

Editorial Opinion

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Obama's 'strategic patience' plays more like appeasement

WASHINGTON — His secretary of defense says “the world is exploding all over.” His attorney general says that the threat of terror “keeps me up at night.” The world bears them out. On Tuesday, American hostage Kayla Mueller is confirmed dead. On Wednesday, the U.S. evacuates its embassy in Yemen, cited by President Barack Obama last September as an American success in fighting terrorism.

Yet Obama's reaction to, shall we say, turmoil abroad has been one of alarming lassitude and passivity.

Not to worry, says his national security adviser: This is not World War II. As if one should be reassured because the current chaos has yet to achieve the level of the most devastating conflict in human history. Indeed, insists the president, the real source of our metastasizing anxiety is ... the news media.

Russia pushes deep into



CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
COMMENTARY

eastern Ukraine. The Islamic State burns to death a Jordanian pilot. Iran extends its hegemony over four Arab capitals — Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad and now Sanaa.

And America watches. Obama calls the policy “strategic patience.” That's a synonym for “inaction,” made to sound profoundly “strategic.”

Take Russia. The only news out of Obama's one-hour news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel this week was that he still can't make up his mind whether to supply Ukraine with defensive weapons. The Russians have sent in T-80 tanks and Grad rocket launchers. We've

sent in humanitarian aid that includes blankets, MREs and psychological counselors.

How complementary: The counselors do grief therapy for those on the receiving end of the T-80 tank fire. “I think the Ukrainian people can feel confident that we have stood by them,” said Obama at the news conference.

Indeed. And don't forget the blankets. America was once the arsenal of democracy, notes Elliott Abrams. We are now its linen closet.

Why no anti-tank and other defensive weapons? Because we are afraid that arming the victim of aggression will anger the aggressor.

Such on-the-ground appeasement goes well with the linguistic appeasement whereby Obama dares not call radical Islam by name. And whereby both the White House and State Department spend much of a day

insisting that the attack on the kosher grocery in Paris had nothing to do with Jews. It was just, as the president said, someone “randomly shoot(ing) a bunch of folks in a deli.” (By the end of the day, the administration backed off this idiocy. By tweet.)

This passivity — strategic, syntactic, ideological — is more than just a reaction to the perceived overreach of the Bush years. Or a fear of failure. Or bowing to the domestic left. It is, above all, rooted in Obama's deep belief that we — America, Christians, the West — lack the moral authority to engage, to project, i.e., to lead.

Before we condemn the atrocities of others, intoned Obama at the National Prayer Breakfast, we shouldn't “get on our high horse.” We should acknowledge having authored the Crusades, the Inquisition, slavery, etc., “in the name of Christ.”

In a rare rhetorical feat, Obama managed to

combine the banal and the repulsive. After all, is it really a revelation that all religions have transgressed, that man is fallen? To the adolescent Columbia undergrad, that's a profundity. To a roomful of faith leaders, that's an insult to one's intelligence.

And in deeply bad taste. A coalition POW is burned alive and the reaction of the alliance leader barely 48 hours later is essentially: “Hey, but what about Joan of Arc?”

Obama's Christians-have-sinned dismissal of the West's moral standing is not new, however. It is just a reprise of the theme of his post-inauguration 2009 confessional world tour. From Strasbourg to Cairo and the U.N. General Assembly, he indicted his own country, as I chronicled at the time, “for arrogance, for dismissiveness and derisiveness (toward Europe), for maltreatment of natives, for torture, for Hiroshima, for

Guantánamo, for unilateralism, and for insufficient respect for the Muslim world.”

The purpose and the effect of such an indictment is to undermine any moral claim to American world leadership. The line between the Washington prayer breakfast and the Ukrainian grief counselors is direct and causal. Once you've discounted your own moral authority, once you've undermined your own country's moral self-confidence, you cannot lead.

If, during the very week Islamic supremacists achieve “peak barbarism” with the immolation of a helpless prisoner, you cannot take them on without apologizing for sins committed a thousand years ago, you have prepared the ground for strategic paralysis.

All that's left is to call it strategic patience.

The Washington Post
Writers Group

On this date

Today is the 46th day of 2015 and the 57th day of winter.

Today's history: In 1898, the U.S. battleship Maine exploded and sank in Havana Harbor in Cuba, ultimately leading the United States to declare war on Spain.

In 1961, the U.S. figure skating team was killed in a plane crash in Belgium.

In 1972, sound recordings were granted U.S. federal copyright protection.

In 2001, the first draft of the complete human genome was published in the scientific journal Nature.

In 2013, a meteor exploded over Chelyabinsk Oblast in Russia, injuring 1,500 people and damaging 7,200 buildings in six cities.

