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AIRSTRIKES IN SYRIA ARE SLIDING ON CAPITOL HILL

Support for President Obama's call for military airstrikes in Syria is sliding on Capitol Hill.

President Obama's push for congressional approval for military airstrikes in Syria ran aground Monday, forcing Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., to delay a procedural vote as opposition builds among senators in both parties.

Six senators, including five Republicans and one Democrat, announced Monday they would vote against a resolution authorizing the use of force -- a strong indication that the administration's efforts to build bipartisan support have been ineffective.

The Senate was scheduled to vote Wednesday on a procedural motion to begin formal debate on the resolution, but Reid announced late Monday the vote would be delayed in order to buy the president more time to make his case to senators and the public.

"What we need to do is make sure the president has the opportunity to speak to all 100 senators and all 300 million American people before we do this," Reid said.

The delay also came amid reports that Russia was seeking a deal with Syria to dismantle its chemical weapons program. Obama said in television interviews Monday such a deal could circumvent the need for U.S. military intervention, but senators had not been briefed on the development and expressed skepticism.

OBAMA: Russian Syria proposal could be a breakthrough

MORE: Obama undecided on Syria strike if Congress says no

"I have no idea what's going on. It'd be great if the Russians could convince Assad to turn over his chemical weapons to the international community. That'd be a terrific outcome. I just am very dubious and skeptical," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C.

Comments made Monday in London by Secretary of State John Kerry describing the military effort as "unbelievably small" also rankled lawmakers. Graham said Kerry "undercut everything the president has been doing for the last couple of days" to build support.

The rapid clip of senators announcing their opposition on Monday raised serious doubts that the president would be able to muster the necessary support in either the House or Senate. The GOP-led House is not
likely to take up a resolution unless the Senate can pass it first. A final Senate vote was expected this weekend, but Reid's decision to delay the formal debate puts the schedule in flux.

Five GOP Sens. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, Roy Blunt of Missouri, Johnny Isakson of Georgia, Roger Wicker of Mississippi, and Mike Enzi of Wyoming all announced opposition Monday, as did Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota.

Briefings by top administration officials and a weekend conversation with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel were not enough to sway Alexander. "I see too much risk that the strike will do more harm than good by setting off a chain of consequences that could involve American fighting men and women in another long-term Middle East conflict," he said.

Heitkamp was the latest in a string of Democratic senators from conservative states to come out in opposition, including Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark. Heitkamp and Manchin are working on an alternative resolution that would give the Assad government 45 days to sign an international chemical weapons ban and begin turning over its chemical weapons before authorizing U.S. military action.

Two Democratic senators, Barbara Mikulski of Maryland and Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, declared their support. However, Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Md., who voted for the resolution in the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, cautioned Monday that he preferred pursuing diplomatic solutions.

The opposition underscored the uphill battle Obama faces on Capitol Hill to rally around his foreign policy agenda. The president will visit separately with Senate Democrats and Senate Republicans on Tuesday before his prime-time television address.

Graham, who supports the resolution, said he believed it could still pass the Senate: "If the president does a good job tomorrow night, yes." (Contributor: By Susan Davis for USA Today)

The suggested prayer focus here is simply “Watch and pray.” What comment can be made that hasn’t already been considered? Intercessors are not unaware of the many opinions and concerns on the matter of Syria, and there are significant differences from all political viewpoints. President Obama has given interviews to representatives of all major news outlets. But that viewpoint seems to have changed. He first (and recently) said that some form of military response was necessary. But the American public largely disagrees, and Congress is rapidly “sliding” on the issue. In summary, the U.S. is a deeply divided country. All Christian intercessors can and will continue to pray, asking God to show mercy to our nation, and that our leaders, including the president, will carry out their sworn Constitutional duties with regard to U.S. citizens’ security and safety. Keep praying. We do not suggest in any way that this is “the Day of the Lord” or even a close precursor. (No one knows.) Yet the Scripture passages seem applicable. They speak of readiness and spiritual warfare, both vital intercessory attitudes.

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or
sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” (1 Thess. 5:1-11)

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” (Romans 13:11-12)

**IRS WILL TREAT HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES LIKE LEGITIMATE SPOUSES**

Homosexual married couples will be allowed to file joint federal tax returns, the same as married heterosexual couples, the Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service announced Thursday.

The new policy, a response to the Supreme Court ruling in June that overturned a key provision in the Defense of Marriage Act, allows same-sex married couples to claim marriage-related exemptions, credits and deductions even if they live in jurisdictions that don’t recognize gay unions. Like heterosexual spouses, gay couples will be required to declare “married filing jointly” or “married filing separately.”

Treasury Secretary Jack Lew said in a statement that the move “assures legally married same-sex couples that they can move freely throughout the country knowing that their federal filing status will not change.”

