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Republican Perspective

By Tom Hensley

Hope and Change

Hope and change. I hope things will change but so far this president's has been the most hopeless and unchanging since the Carter Administration. Accountability and transparency are nowhere to be found. Scandal and fiscal irresponsibility are rampant.

Let's take the Fast and Furious scandal first. This is where Attorney General Eric Holder, who is responsible for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), purposely allowed thousands of firearms, including automatic rifles and machine pistols, to be delivered into the hands of thugs and drug cartels with little or no surveillance. In fact, Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry and dozens of Mexican nationals were killed as a result of this incompetence.

Two years ago, ATF whistleblower John Dodson revealed the negligence of the Fast and Furious operation, which led to the resignation of a number of top-ranking ATF officials. No others have taken responsibility, including Holder or the president. To date, the ATF and its bosses in the Justice Department have refused to provide the House Oversight Committee thousands of documents relating to Fast and Furious, which could provide insight into how to prevent a recurrence of the debacle. Let me ask, does this sound like transparency to you?

Now let's explore the Benghazi fiasco. This is where the U.S. ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, was murdered, along with three other citizens serving their country. In fact, the attackers had the effrontery to carry out the assault on the anniversary of 9-11. The public's knowledge of the incident has been plagued by obfuscation, by half-truths, by outright lies and by stalling from the administration.

We are all familiar with the story told by UN Ambassador Susan Rice, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and even by President Barack Obama. This story blamed the attack on an obscure 14-minute video titled "Innocence of Muslims" produced by an obscure man named Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, a Coptic Christian. Currently, Coptics are being murdered and their places of worship destroyed in Egypt. While the video may have been perceived as gross and provocative, it was not the cause of the attack.

The attack was well planned and coordinated by militant Muslim jihadists. To date, few arrests have been made (none by the United States) and no one has been prosecuted. At least 18 days before the attack, an Al Qaida leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, called for attacks on Americans in Libya to avenge the death of Yahya al-Libi, who was killed in a drone attack. Therefore, it seems there was ample warning, not only from the enemy but also from our own folks. Even the ambassador himself said that security was inadequate. So why try to cover it up? I think for political purposes.

After all, there was an election in one or two months and there were just too many unanswered questions. For example:

1. What really happened in Benghazi on Sept. 11, 2012 and why? We know one thing for sure: The initial story was untrue.
2. Why did the administration put out a cover story? Why not tell what they knew from the video and text (emails, etc.) feeds from the location?
3. Where is the ongoing FBI investigation? No arrests have been made.
4. Why won't the White House release photos similar to the Ben Laden raid? Because there is no football to spike?

Again I ask: Is this the transparency we were promised in the campaign?

Finally, let's look at the IRS harassment of conservative groups over their application for tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. This section of the code exempts certain types of nonprofit organizations from having to pay federal income tax. In order to qualify, an organization must be operated primarily for the purpose of bringing about civic and social improvements. The IRS has traditionally permitted organizations to participate in lobbying and political campaign activities, if those activities are not the organization's primary activities. IRS rules also protect groups organized under 501(c)(4) from having to reveal names of donors or the amount of funds the donors have contributed.

When the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the court in effect overturned previous restrictions on political campaign spending. Some Tea Party leaders began forming political action committees (PACs) as offshoots of their 501(c)(4) tax-exempt organizations.

The timeline goes something like as follows: Beginning in March 2010, the IRS more closely scrutinized certain organizations applying for tax-exempt status by focusing on groups with certain words in their names. They began developing a list of words that became known as "be on the lookout for" list. Words such as "tea party," "patriots," "Israel" or "9/12 project" caused closer scrutiny. By mid-2011, IRS officials knew that conservative groups were being targeted. IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman denied any targeting in 2012 in response to a congressional committee. Shulman resigned in late 2012 before the scandal came to light. IRS Exempt Organizations Director Lois Lerner was a key actor in the scandal. She owned up to the bias by planting a question at an American Bar Association conference and then apologizing for the bias at the

conference. Then at a House hearing on May 23, 2013 she took the Fifth Amendment so as not to incriminate herself.

This is all a confused mess of out-of-control bureaucrats without direction or leadership. Where is the transparency? Where is the executive leadership? Can we trust this administration to bring about change that is needed and give the American people hope for the future? I don't think so.

I recently saw a T-shirt that read, "We once had Ronald Reagan, Johnny Cash and Bob Hope; now we have Obama no cash and no hope."

Tom Hensley can be emailed at tomhlwedge@aol.com.