

The Benghazi Hearing as Rorschach Test



The big news that came out of the marathon Benghazi hearing is that the coronation of Hillary Clinton is proceeding on course. She came off as calm under fire from Republicans. At times, when the pols from both sides were sparring, she just sat there looking bored. Nothing, I suspect, that transpired over those many hours will hurt her.

Which is not to say that the Republicans, who undeniably were tough, weren't asking legitimate questions. They were. And two struck me as especially significant.

The first involves security.

Something went tragically wrong in Benghazi – on that, even Mrs. Clinton's most loyal supporters can agree. But who bears responsibility for the insufficient security? Mrs. Clinton was the secretary of state, after all. Is that where the buck stops?

There had been more than 600 requests for more security from ambassador Christopher Stevens and his team. Yet nothing, or virtually nothing, was done regarding those requests. Secretary Clinton told the committee that Ambassador Stevens "did not raise security with me. He raised security with the security professionals."

"Security professionals" was a term she used over and over again to make sure everyone understood that it wasn't her job to make sure the ambassador had the right amount of security; security was the responsibility of "security professionals."

But no "security professional" lost his job after Benghazi. No "security professional" lost so much as a day's pay. Mrs. Clinton explained that's because no one was found to be in "dereliction of duty," so in essence, her hands were tied.

But she went further than that. She told Georgia Republican Lynn Westmoreland that those "security professionals" were courageous Americans who should not be so much as criticized for Benghazi. She implied that it was practically un-American to go after them.

"And I have to add, Congressman, the diplomatic security professionals are among the best in the world," she said. "I would put them up against anybody. And I just cannot allow any comment to be in the record in any way criticizing or disparaging them. They have kept Americans safe in two wars and in a lot of other really terrible situations over the last many years. I trusted them with my life. ... They deserve better. And they deserve all the support that the Congress can give them, because they're doing a really hard job very well."

To which Congressman Westmoreland quietly and politely replied, "Well, ma'am, all I can say is they missed something here. And we lost four Americans."

No one could argue with that either.

So what is Hillary Clinton, former secretary of state and all-but-official Democratic nominee for president telling us? That we shouldn't hold the "security professionals" accountable for the disaster in Benghazi and that we shouldn't hold her accountable either. The professionals aren't to blame because they're "among the best in the world" and she's not to blame because security wasn't really her job. So let's just move on, she was saying, I'm on my way to a coronation.

The other line of questioning that was especially important was about the story, concocted someplace along the line, that it wasn't anti-American terrorism but an anti-Muslim video

made by some guy in California that touched off the violence that ended in the deaths of Stevens and the others.

Except even Mrs. Clinton knew the story wasn't true. It turns out that she told her daughter that what happened in Benghazi was the result (not of a video, but) of terrorism. And she said the same thing to more than a few others, including the Prime Minister of Egypt.. But while she was telling them the truth, she was telling the American people something else. She was blaming what happened on that video.

And that matters because Mrs. Clinton decided to deceive the American people for only one reason: politics. The re-election of President Obama was on the line and Hillary Clinton decided it was more important to be on Team Obama than level with the American people. Congressman Jim Jordan of Ohio, one of the Republicans supposedly out to get her, connected the dots.

"And a key campaign theme that year was GM's alive, bin Laden's dead, Al Qaida's on the run," he told Mrs. Clinton. "And now you have a terrorist attack, and it's a terrorist attack in Libya, and it's just 56 days before an election. You can live with a protest about a video. That won't hurt you. But a terrorist attack will. So you can't be square with the American people. You tell your family it's a terrorist attack, but not the American people. You can tell the president of Libya it's a terrorist attack, but not the American people. And you can tell the Egyptian prime minister it's a terrorist attack, but you can't tell your own people the truth."

That, I think, is a damning analysis of Mrs. Clinton's behavior after Benghazi. But I suspect it won't matter. I suspect nothing we heard at the hearing will matter.

The Benghazi hearing was a Rorschach test. You saw in it whatever you wanted to see. If the day before the hearing you thought the Republicans were out to get Hillary Clinton, that's what you think today. And if you thought Mrs. Clinton

was responsible for the lax security in Benghazi going in, that's what you thought when the hearing finally ended.

Those who say if John Kerry or someone else not running for president on the Democratic side had been secretary of state during Benghazi there would have been no hearing that went on and on and on. The questions would have been softer. The tone different.

They may be right. But Mrs. Clinton also played politics. And so did her Democrat protectors on the select committee. They were breathtakingly uncurious about who screwed up over there. They couldn't care less about a phony story about a video. They played the role not of serious lawmakers looking for real answers to legitimate questions, but instead they were content playing the part of traffic cops – clearing away any obstacle that might slow up the caravan en route to the coronation.