The policy applies only to legally married couples and not to those in registered domestic partnerships, civil unions or similar formal relationships recognized by certain states.

The policy shift was inevitable after the DOMA ruling in United States v. Windsor, but the change nonetheless represents a milestone for gay-rights advocates.

Same-sex couples expressed relief Thursday.

“We’re just so overjoyed about not having to experience that negative feeling of not being a legitimate family,” said Geraldine Artis, who lives in Connecticut with her wife and two teenage children. “We’re looking forward to the experience of filing our taxes jointly and being treated as a family.”

Edith Windsor, the plaintiff in the DOMA case, said in a statement, “Thanks to today’s ruling at the Treasury Department, no one will have to experience the pain and indignity that I went through ever again. I feel so proud and grateful to my country and to our president.”

Windsor was blocked from claiming a spousal exemption to the federal estate tax when her wife, Thea Spyer, died.

Same-sex couples married before the court ruling will have the option of filing amended returns for up to three prior years, according to the announcement. That rule would benefit couples that stand to collect a refund by filing with married status.

“Filing jointly with a spouse most of the time has a benefit, but it could be a penalty for high-income earners,” said Adam S. Fayne, a tax lawyer and former special assistant U.S. attorney with the Treasury Department. “For most people, it’s going to be a benefit and generate a refund.”
The Supreme Court declared in June that the federal government must provide legally married gay couples with the same federal tax, health, Social Security and other benefits that opposite-sex couples receive.

Other federal agencies have already announced that they will allow federal benefits for same-sex spouses of federal workers and military personnel. But those policies affect only a subset of the gay population, whereas Thursday's announcement impacts all same-sex couples paying taxes in the United States.

“The IRS is an agency that people tend to interact with more than other federal agencies, so it’s going to make a big difference in the lives of same-sex married couples,” said Brian Moulton, legal director for the Human Rights Campaign.

Roberta Kaplan, Windsor's attorney, said the decision will “put more pressure on states like New Jersey that do not treat their gay citizens equally since it will become increasingly intolerable for those states to continue to treat married gay couples as second-class citizens, especially given that the IRS will now afford them equal respect and dignity under the law.”

Same-sex marriage opponent Bryan Fischer, director of the issues analysis for the American Family Association, predicted the same outcome, adding that the possibility concerns him.

“There will be enormous federal pressure now on states to conform to the IRS,” he said. “The Supreme Court decision placed an (improvised explosive device) under every state marriage amendment in the land,” he said. “I predict we will very quickly see legal action in the 37 states that do not give legal recognition to same-sex marriage to force them to conform to federal policy on their tax forms, and you will get activist federal judges that will comply.”

The joint Treasury-IRS announcement came hours after the Department of Health and Human Services issued a memo clarifying that gays enrolled in private Medicare plans are entitled to care in the nursing facilities where their same-sex spouses reside. That policy was already in effect for heterosexual couples. (Contributor: By Josh Hicks for The Washington Post reported by The Yakima Herald)

One goal in providing prayer points is to encourage intercessors that they are not alone but are praying in agreement with many others across the U.S. and around the world. We hear good reports—thousands called to intercessory prayer are standing true to God and His Word as “watchmen on the wall,” praying through myriad issues confronting our nation week by week. A second goal is to counter discouragement when we have prayed so long into situations that not only seem immovable but appear to grow darker, with more and more ungodly ramifications. In the present article, we see a paradox that only faith will conquer. On one hand, we hear from reliable prophetic ministries that revival and new awakenings are springing up in many quarters; while on the other, the same-sex “marriage” decision, now being upheld at the federal level, seems destined to divide our nation into two separate and irreconcilable “people groups,” never to be united. But light overcomes darkness, and God’s purpose will prevail. Let us pray for a national turning to the Lord. Have you considered participating in our “21 Days” of repentant prayer (and some will fast)? Beginning today, daily e-mail devotionals will challenge and edify. Let righteousness and unity begin in the Church! Let faith arise. Let us be patient. Take comfort and hope from God’s Word. Remember, the “gates of hell” shall not prevail against the Church.

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that …on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’” (Matt: 16:17-18).
“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one … Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” (2 Thess. 3:1-5)

“But know this: in the last days perilous times will come … men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unhonored, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power … always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth … these resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith. … Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of … the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3:1-15)

WITH OBAMACARE, BUSINESS DOESN'T HAVE A PRAYER

May religious families — be they Jewish, Christian or otherwise — exercise their faith in a family business? The right to do so was recently repudiated by The New York Times. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), once claiming to support religious freedom, recently praised a Mennonite family’s loss in court, opining with regard to the family’s small woodworking business that “corporations don’t pray and have values.”

