

# Angry Obama blasts top 'outrageous' Republicans for attacking 'reputation' of U.N. ambassador Susan Rice over Benghazi

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**Target: Obama turned on Republican senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham over their criticism of Ambassador Susan Rice's inaccurate statements on Benghazi, challenging them to 'go after me' instead**

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A furious President Barack Obama turned on Republican senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham over their criticism of Ambassador Susan Rice's inaccurate statements on Benghazi, challenging them to 'go after me' instead.

The U.S. commander-in-chief, buoyed by his crushing re-election victory over Mitt Romney, used his first full press conference in eight months to tell the Republicans to lay off Rice over her controversial September 16th comments on the Libya attack.

Ambassador Chris Stevens, diplomat Sean Smith and CIA contractors and former U.S. Navy SEALs Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods were all killed. Stevens

Rice's claim, on five Sunday shows five days after the September 11th attack that left four Americans dead, that the assault was 'spontaneous' and down to a crude anti-Islam movie made in California has been proved false.

Calling Rice an 'easy target', Obama challenged the senators to 'go after me' instead. 'If Senator McCain and Senator Graham, and others want to go after somebody, they should go after me.

'And I'm happy to have that discussion with them. But for them to go after the U.N. ambassador who had

nothing to do with Benghazi? And was simply making a presentation based on intelligence that she had received? And to besmirch her reputation is outrageous. And, you know, we're after an election now.

'I think it is important for us to find out exactly what happened in Benghazi and I'm happy to cooperate in any ways that Congress wants. We have provided every bit of information that we have and we will continue to provide information. And we've got a full-blown investigation, and all that information will be disgorged to Congress.

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**World affairs: US United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice (speaking at the UN on Aug. 30) has come under fire for allegedly not branding the deadly Sept. 11 attack on the U.S. consulate in Libya as a terrorist attack**

'And I don't think there's any debate in this country that when you have four Americans killed, that's a problem. And we've got to get to the bottom of it and there needs to be accountability. We've got to bring those who carried it out to justice. They won't get any debate from me on that.

'But when they go after the U.N. ambassador, apparently because they think she's an easy target, then they've got a problem with me. And should I choose, if I think that she would be the best person to serve America in the capacity at the State Department, then I will nominate her. That's not a determination that I've made yet.

Senator Graham of South Carolina immediately shot back: 'Mr President, don't think for one minute I don't hold you ultimately responsible for Benghazi. I think you failed as Commander in Chief before, during, and after the attack.'

The normally cool and placid Obama's full-throated defence of Rice follows weeks of biting criticism from Republicans about Rice's Sunday talk show utterances.



**Picking fights: 'If Senator McCain and Senator Graham, and others want to go after somebody, they should go after me,' Obama said**

Amid growing speculation that Rice could be nominated to succeed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, McCain and his allies vowed to do 'whatever is necessary' to block such a nomination.

Obama said Rice made the appearance 'at the request of the White House' and 'gave her best understanding of the intelligence that had been provided to her' - an indication that the CIA might be blamed by the White House.

'If Sen. McCain and Sen. Graham and others want to go after somebody, they should go after me,' Obama said, adding: 'When they go after the U.N. ambassador apparently because they think she's an easy target, then they've got a problem with me.'

The president said he would nominate Rice if he thinks she is the best person for the job, but added that's not a determination that I've made yet'.

Obama's comments on Rice drew sharp from all three of the senators who originally raised concerns -- McCain, Graham and Sen Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire. The three senators have put forward a proposal empanel a Watergate-style 'select committee' to investigate the Benghazi attack.

On the Senate floor, McCain, defended his concerns about Rice and echoed Graham's comments about Obama's ultimate responsibility.





**Looking for answers: On the Senate floor, Senator John McCain defended his concerns about Rice and echoed Senator Lindsey Graham's comments about Obama's ultimate responsibility**

'This president and this administration has either been guilty of colossal incompetence or engaged in a cover up. This attack clearly could have been prevented.'

McCain ended by saying that 'e're not picking on anybody' but simply trying to 'find out the facts'

Senator John Kerry is the other top candidate for Secretary of State but after Obama's trenchant defence of her Rice appears to be the top candidate.

While Rice is likely to be backed by the Democratic-controlled Senate, her nomination could spark an ugly fight and a near party-line rejection by Republicans.

Senator Graham said: 'Somebody has got to start paying a price around this place. I don't think she deserves to be promoted. There are a lot of qualified people in this country the president could pick, but I am dead-set on making sure we don't promote anybody that was an essential player in the Benghazi debacle.'