

Debate feud injects fresh chaos into GOP

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — An explosive feud between Donald Trump and Fox News Channel is overshadowing the final sprint to Iowa's presidential caucuses, injecting a new sense of chaos into the 2016 Republican contest.

On the eve of the final debate before Iowa voters weigh in, Trump refused to back off his decision to boycott Thursday's prime-time faceoff. His campaign insisted that debate host Fox News crossed a line with a sarcastic statement mocking him and continued to criticize moderator Megyn Kelly. In turn, Fox accused Trump's camp of trying to terrorize its employees.

"They think they can toy with Mr. Trump," campaign manager Corey Lewandowski said Wednesday on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." "Mr. Trump doesn't play games."

Trump reiterated his plans to skip the debate in an interview Wednesday on Fox News, saying, "I just don't like being used."

As the public clash intensified, Trump's Republican competitors hunkered down for a day of private debate preparations filled with uncertainty. Skeptical that he would follow through on his boycott, the other campaigns held practice sessions with and without someone playing Trump.

Some thought the absence of Trump could make another leading Iowa contender, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, a prime target for campaigns eager to spark a last-minute shakeup. Cruz challenged Trump to a separate one-on-one debate, a proposal that was dismissed by his opponent.

"Even though I beat him in the first six debates, especially the last one, Ted Cruz wants to debate me again. Can we do it in Canada?" Trump tweeted, referencing Cruz's birthplace.

Cruz renewed the invitation to debate, saying they could meet Saturday in Sioux City, Iowa.

"It's not really that Donald is afraid of me," Cruz said at a rally Wednesday night outside of Des Moines. "He's afraid of you. He doesn't want to answer questions from the men and women of Iowa about how his record doesn't match what he's selling."

Some foes saw the shakeup as an opening to rise above the ruckus.

"These kinds of theatrics by Ted Cruz and Donald Trump are an entertaining sideshow, but they have nothing to do with defeating Hillary Clinton," Florida Sen. Marco Rubio said. "We don't have time for these kinds of distractions."

Despite the attention, there was little sense that Trump's move would significantly change the trajectory of the Republican contest in Iowa. While the former reality television star holds a big lead in most national polls, he and Cruz are locked in a tight race here.

"My sense is those Iowa Republicans who weren't fans of Donald Trump before yesterday, this has only validated their opinion of him, and those Iowans who have been drawn to his passionate attack on the media and political elites in our country are even more emboldened



This file photo combination made from Aug. 6 photos shows Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, left, and Fox News Channel host and moderator Megyn Kelly during the first Republican presidential debate at the Quicken Loans Arena, in Cleveland.

Super PACs offer \$1.5M for Cruz-Trump debate

Two super PACs supporting Sen. Ted Cruz's presidential campaign are offering to donate \$1.5 million to charities that help veterans if Donald Trump will debate Cruz head-to-head before the Iowa caucuses.

The political action committees, Keep the Promise I and II, are proposing a one-hour debate to be held in Iowa on or before Jan. 31, the day before the caucuses, with a moderator chosen by the candidates.

Cruz himself sent a letter to Trump Wednesday inviting him to debate in Sioux City, Iowa, on Saturday night. The Cruz campaign suggested conservative radio hosts Mark Levin, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh as possible moderators.

Trump dismissed Cruz's proposal earlier Wednesday.

by their guy today," said former Iowa GOP chairman Matt Strawn.

Trump has substituted mass rallies for normal meet-and-greet events, made inflammatory statements that would have sunk other candidates, and spent much of his time giving his views on television news shows and Twitter.

Instead of debating Thursday night, Trump will host what his campaign is calling a "special event to benefit veterans' organizations."

The campaign on Wednesday evening formally announced details for the event, scheduled to begin at the same time as the debate — and just two miles away.

Campaigning Wednesday evening in South Carolina, Trump drew cheers when he noted his plans to return to Iowa for the fundraiser. But he made no direct reference to the debate, off-handedly saying, "I've not been treated fairly."

In Iowa, Plymouth County GOP Chairman Don Kass called it "typical Trump" and said the candidate could benefit by "making a bigger splash" with his own event.

"Frankly, you know, in the past, anytime somebody thought he did something that cost him, it didn't cost him," Kass said.

Trump is not the first Republican to skip a pre-caucus debate.