Really? What about churches? They are corporations, too. Don’t they pray? The New York Times and the ACLU themselves are both corporations. They have no values? Anyone reading their editorials or press releases can see that they do.

The newspaper is a for-profit corporation, yet it has won important U.S. Supreme Court cases preventing the government from violating its constitutionally protected rights and its journalistic “values.”

Too many left-leaning groups attack religious freedom, and lately, it has been especially apparent in the context of Obamacare. In doing so, they are undermining the First Amendment freedoms of all Americans, including their own.

The notorious abortion-pill mandate in Obamacare requires health insurance plans to cover items that can kill early human embryos and to cover other birth control. This rule affects the religious freedom of millions of citizens, including the aforementioned Mennonite family, the Hahns, who make wood cabinetry in Lancaster County, Pa.

Recently, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit ruled against the Hahns when they requested an exemption from the abortion-pill mandate owing to the value they place on innocent human life. This set up a potential U.S. Supreme Court showdown, because it contradicts another ruling in favor of the Green family, which owns the Hobby Lobby store chain.

Obamacare’s supporters insist that families are not capable of practicing religion when they do things like build cabinets in a company. Supposedly, they “don’t have values.”

Why not?
The Hahns strive to deal fairly with their customers and treat their employees with dignity. Why shouldn’t we believe them when they say this is part of their Christian faith, along with their pro-life beliefs? Most if not all religions apply their ideals Monday through Friday, not just during worship services on weekends.

The opponents of religious freedom seem to be willing to sacrifice anything to prop up abortion. Many companies promote values besides profit, including left-leaning organizations such as Ben and Jerry’s and Microsoft. The stand of The New York Times and the ACLU these days would create an America where no businesses “have values” and, therefore, can only pursue greed. Only Gordon Gekko would celebrate that society.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, which covers New York, recognizes that Jewish families exercise religion when they operate kosher butcher companies. The infamous U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit recognizes that families exercise their faith when they run manufacturing or pharmacy companies. The Supreme Court has long held that corporations exercise religion. Obamacare’s supporters would sweep away all this precedent just so religious families can’t object to the health care law.

Under American law, modern corporations can pursue any lawful purpose, including religion. That’s been true for a century. Religion is lawful in America, and so are environmental stewardship and social advocacy. These are all “values” that families can and do exercise when they run a business corporation.

If the government forced companies like The New York Times, the ACLU or Starbucks to, let’s say, pay for health insurance that covers sexual-orientation change therapy for those who no longer wish to practice homosexual behavior, those corporations (including the for-profit ones) would likely scream about their First Amendment freedoms. That same amendment, though, also guarantees the free exercise of religion, and it is not a second-class freedom.

Confirming that, President Clinton signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in 1993. It protects “any” exercise of religion, its definition includes “corporations,” and it applies to any future law, including Obamacare. The First Amendment’s authors would almost certainly proclaim a hearty “amen” to this affirmation of their hard-fought — and timeless — principles.

Matt Bowman is senior legal counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom, which represents several clients in lawsuits against the Obama administration’s abortion-pill mandate. (Contributor: Matt Bowman for The Washington Times)

Regular readers and seasoned intercessors know we have been tracking the Affordable Care Act (dubbed “Obamacare”) and its divisive and anti-Biblical provisions aimed at separating citizens from God-given freedoms (not “Constitutionally granted freedoms”). While IFA is not political, we recognize that the president of the United States and the Congress, whose offices are necessarily and properly honored and protected, are elected fellow-citizens. Christian believers should and must pray and stand against what is contrary to God’s Word. The ruling cited here is morally wrong and should not stand, as it represents an egregious violation of rights and thus, darkness and not light. Congress and the president are prohibiting the “free exercise” of religion. This is another hydra-head of viper-like restrictions, and we have every right to respectfully protest and most assuredly, to pray. The larger goal, as these national sins proliferate and abound, is that intercessors pray with repentant hearts (as did Daniel, when he prayed, “we have sinned”), and with the faith and hope that God will restore national honor that at least represents the Founders’ ideals. The goal is to reach a united, prayerful tipping point, whereby God is effectively petitioned to restore America’s foundations. In unity of prayer and purpose, the Church will have renewed
power with God to address national sins of this magnitude. May our Sovereign Lord find a multitude of intercessors today!

“Daniel [prayed]: ‘Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes [rulers and leaders] and raises [them] up … He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.” (Daniel 2:20-22)

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Proverbs 14:34)

“Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness! … Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails … Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor…” (Isaiah 59:9-16a)

BOY SCOUTS ALTERNATIVE TO REVEAL NAME AT FULL-CAPACITY GATHERING

More than 1,200 former Scouting officials, parents and youths are gathering in Nashville, Tenn., Friday to unveil the name and other details about a new Christian-based organization for boys.

