

Risch focuses on “armed militants” statement in Clinton Benghazi questioning

By Kip Hill, SR Washington Correspondent

Idaho Sen. James Risch used his time with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to confirm statements she made soon after the American consulate in Libya was attacked and four U.S. officials were killed in September.

Clinton testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Wednesday morning that she “told the American people that ‘heavily armed militants assaulted our compound’ and vowed to bring them to justice. And I stood with President Obama as he spoke of ‘an act of terror.’”

That account conflicts with early reports of the attacks, characterized by U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice as a series of spontaneous attacks that rose in protest to an American-made video that prompted outrage among many Muslim communities.

Risch asked whether Clinton was involved in selecting Rice to comment on the attacks to the American media, noting that it came at a “politically charged time.” Some Republicans, including Sen. John McCain, have accused the Obama administration of mischaracterizing the deadly assault to avoid unwanted terrorism concerns during the fall’s presidential campaign.

Clinton said she was not involved in the decision to allow Rice to brief the press.

“I, personally, was not focused on talking points,” Clinton said. “I was focused on keeping our people safe.”

Risch concluded by asking Clinton once again whether she stood behind her comments that indicated the attack on Benghazi was motivated by terror.

“Absolutely,” Clinton answered.

McCain did not seem placated by Clinton’s testimony.

“The answers that you’ve given this morning are, frankly, not satisfactory,” McCain told Clinton.