Front-runner Ronald Reagan skipped a debate held ahead of the 1980 Iowa caucuses and wound up losing the state to George H.W. Bush. But Reagan went

on to win the nomination.

In December, Trump threatened to skip a CNN debate unless the network paid him \$5 million, which he said he'd donate to charity. The network did not pay up, and he showed up nonetheless. And in October, he and rival Ben Carson's campaign threatened not to show unless their demands for a shorter run time and other conditions were met. The network adjusted and they appeared.

Trump's Fox feud dates back to the first primary debate, when Kelly took him to task over derogatory statements he'd made about women.

The mocking Fox statement on Tuesday was the final straw.

It said the leaders of Iran and Russia "both intend to treat Donald Trump unfairly when they meet with him if he becomes president" and said "Trump has his own secret plan to replace the Cabinet with his Twitter followers to see if he should even go to those meetings."

Taunting and juvenile, Trump and his campaign manager said.

But some conservative leaders suggested Trump was taking a risk.

The debate is "going to be the Donald Trump hatefest," said Mark Meckler, one of the tea party movement's original leaders.

Republican operative Ryan Williams offered some perspective on the wild campaign season.

"The debate chaos is a fitting end," he said, "to a caucus process that has been nothing short of a complete circus."

BRIEFLY

Ferguson, U.S. reach tentative deal on police overhaul

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The Ferguson Police Department has agreed to overhaul its policies, training and practices as part of a sweeping deal with the Justice Department following the 2014 fatal police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown, city and federal officials announced Wednesday.

The recommendations, detailed in a 131-page proposed consent decree, are meant to correct problems identified in a scathing Justice Department report last year that identified unconstitutional and discriminatory practices across the city police force and municipal court system.

The city had been under federal scrutiny since the August 2014 shooting of Brown, who was black and unarmed, by white police officer Darren Wilson.

The killing led to protests and promoted a wave of national scrutiny about police use of force and law enforcement's interactions with minorities.

Wilson was cleared in the shooting, but a federal investigation into the Ferguson police force found sweeping patterns of racial bias throughout the city's criminal justice system. A Justice Department report in March found that officers routinely used excessive force, issued petty citations and made baseless traffic stops in the city of about 21,000 residents, about two-thirds of whom are black.

It also criticized the police force, which was nearly all white, and the court system for leaning heavily on fines for petty municipal violations as a source of revenue for the city government.

The recommended overhaul follows seven months of negotiations and likely averts a civil rights lawsuit that federal officials can bring against departments that resist changing their policing practices. City officials posted the tentative deal on its website and scheduled

three public sessions for input from residents. The agreement envisions a top-to-bottom reshaping of basic policing practices as the Justice Department calls for fundamental changes in how officers conduct stops, searches and arrests, use their firearms and respond to demonstrations. Ferguson officials also agreed to rewrite their municipal code to restrict the use of fines and jail time for petty violations.

Snyder pledges help to Flint amid mistrust of government

FLINT, Mich. (AP) — Flint residents coping with lead contamination will be cleared to drink unfiltered water again only when outside experts determine it is safe, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder said Wednesday, acknowledging their mistrust of government officials while saying a full replacement of the city's pipes is not imminent.

A lawsuit filed earlier in the day by environmental and civil rights groups asked a federal judge to order the prompt replacement of all lead pipes in Flint's water system at no cost to customers. Snyder did not rule out the eventual replacement of the lead service lines leading from water mains, but said it is a longer-term consideration.

In the meantime, Flint hired a Virginia Tech professor who helped expose the lead problem despite initial skepticism from state regulators to now oversee water testing. Professor Marc Edwards also was appointed by Snyder to a committee that will set in place long-term solutions.

Mayor Karen Weaver said residents should not have to pay for the water "they did not and are not using." Emergency budget legislation approved Wednesday by a Senate committee includes \$3 million to help Flint with unpaid water bills.

"I was glad that the governor said these are just first steps because I'm asking for a staircase," she said.

Five arrests in search for escaped inmates

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The investigation of a daring California jail break has led to the arrests of five people, with more expected soon, but the three inmates who escaped remain at large, the Orange County sheriff said Wednesday.

Sheriff Sandra Hutchens said she definitely believes the inmates had assistance from the outside, and that the investigation is focusing on a local Vietnamese gang.

"They had to have had help," Hutchens said.