The group represents the most ambitious and well-funded challenge to date to the decision this year by the Boy Scouts of America to drop its long-standing ban on openly gay Scouts, one that has created a major rift in the organization.

“We are not looking to be an anti-BSA organization,” said John Stemberger, founder of OnMyHonor.net. But he acknowledged that the group would provide “an alternative” for the tens of thousands of people who are expected to leave the Boy Scouts because of its vote on gay Scouts. Gay adults are still barred as Scout leaders.

The group is expected to be modeled after the American Heritage Girls — which was created as a “Christ-centered” alternative to the Girl Scouts of America 18 years ago — and will promote outdoor adventure, service, character development and life-skills training for boys.

It will offer people “a home, a place to go,” Mr. Stemberger said. “We’re saying we are more committed to truth than tradition, and we’re more committed to integrity than institutions.”

Deron Smith, a spokesman for the Boy Scouts of America, which has 2.6 million youth members, declined to comment on the rival, saying “it would be inappropriate for us to discuss other organizations.”

To date, however, more than 99 percent of the Boy Scouts’ 116,000 units “remain committed” to the organization, Mr. Smith said. Moreover, in the “very rare instance” when a chartered organization has chosen not to continue with the Boy Scouts, other organizations have stepped up to charter them, so the troops have uninterrupted service, he said.
The Wilkes (N.C.) Journal-Patriot, for instance, recently reported that two Baptist churches have dropped their charters for four Boy Scout units. Boy Scout leaders told the newspaper that they would “make certain” to find new chartering organizations for the units.

The convention Friday and Saturday in Nashville — which has the theme of “Honoring the Legacy, Raising the Standard” — will feature speeches from Michael Farris, chancellor of Patrick Henry College, and former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee. Parts of the convention can be seen live-streamed for a fee.

Conference registration exceeded expectations, Mr. Stemberger said. “There’s going to be over 1,200 people here, so we’ll be at full capacity. We’re turning people away.”

On Friday night, the name, logo and branding are scheduled to be released; words or phrases such as “Faith-Based Boys,” “American Honor Corps” and “Young Adventurers” have been suggested as options. Attendees are expected to work out issues such as chartering rules, programs, rankings, uniforms — down to such details as whether to have baseball caps or “Indiana Jones”-style hats, or both, as official headgear.

The major difference with the traditional Scouting movement, however, will be in the group’s Bible-based worldview: It promises to uphold marriage as the union between one man and one woman, and clearly define what is meant by “duty to God,” “morally straight,” “clean” and “reverent.”

The group will be open to boys regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or national origin, but it will be “Christ-centered” because adult leaders will be asked to adhere to a Christian statement of faith and values, organizers said on the OnMyHonor.net website.

The group also will admit boys who are experiencing sexual-identity confusion or same-sex attraction, but not those who are “open and avowed” about their homosexuality.

Moreover, boys must be “biologically male” — boys who wish to dress and act like girls, and girls who wish to dress and act like boys will not be accepted, according to preliminary documents on the group.

The group was created in the wake of the Boy Scouts’ extensive and at times passionate debate about whether to change its “don’t ask, don’t tell”-style membership policy on homosexuals.

In May, some 1,400 Boy Scouts of America leaders voted on whether to admit openly gay youths — but not adults — as members. With support from gay-rights activists, corporate and community leaders, and major religious sponsoring groups, including the Mormon Church, more than 60 percent of the organization’s voters decided for the policy change.

A few weeks later, Mr. Stemberger and other opponents of the policy change met in Louisville, Ky., to map out an alternative organization.

The full impact of the Boy Scouts’ policy change and the viability of the rival organization for boys are unlikely to be known until after Jan. 1, the official start date for both.

Mr. Stemberger, an Eagle Scout, said the new organization will “honor the BSA and respect the contributions they have made,” and that the people in the Boy Scouts of America “are our brothers, and friends and family.”

At the same time, he said, “we just think the organization has made an enormous mistake and a tragic mistake that is going to change the course of history and nature of Scouting in the future.”
Creating a group from scratch will take time, energy and resources, said Patti Garibay, founder and national executive director of American Heritage Girls.

The 17-year-old group claimed more than 20,000 members last year with chapters in 48 of the 50 states. The group signed a “memorandum of mutual support” with the Boy Scouts of America in 2009, only to revoke in May after the revised Boy Scouts guidelines on gay Scouts were approved.