Today's birthdays: Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), scientist; Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), activist; Ernest Shackleton (1874-1922), explorer; Harold Arlen (1905-86), songwriter; Jane Seymour, actress, is 64; Matt Groening, animator/screenwriter, is 61; Chris Farley (1964-97), actor/comedian; Amber Riley, singer/actress, is 29; Zachary Gordon, actor, is 17.

Today's fact: “The Simpsons,” created by Matt Groening and currently in its 26th season, is the longest-running American sitcom.

Today's quote: “Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation.”

— Susan B. Anthony

Today's number: 12,750 — total length, in miles, of sidewalks in New York City.

Bible quote: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

— Hebrews 11:1

Crisis hotlines

■ Project HELP offers 24-hour crisis (suicide, rape, depression) hotline and referral services at 239-262-7227; call free from pay phones, 800-329-7227. Hearing-impaired, call 800-955-8771.

■ Shelter for Abused Women & Children (Collier County) offers a 24-hour crisis line at 239-775-1101.



Then and now

Remember this iconic place in Naples? If you think you know what's there now, go to www.naplesnews.com/bg and look for the “construction and development” link and enter your answer. We'll print the answer here next week. Last week's answer: Doctors Pass. Last week's winner: Paul Stevens

Guest commentary

It's up to us to break the cycle of domestic violence

By Linda Oberhaus
Executive director,
The Shelter for Abused Women
& Children

“Authentic love does not devalue another human being. Authentic love does not silence, shame or abuse.”

These powerful words were shared by writer, activist, performance artist and domestic violence survivor Brooke Axtell as she bared her soul before an audience of millions during last week's Grammy Awards. Sharing her platform were President Barack Obama and singing star Katy Perry.

For his part, the president called on all of us to exercise the power of example to “create a culture where violence is intolerable and survivors are supported.” This directive champions The Shelter for Abused Women & Children's mission to prevent, protect and prevail over domestic violence through advocacy, empowerment and social change. It is es-



Linda Oberhaus

pecially poignant during February, National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

As the president stated, the statistics are daunting. One in 4 women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime and 1 in 5 teenage girls are physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner before they graduate from high school. Such relationships put these young people at higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, suicide and adult revictimization.

In his message, the president urged the music industry to use its unique power to change minds and attitudes. To that we add the power of print, film and Internet media, which too often publicize and glamorize unhealthy relationships.

From “Jersey Shore” to MTV's “Real World,” our young people are seriously challenged to know what a healthy dating relationship looks like. They don't know the warning signs and there are little or no resources available to understand how potentially dangerous their situation

may be. Without intervention, these relationships can result in physical and/or emotional abuse and on occasion, death, such as the tragic loss of Immokalee teens Natalia Trejo and Colby Deleon in December 2012.

So how do we meet the president's challenge to be agents of change? Here at the shelter, we believe the answer starts with prevention. By helping teens recognize unhealthy dating behavior, we can address the problem before it begins. Parents can start a conversation at home. If you're not sure how to do this, shelter staff members can help you. Call us at 239-775-3862.

Schools also have a unique opportunity to evoke change. Unlike domestic violence, which typically takes place in the home, victims of teen dating violence are more at risk in and around their schools, where abusers have easy access to their victims.

Technologies such as cellphones and the Internet have made dating abuse both more pervasive and more hidden.

Fortunately for our

community, the Collier County school district has partnered with the shelter to provide a variety of in-school education and prevention programs including “Hands Are For Helping Not for Hitting” at the elementary level, and “Healthy Relationships,” “Expect Respect” and “Raising Gentlemen” at the middle and high school levels.

Through these programs, shelter advocates reached out to more than 16,000 students last year, helping them to recognize different types of abuse, the dynamics of dating violence, characteristics of unhealthy and healthy relationships and how to set boundaries in a relationship. In addition, the shelter's Youth Advisory Council, made up of young people age 12 to 20, works with local teens to inspire social change by providing education, empowerment, advocacy and support to break the cycle of violence.

The impact of these programs should not be underestimated. When youth are empowered, their broadened awareness of domestic violence

will ultimately create positive change and a safer community.

It's not always easy to talk to friends and family about dating abuse and healthy relationships. Research demonstrates that 75 percent of parents were unaware that their teen had been physically hurt by a dating partner and only 33 percent of teens suffering such abuse ever talked to anyone about what was happening to them.

So let's start the conversation. If you are a parent, friend or relative of a teenager, you can learn more about the warning signs, prevention and intervention of teen dating violence at loveisrespect.org.

Everyone deserves to be in a safe and healthy relationship. You can help make that happen by raising awareness about the issue, speaking out against abuse when you see it and educating yourself and your family to make a difference. As the president said, “It's on us” to be agents of change.

Learn more about how you can support the shelter at www.naplesshelter.org.