

New Hampshire Senator Kelly Ayotte On The Eve Of Benghazi Hearings

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HH: Joined now by United States Senator Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, one of the key forces in pushing for answers on Benghazi. Kelly Ayotte, welcome back to the Hugh Hewitt Show. Great to have you, Senator.

KA: Hey, great to be with you, Hugh. Appreciate it.

HH: What do you hope to get out of tomorrow's House hearings? What do you hope to hear and see as a prod to getting to the truth on Benghazi?

KA: Well, you know, I think already, the partial transcripts that have been released of what the deputy chief of mission has already said about that day is quite, quite surprising. First of all, to step back for a minute, those of us who from the beginning pushed for answers on this, and felt that what Susan Rice had said on every talk show was false, I mean, what he has already told us shows us that they knew that this was a terrorist attack from the beginning, that he had told his superiors that, that no one checked back with him, really supporting the fact that this narrative was a cover-up from the beginning to claim that it was a spontaneous reaction to a video. But also, tomorrow, I serve on the Armed Services Committee. We had testimony before by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and also then-Secretary Leon Panetta. And as you know, one of the things that's been released that Mr. Hicks has said is that he sought to get the Pentagon to scramble fighter jets over Benghazi in a show of force that might have averted the second attack, because this was an attack that occurred over a seven hour period. The second attack occurred almost seven hours later. And you know what's so surprising about that, Hugh, in the Armed Services hearing, I asked, specifically asked our military leaders about this, why couldn't we have done this, and I was dismissed on this. And to know that the man on the ground had asked for this, and didn't get that response, is really troubling. Even more troubling is the fact that they asked for permission to deploy four U.S. Special Operations troops to Benghazi the next morning, and they were told to stand down, because before the Armed Services Committee, they were specifically asked was anyone told to stand down, and our military leader, Secretary Panetta at the time, and Chairman Dempsey, said no.

HH: Wow. You're going to have to get them back. I mean, Chairman Dempsey is still in office.

KA: Yes.

HH: Of course, Secretary Panetta is gone, but you're going to have to ask them about this again, aren't you?

KA: Absolutely, because this is contradicting what we heard before the Armed Services Committee. And so I'm going to be listening very intently tomorrow to the testimony. But as you know from the beginning, those of us that just pushed for the truth of what would occur here, you know, we were derided, that somehow we had some other motive involved. And it turns out that we were right about the fact, the misrepresentations not only made by Ambassador Rice, but then of course, followed up by the President.

HH: You know what's also interesting is, I don't know if you've had a chance to read the book, Damn Few by Rorke Denver, who recently retired from the Navy SEALs. In it, quite serendipitously, or completely unconnected to this, he recounts a tale in Iraq of when he had to call in an F-18 Super Hornet that had no ordinance, but the mere flyover disbursed al Qaeda attackers.

KA: Right.

HH: And so it does work, and that's a corroborating, independent account of how that would have worked. And they didn't do it. I don't understand that.

KA: Well, there's a reason, Hugh, that you use shows of force, even if we aren't going to use force in the setting, because it does scare people off to know that that capacity is there. So it's very troubling to hear this testimony that there was a direct request made for that type of flyover, given what happened at the CIA annex nearly seven hours later.

HH: Senator Ayotte, I am hoping that some member of the house, and Trey Gowdy's coming up, asks Mr. Hicks if he feels that he has heard the President, the Vice President, or the former Secretaries of State or Defense lie, because it's a feeling. It's a subjective question. You're a prosecutor. Are such questions useful, even though they are not factual, they leave impressions upon which additional inquiries can be built?

KA: Well you know, I think that Trey is, first of all, is a former prosecutor, and he'll ask excellent questions. But to ask directly, do you feel this was misrepresented, I think, will probably get an answer, given what I've already heard what Mr. Hicks has said, I mean, you know, he has already said that I've never been so embarrassed in my life that a State Department, that he's already said things about after having listened to Susan Rice, calling another State Department official and saying why did she say that.

HH: Well, speaking of misrepresentations, I want to take a moment to change the subject. The gun debate was fascinating, but it has been used by the left to attack you.

KA: Yes.

HH: And I think unfairly. What is going on in New Hampshire? And should we pay any attention at all to these reports of Kelly Ayotte's plummeting standing in the eyes of New Hampshire voters?

KA: Well first of all, Hugh, this PPP polling outfit is a liberal polling outfit, and they've been doing this around the nation. So I wouldn't put a lot of stock in that. I had town hall meetings where every national media outlet wanted to come out, and they had already had their story prewritten. There were a lot of folks at my town hall meetings that very much supported what I did. And I take a common sense approach to these things. I was a former, as you know, a murder prosecutor. And so they've been misrepresenting my record, saying I'm totally against background checks. That's just false. I supported legislation that would have improved the background check system. But this has been a liberal media, they've already written the narrative, and so I think that this is a situation where they wanted to write what happened in New Hampshire, but it was very different than what happened on the ground.

HH: Now Senator Ayotte, do you suppose that as a result of your work on Benghazi, and your increasing profile on national security issues, that our friends on the left have figured it's time to take a few swipes at Kelly Ayotte and make sure that we lay some groundwork for 2016, 2018?

KA: Hugh, I have to think that as you know, I call them like I see them, and I'm an outspoken person in terms of what I believe. And I've certainly been out there on Benghazi, and I think it contributed to this, absolutely, that they want to use this as an opportunity in advance of 2016. But I think that certainly getting the truth out, which it will, because the attacks they're making against me are false, that that will set things straight with New Hampshire voters.

HH: Now last question, Senator Ayotte, Senator McCain was on last week, and he said he wishes the House would put together a select committee. He knows that you can't get one past Harry Reid on Benghazi.

KA: Yes.

HH: Do you agree with that?

KA: I do. In fact, I've joined him in the effort. We, myself, Senator McCain and Graham called for a select committee, you know, obviously right after this incident. But we also reiterated that request. I firmly believe a select committee, because what's happened is the investigation of this has been disjointed among the various committees with jurisdiction. And so one committee with various members from each of the committees that have jurisdiction to get all of the facts out, Hugh, we need to do that and get the facts out.

HH: One of the objections back from key people in the House is oh, it takes two months to get up and running, Democrats will say we're partisan, and it costs a lot of money, to which you reply?

KA: Well, Democrats are going to say you're partisan. Remember, they have claimed that Benghazi has been partisan from the beginning, and it's not been partisan. I mean, this has just been about a terrorist attack that murdered four Americans. I don't see why they couldn't quickly stand it up. They already know which committees would have jurisdiction, pick the members and get it going, and allow the Democrats to serve on it, too. Have it be bipartisan.

HH: Senator Kelly Ayotte, always a pleasure to talk to you, Senator. I hope we can connect after the hearings commence, and we find out more from all of the witnesses, but especially Mr. Hicks. Thank you so much.

KA: I look forward to that. Thanks so much, Hugh. Have a great day.

HH: You, too.

End of interview.