“Stay laser-focused on your mission of serving youth while glorifying God,” Ms. Garibay advised the group. “Utilize the time and talents of ministry-minded volunteers who will bless the organization” and “remember that if something is truly of Him, He will bless our work for His glory.” (Contributor: By Cheryl Wetzstein for The Washington Times)

Part of intercession is bearing the pain, grief, sorrow, and mourning of others, especially those caught in the crossfire of heart-wrenching division. The formation of the new organization for Scouting was made virtually inevitable by the Boy Scouts of America’s decision to admit openly homosexual boys into its ranks. For conscience’ sake, many parents and young men cannot co-exist with the rapidly surging forced social integration that demands acceptance of homosexuality as a societal norm. And we can applaud Mr. Sternberger’s reticence to criticize the group he and others are leaving to embark on the new venture. He demonstrates humility and respect toward the organization that nurtured him through the years to Eagle Scout status. And yet amidst all the niceties, many families will experience raw emotional trauma such a division, of necessity, causes. Friendships will be disrupted between families and among once-close young men. We read of churches divided over decisions whether or not to continue sponsoring an original Boy Scout troop that embraces the homosexual mix. The prayer focus suggested here is that we intercede for righteousness sake and with compassionate hearts as families are making difficult decisions. Let us remember that the people involved, even if on the “wrong side” of our own convictions, are not the enemy. Our warfare is against “spiritual wickedness in high places.” Homosexuality is not a gene but a spirit that is in opposition to God's Spirit and His design.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” (Genesis 1:26-27)

“[Although] they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions … also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;” (Romans 1:21-28)
PERU THE GLOBAL LEADER IN DOLLAR COUNTERFEITING

The police colonel was stunned by the skill of the 13-year-old arrested during a raid on counterfeiters in Lima’s gritty outskirts, how he deftly slid the shiny plastic security strip through a bogus $100 bank note emblazoned with Benjamin Franklin’s face.

The boy demonstrated his technique for police after they arrested him on the street with a sack of $700,000 in false U.S. dollars and euro that he’d received from a co-conspirator and he led them to a squat house where he and others did detail work.

With its meticulous criminal craftsmen, cheap labor and, by some accounts, less effective law enforcement, Peru has in the past two years overtaken Colombia as the No. 1 source of counterfeit U.S. dollars, says the U.S. Secret Service, protector of the world’s most widely traded currency.

In response, the service opened a permanent office in Lima last year, only its fourth in Latin America, and has since helped Peru’s police arrest 50 people on counterfeiting charges.

Over the past decade, $103 million in fake U.S. dollars "made in Peru" have been seized — nearly half since 2010, Peruvian and U.S. officials say. Unlike most other counterfeiters, who rely on sophisticated late-model inkjet printers, the Peruvians generally go a step further — finishing each bill by hand. (Contributor: By Carla Salazar for The Denver Post and the Associated Press)

Such stories remind us of and confirm the authenticity of God’s Word, especially when it teaches the reality of sin and the hopelessness of life without Christ. It is not money but the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. Hence, evil men and women will use God-given ingenuity to devise ways to steal and plunder rather than to apply themselves to creative ways to contribute to society. Let us first face this question: have we given thanks today for our own salvation and the life and future hope we have because God’s love was shown to us through the Gospel? Such thanksgiving and praise to God will help position us for the ministry of intercession. But for God’s grace, that 13-year-old boy could be a son or grandson we know and love. Second, we realize that these wily schemes of dishonesty, such as stealing, fraud, and deception are spawned by the devil. Our Lord said, “The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy…” Evil will get worse, as the human heart, without God, is deceitful and desperately wicked. Wicked men counterfeit money, but even more wicked is mankind’s attempt to counterfeit righteousness and good standing before fictitious gods (small “g”) that cannot save or give hope. The Gospel is still God’s message of salvation. Let us pray that men and women will “accept no substitute” for the true and living God who is able to save from sin and to the uttermost through Jesus Christ. Finally, let us pray, as Jesus taught, for “workers” to reap souls in the fields ripe and ready for harvest.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, so is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be a fool … ‘Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise.’” (Jeremiah 17:9-14)
"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." (1 Tim. 6:10-11)

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)

**E-CIGARETTE USE AMONG TEENS RISING RAPIDLY**

The use of electronic cigarettes among middle and high school students has been rising rapidly, a trend that public health officials worry could undermine decades of efforts to reduce youth smoking and put a growing number of teenagers on a path toward conventional cigarettes.

According to data released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the percentage of middle and high school students in the United States who have used e-cigarettes more than doubled from 2011 to 2012.

“The increased use of e-cigarettes by teens is deeply troubling,” CDC Director Tom Frieden said in announcing findings from the National Youth Tobacco Survey. "Nicotine is a highly addictive drug. Many teens who start with e-cigarettes may be condemned to struggling with a lifelong addiction to nicotine and conventional cigarettes."

