mohammad, they had not raised red flags that put them on a watch list. In both cases family members said they were unaware of their loved ones’ interests in terrorists groups.

In Merced, Mohammad burst into a classroom, stabbing two students. He stabbed a construction worker who intervened, then ran from the building, where he knifed a school employee sitting on a bench. Police shot and killed Mohammad. The FBI says the college freshman from Santa Clara, California, for several weeks had visited the websites of Islamic State and other extremist groups. He planned the attack at least a week before carrying it out, investigators said. —AP

MAN FALLS TO DEATH FROM LA SKYSCRAPER

LOS ANGELES: An electrician, who was on just his second day working at what will be Los Angeles’ tallest skyscraper, plunged more than 50 floors to his death, onto a busy city intersection that hummed with a normal weekday’s bustle.

It took some time for people below to realize the horror of what had happened, said Los Angeles Times photographer Mel Melcon, who was on assignment at the building. “No one thought it was a body,” Melcon told his paper. “We heard no screams.”

The man fell 53 stories - about 800 feet - Thursday from the unfinished Wilshire Grand Center, and landed on a passing car, Los Angeles police said. He was not supposed to be above the third floor, construction company officials said.

He had taken off his hard hat and had not been wearing a safety harness because it wasn’t required for the bottom floors he was working on, said Lisa Gritzner, spokeswoman for Turner Construction, the main contractor on the project. She could say no more about what may have caused the man to fall or why he was on the upper floor. His name has not been released.

The car he struck appeared to be undamaged, but a rear side panel was splattered with blood, officials said. James Armstrong III was walking to a nearby bank just after the fall when he saw police helping the driver. “She was hysterical,” waving her hands in the air and holding her head, he said. But she did not seem to be hurt, Armstrong said.

The woman was taken to a hospital to be examined, fire officials said. The 73-story skyscraper, the tallest on the West Coast, will be about 1,100 feet tall, or nearly a quarter-mile, when it’s completed. A ceremony was held earlier this month when the top beam was hoisted into place on the 73rd floor. The \$1 billion office and hotel tower being developed by Korean Airlines Co. Ltd. is expected to open in early 2017. —AP