Those in custody — none of whom are jail employees or insiders — may not all have had direct ties to the escape, but the investigation of the breakout led to their arrest, sheriff's spokesman Lt. Jeff Hallock said.

Hutchens would only say they had "some connection" to the inmates, adding that providing more information might tip off the inmates to details of the search.

The department is still investigating whether the men had help on the inside, she said.

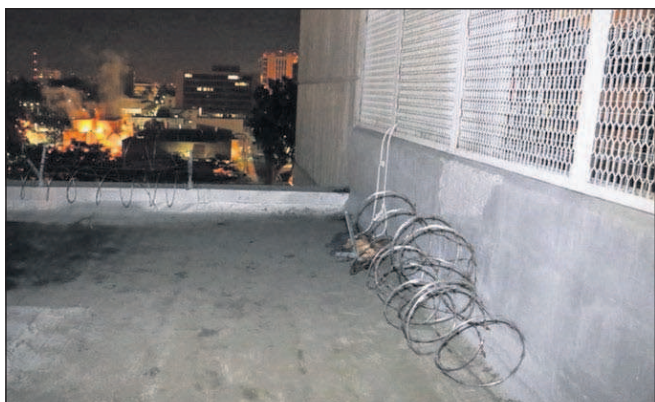
The men would have needed powerful cutting tools that would not have been available to them inside to get through thick metal, and investigators are looking into how they could have obtained them, Hutchens said.

"We don't know what they are, but we know that they made a clean cut," Hutchens said of the tools the men used. "It's nothing we think could have occurred with a jail-made shank."

The jail has revised its headcount procedures because it took so long to discover the men were missing. The changes include requiring deputies to call and confirm



Orange County Sheriff Sandra Hutchens speaks Wednesday about three inmates who escaped the Central Men's Jail during a press conference in Santa Ana, Calif. Hutchens said several arrests have been made in the investigation of the escape, but the inmates themselves have not been captured.



This Jan. 23 photo provided by the Orange County Sheriff's Office shows the exterior of Central Men's Jail in Santa Ana, Calif., showing where razor wire was removed from a parapet, center rear, and a rope-like line, which authorities believe three inmates used to repel to the ground during their escape sometime Jan. 22.

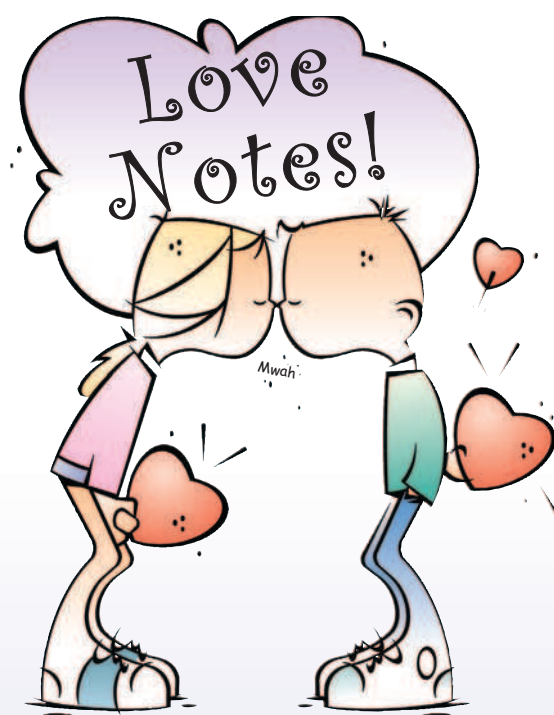
that inmates who are in court, getting medical help or otherwise out of the jail are actually where they are supposed to be. The men escaped Friday from the jail after cutting a hole in a metal grate then crawling through plumbing tunnels and onto the roof. They pushed aside barbed wire and rappelled down using a rope made of bed sheets.

"It's every sheriff's nightmare," Hutchens said. "You never want to have an escape from any jail. They do happen. And you certainly don't want maximum security prisoners who are a danger to the public to get out of your jail. So it's not a good day."

Jonathan Tieu, Bac Duong and Hossein Nayeri had all been awaiting trial for unrelated violent crimes.

Nayeri was probably the mastermind of the escape, Hutchens said, saying his sophistication, his military past and a history of fleeing from law enforcement have investigators focusing on his role.

The sheriff appeared on television and radio shows in Orange County's Little Saigon early in the day to ask for help from the community.



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