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that look like cigarettes but do not burn tobacco. Rather, they deliver nicotine, flavor and other chemicals in the form of a vapor. A starter kit, which typically includes two e-cigarettes, extra batteries and various nicotine cartridges, can cost $20 to $200. Because of the limited research into e-cigarette use, their risks and benefits remain uncertain and subject to widespread debate.

What’s more certain is their steady growth in popularity among adults and, according to the CDC survey, young people.

The survey found that the percentage of high school students who said they had used an e-cigarette jumped from 4.7 percent in 2011 to 10 percent in 2012. Nearly 3 percent of those students said they had used an e-cigarette in the past 30 days, up from 1.5 percent a year earlier. Use also doubled among middle school students, the CDC reported.

All told, more than 1.78 million middle and high school students nationwide had tried e-cigarettes in 2012, the agency said.

Perhaps most troubling for public health advocates, the survey found that more than three-quarters of middle and high school students who had used e-cigarettes within the past month also had smoked conventional cigarettes during the same period. About 1 in 5 middle school students who reported using e-cigarettes said they had never tried conventional cigarettes.

The CDC’s findings are in line with a more recent survey conducted in Florida that found that more than 4 percent of middle-schoolers and 12 percent of high-schoolers had tried e-cigarettes — figures that have risen dramatically over the past two years.
Big U.S. tobacco companies have begun scooping up e-cigarette manufacturers with an eye toward a not-so-distant future, when, some analysts say, sales of e-cigarettes could eclipse those of conventional cigarettes. This year alone, tobacco giants such as Lorillard, Altria and Reynolds have begun wading into the e-cigarette market. E-cigarette use also has boomed in Europe in recent years.

Anti-smoking activists say that the rise in the popularity has happened in part because the devices are largely unregulated and cultivate an image as a cooler, less harmful alternative to regular cigarettes.

Although the Food and Drug Administration has long said it intends to expand its regulatory authority over tobacco products to include e-cigarettes, the agency has not done so.

“FDA needs to act and act quickly to get a handle both on the product and its marketing,” said Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

Without that kind of oversight, he said, e-cigarette companies have remained free to sell their products online and spend huge sums mimicking the advertising practices that big tobacco companies once used.

“We have seen e-cigarettes marketed using exactly the same images in exactly the same places that the cigarette industry used decades ago,” he said. “Open a magazine, and you'll see beautiful women and young celebrities marketing e-cigarettes. Go to NASCAR, and you'll see cars sponsored by e-cigarettes.”

Those efforts to “re-glamorize” smoking, Myers said, threaten to undo years of efforts and millions of dollars spent on campaigns to cut down on youth smoking in the United States and could create a new generation of smokers.

Proponents of e-cigarettes reject comparisons to traditional cigarettes, arguing that they contain nowhere near the amount of harmful substances that smokers inhale. They also have argued that rather than creating a slippery slope that could lead nonsmokers toward other tobacco products, e-cigarettes have the potential to help people wean themselves off conventional cigarettes.

Thomas Kiklas, president of the Tobacco Vapor Electronic Cigarette Association, said he doesn't buy the argument that e-cigarettes are a “gateway” to traditional cigarettes for young people.

“Kids have been smoking for hundreds of years,” he said. “So I don't think any singular technology is going to push kids into cigarette use.” (Contributor: By Brady Dennis for The Washington Post)

Intercessors always want to be kind, compassionate, and non-judgmental. However, readers of a certain age will ponder this article and say, “Here we go again!” That is because we remember the sincere-looking tobacco-industry executives who perjured themselves time after time as they claimed (often during public hearings) that they had found no evidence in their own financed research that smoking was in any way injurious to one's health. How many cancer victims learned otherwise, but too late? Now we hear that the e-cigarettes are little more than status symbols or mildly pleasurable. And yet the tobacco industry is heavily invested in the electronic smoking devices. Without passing judgment, we think again of the runaway greed and quest for financial profit that characterizes so much of human commerce, both in our country and globally. One prayer focus might be for America's youth, since middle school and high school children and young people—many if not most from non-Christian homes—are so susceptible to forming lifetime bad habits at this time. Let us pray for after-school ministries, such as Young Life and others, to be fruitful in evangelism and teaching purity and care for the body. As we approach September 25, let us also remember a growing ministry, “See You at the Pole,” when students and
teachers are free, before school hours, to gather around their school’s flag pole and pray. This day also provides a witnessing opportunity.

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’ … Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken … Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it … Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” (Eccl. 12:1,6, 13-14)

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

**CONGRESSMAN FRANK WOLF: FACTS ON BENGHAZI**

Nearly one year after the Benghazi terror attack, questions remain unanswered and the investigation incomplete, says Virginia Republican Rep. Frank Wolf.

Even with six different committees looking into aspects of the attack and the response by the Obama State Department, “The Congress, as of this moment, has failed to carry out its oversight responsibility,” Wolf told The Daily Caller.

The solution, he said, is a single “select committee” with the authority and resources to get to the bottom of the U.S. government’s inept response.

The public still has not learned why help was not sent to the U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi on Sept. 11, 2012, to rescue Ambassador Christopher Stevens, Ty Woods, Sean Smith and Glen Doherty.

As a congressman of 22 years whose Northern Virginia district includes many in the federal workforce, and as a powerful appropriations subcommittee chairman, Wolf has been pressing for a select committee for months.

In this interview, Wolf discusses twenty things we know a year after the incident, including that someone issued “stand-down orders” preventing any attempt to rescue our brave Americans, violating the longstanding ethos of the American military to never leave a soldier behind.

He also confirms how some federal employees watched the incident real time, “like a movie,” saying he has seen some of that footage. He discusses a hero who is severely wounded and still at Walter Reed hospital, but who, perhaps like others, has never been properly thanked by a nation for his heroism.

Wolf describes the stonewalling and intimidation of others who know what happened. Some have had to sign legally binding “non-disclosure agreements” with occasional “polygraph testing” to ensure the public never learns the facts. And he discusses how a Libyan plane, not an American plane, brought the wounded Americans home.

What difference does this make?

“I know that Hillary Clinton is now receiving $200,000 a speech,” Wolf said. “I also know that Susan Rice, who went on five talk shows saying that it was the video, is now the national security advisor. I also know
that Leon Panetta signed a $3 million book deal. I also know that General Petraeus is now working for the large Wall Street firm up in New York and making a lot of money. I also know that Jack Lew, the chief of staff, is now the secretary of treasury. So they have all gotten rewards, but I also know that four people died who are American heroes and patriots, and two were seriously wounded, and several others were wounded. The comparison of that situation, I think, is just not very good.”

This week, some in Congress are memorializing the Benghazi anniversary with services, speeches or social-media ribbon campaigns. As they do, Rep. Wolf continues to press the House Republican leadership team to finish this investigation with professional, careful, bipartisan oversight so what happened in Benghazi never happens again and so that the families of the fallen can rest knowing the truth. (Contributor: By Ginni Thomas for The Daily Caller)

IFA’s offices are in the Virginia district represented by Congressman Frank Wolf, who is known throughout the district, and on Capitol Hill, as a conscientious and faithful—seemingly tireless—worker and a fair-minded representative of his constituents. He deserves much respect and all Christians’ prayers as he tries to persevere in the Benghazi matter. As you read this, it is not “nearly one year” but exactly the one-year anniversary of the fatal Benghazi attack, now referred to widely as a “massacre.” In that attack, Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were cruelly murdered. So much has happened during the intervening year, including additional U.S. government scandals and hearings. No one is to be blamed if memory is dim even to remember that Benghazi is in Libya, while now all eyes are on Syria. And yet Mr. Wolf, with the best of motives, is urging action to bring truth to the light, to find honest answers, and to bring proper closure to that dark day in our nation’s history. The question is whether anyone will be held responsible, or will the administration, primarily the Department of State, continue to gloss over the facts and hide from accountability? This is especially troublesome, as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is now seen as a probable presidential candidate in 2016. Let us pray for Representative Wolf’s quest, and that God will guide him and give him divine energy and spiritual discernment in his determined effort to find truthful answers amid obfuscation and cover-up.

“Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.” (Psalm 51:6)

“Also [Jesus] said to them, ‘Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’” (Mark 4:21-23)

“Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth.” (Psalm 119: 142)

**AIR FORCE CRACKING DOWN ON CHRISTIANS**

A [19-year Air Force veteran who was relieved of his duties because he disagreed with his openly homosexual commander over homosexual marriage](#) is now facing a formal investigation after he told me his story.

Senior Master Sgt. Phillip Monk found himself at odds with his Lackland Air Force Base commander after he objected to her plans to severely punish an instructor who had expressed religious objections to
homosexuality. During the conversation, his commander ordered him to share his personal views on homosexuality.

“I was relieved of my position because I don’t agree with my commander’s position on homosexual marriage,” he told me. “We’ve been told that if you publicly say that homosexuality is wrong, you are in violation of Air Force policy.”

In one of her first meetings with Monk, the commander expressed concern about the chaplain who would deliver the benediction at her promotion ceremony.

Steve Branson, pastor of Village Parkway Baptist Church, tells me that as many as a half dozen of his church members are currently facing persecution on the base for their religious beliefs.

“She said she wanted a chaplain but objected to one particular chaplain that she called a bigot because he preached that homosexuality is a sin,” Monk said.

After he was relieved of his duties, the Liberty Institute filed a religious discrimination complaint on his behalf.

Last week, Monk was supposed to meet with an Air Force investigator tasked with gathering facts about the complaint. But when he arrived, Monk was immediately read his Miranda Rights and accused of providing false statements in a conversation Monk had with me.

“I immediately got the sense that this was retaliation against me for coming forward with my religious discrimination complaint,” he said.

The accusations against Monk are a court-martial offense in the Air Force – and it’s quite possible that the 19-year veteran with a spotless record could be booted out of the military because of his Christian beliefs.

And he’s not the only Christian at Lackland Air Force Base facing persecution for opposing gay marriage, according to Monk’s pastor.

Steve Branson is the pastor of Village Parkway Baptist Church, about five miles from the Air Force base. He tells me that as many as a half dozen of his church members are currently facing persecution on the base for their religious beliefs.

“Sgt. Monk is just the tip of the iceberg,” the pastor tells me. “Anyone who doesn’t hold to the right view on homosexuality is having a very difficult time.”

Branson said one colonel is not even allowed to voice an opinion on the matter over fears it might cost him his job. Another airman has been brought up on charges eight times.

Christians are under attack, the pastor warned – and Lackland Air Force Base seems to be ground zero.

“I’m raising the warning,” the pastor said. “It’s not a good situation out here. The military’s job is not to fight these kinds of battles. Christians are having to walk so carefully. I hear it every Sunday at church.”

Hiram Sasser, of the Liberty Institute, is representing Monk in his battle with the Air Force. He said he’s very disturbed at what’s happening at Lackland.

“Lackland has been having some extensive problems,” Sasser told me. “It tells me there must be some sort of systemic problem in the Air Force. It’s leading to Christians not feeling welcome.”
Sasser said he was repulsed by the way the military has treated Monk.

“I can’t imagine someone having their Miranda Rights read to them like they did to Sgt. Monk simply because he is complaining about being mistreated and being discriminated against,” he said. “This kind of retaliation needs to come to a stop.”

Sasser said someone with such a clean military record deserves better treatment.

“We want to make sure we right all the wrongs and keep anyone from retaliating against Sgt. Monk,” he said.

Pastor Branson told me Monk is an outstanding member of the congregation.

“One of the finest men I’ve ever met in my life,” he said. “He lost his job because of what he thought. He’s saying the price.”

Monk tells me Christians are trading places with homosexuals.

“Christians have to go into the closet,” he said. “We are being robbed of our dignity and respect. We can’t be who we are.”

I asked Sgt. Monk why he just couldn't keep quiet knowing that the Obama administration has staffed the Pentagon with anti-Christian civilians. Why risk getting booted out of the military?

Sgt. Monk told me he decided to take a stand for his three teenage sons.

“Every night after dinner we read the Bible together,” he said. “I tell the boys we’ve got a lot of stuff going on in this world and we need people to stand up. My boys know what I’m going through. They are looking at me – wanting to know how I’m going to handle this.”

He said the Monk family has a “family ethos.”

“The Monk family will be strong in mind, strong in soul, they will have strong character and strong work ethic,” he said. “That is the ethos of our family. That’s what I hope they see in me.”

He hopes his boys will see “a man who stands upright and stands for integrity.”

Sadly, those values are no longer seen as virtuous in a military that’s been turned into a social-engineering petri dish. (Contributor: By Todd Starnes for Fox News)

The best way—perhaps the only way—to put this article in perspective is to say it reads like fiction and could not have been written as a serious news report as recently as 6 years ago. And yet in that brief time span, it is not hysterical overstatement to suggest we are reading only an introduction to what may well become the major cultural clash since legal abortion was defined by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973. Who can imagine that an American Air Force officer would face persecution and possible punishment from his own government for stating a traditional and basic religious belief. And why? Because it differs from what has become the politically correct position of the U.S. military complex. And there is more. Intercessors should be aware that this account is simply one instance, backed up by corroborating reports of similar conflicts. If Sgt. Monk is prosecuted and becomes a “marked man,” is it too great a stretch to think of arm bands on Jews in Germany of 1940? Intercessors will know how to pray. This will be a long battle in a divided nation. Regardless of Supreme Court decisions, our freedom of belief comes from God.
and was in part the reason for our country’s founding and success. Let us pray for mercy for all those who oppose God’s purpose and His design. This is not a clash of persons but a clash of kingdoms. It is bigger than the U.S. and far beyond even the Supreme Court.

“The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts. The mountains quake before Him. The hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence. Yes, the world and all who dwell in it. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him. The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.” (Nahum 1:1-7)