

Obama finally says Boston Marathon blasts were an 'act of terror' and vows 'we will find whoever harmed our citizens'

- 'The American people will not be terrorized,' Obama said in a speech that evoked President George W. Bush in Manhattan after 9/11
- Senators from both sides of the aisle call bombings 'terrorism'
- The president makes his first use of the 'T'-word, and says it three times
- Says Americans will respond 'selflessly, compassionately, unafraid'

By [David Martosko](#)

PUBLISHED: 10:49 EST, 16 April 2013 | UPDATED: 12:23 EST, 16 April 2013

In a short briefing from the White House press room, President Barack Obama called Monday's bombings near the finish line of the Boston Marathon 'a heinous and cowardly act, and given what we now know about what took place, the FBI is investigating it as an act of terrorism.'

With flags across the country flying at half-staff, Obama leveled his sharpest words yet about the attacks that killed three people and left at least 173 injured, some gravely.

'Any time bombs are used to target innocent civilians, it is an act of terror, he said.'

'What we don't yet know, however,' he added, 'is who carried out this attack or why, whether it was planned by a terrorist organization, foreign or domestic, or whether it was the act of a malevolent individual.'

'We will find whoever harmed our citizens and bring them to justice,' Obama said in closing. 'We also know this: the American people will not be terrorized.'

Scroll down for video



President Obama uncorked his strongest words yet about the Boston Marathon bombings, assuring Americans that 'any time bombs are used to target innocent civilians, it is an act of terror'

The Boston Globe

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2013

Marathon terror







The hometown Boston Globe called the two bomb blasts, which went off 12 seconds apart near the Boston Marathon's finish line, 'Marathon Terror'

He praised the 'exhausted runners who kept running to the nearest hospital to give blood, and those who stayed to tend to the wounded, some tearing off their own clothes to make tourniquets. The first responders who ran into the chaos to save lives. The men and women who are still treating the wounded at some of the best hospitals in the world, and the medical students who hurried to help, saying "When we heard, we all came in." The priests who opened their churches and ministered to the hurt and the fearful. And the good people of Boston who opened their homes to the victims of this attack and those shaken by it.'

'If you want to know who we are, what America is, how we respond to evil,' Obama said, 'that's it. Selflessly. Compassionately. Unafraid.'

On Monday the president avoided using the words 'terror,' 'terrorist' or 'terrorism,' leaving a White House official to tell reporters after his prepared statement that the federal government was, in fact, treating the carnage in Boston as a terrorist act.

But less than 24 hours later, the word is firmly in the presidential lexicon.

And U.S. lawmakers joined - or perhaps led - the chorus.

Obama calls Boston bombings an 'act of terror'



The second of two explosions rocked the last 1050 yards of the Boston Marathon course, sending shrapnel into the crowd, severing limbs, and ending lives

'My understanding is that it's a terrorist incident,' California Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein was quick to say on Monday. She chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Sen. Saxby Chambliss, that committee's vice chairman and ranking Republican, said that 'as the evidence mounts that this was a terrorist attack, our intelligence and law enforcement agencies must do whatever is necessary to find and interrogate those responsible so we can prevent similar attacks.'

One of their counterparts in the House of Representatives, Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, told reporters that the attacks in Boston had 'all the hallmarks of an act of terrorism, but we do not know for sure who did it.'

House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Ed Royce offered his sympathies 'to victims of the terrorist attack in Boston as well as to their families.'

Maine Senators Susan Collins and Angus King said that initial reports suggests that the bombs 'bear the hallmarks of a terrorist attack.'







A victim of the first explosion is helped on the sidewalk of Boylston Street, after two devices were detonated near the finish line of the 117th Boston Marathon

Obama's reticence to refer to attacks on American soil as 'terrorist' activities was brought into sharp focus during his 2012 re-election campaign, when Republican challenger Mitt Romney chastised him during a debate for refusing to call the Sept. 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya an act of terror.

The president, backed by debate moderator and CNN chief political correspondent Candy Crowley, insisted that he had in fact called the attack a terrorist act in a speech during the day following the Benghazi assault.

CBS News correspondent Steve Kroft, however, had interviewed the president on the day he gave that speech and asked him why he 'went out of your way to avoid the use of the word terrorism in connection with the Libya attack.'

Obama responded that it was 'too early to know exactly how this came about [or] what group was involved.'

CBS kept the interview out of public view until the night before Election Day, long after the debate confrontation had cemented in many Americans' minds the idea that Obama never expressed reluctance to declare that 'terrorists' attacked Americans in Benghazi.

As with the Benghazi situation, the White House has promised a continuing series of briefings throughout the length of the investigation.

### **'THE AMERICAN PEOPLE REFUSE TO BE TERRORIZED': OBAMA'S PRESS ROOM BRIEFING**

Good morning, everybody. I've just been briefed by my national security team, including FBI Director Mueller, Attorney General Holder, Secretary Napolitano, and my Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Advisor Lisa Monaco, on the attacks in Boston. We continue to mobilize and deploy all appropriate law enforcement resources to protect our citizens, and to investigate and to respond to this attack.

Obviously our first thoughts this morning are with the victims, their families, and the city of Boston. We know that two explosions gravely wounded dozens of Americans, and took the lives of others, including a 8-year-old boy.

This was a heinous and cowardly act. And given what we now know about what took place, the FBI is investigating it as an act of terrorism. Any time bombs are used to target innocent civilians it is an act of terror. What we don't yet know, however, is who carried out this attack, or why; whether it was planned and executed by a terrorist organization, foreign or domestic, or was the act of a malevolent individual. That's what we don't yet know. And clearly, we're at the beginning of our investigation.

It will take time to follow every lead and determine what happened. But we will find out. We will find whoever harmed our citizens and we will bring them to justice.

We also know this -- the American people refuse to be terrorized. Because what the world saw yesterday in the aftermath of the explosions were stories of heroism and kindness, and generosity and love: Exhausted runners who kept running to the nearest hospital to give blood, and those who stayed to tend to the wounded, some tearing off their own clothes to make tourniquets. The first responders who ran into the chaos to save lives. The men and women who are still treating the wounded at some of the best hospitals in the world, and the medical students who hurried to help, saying "When we heard, we all came in." The priests who opened their churches and ministered to the hurt and the fearful. And the good people of Boston who opened their homes to the victims of this attack and those shaken by it.

So if you want to know who we are, what America is, how we respond to evil -- that's it. Selflessly. Compassionately. Unafraid.

In the coming days, we will pursue every effort to get to the bottom of what happened. And we will continue to remain vigilant. I've directed my administration to take appropriate security measures to protect the American people. And this is a good time for all of us to remember that we all have a part to play in alerting authorities -- if you see something suspicious, speak up.

I have extraordinary confidence in the men and women of the FBI, the Boston Police Department, and the other agencies that responded so heroically and effectively in the aftermath of yesterday's events. I'm very grateful for the leadership of Governor Patrick and Mayor Menino. And I know that even as we protect our people and aggressively pursue this investigation, the people of Boston will continue to respond in the same proud and heroic way that they have thus far -- and their fellow Americans will be right there with them.

Thank you very much. And you can expect further briefings from our law enforcement officials as the day goes on. When we have more details, they will be disclosed. What I've indicated to you is what we know now. We know it was bombs that were set off. We know that obviously they did some severe damage. We do not know who did them. We do not know whether this was an act of an organization or an individual or individuals. We don't have a sense of motive yet. So everything else at this point is speculation. But as we receive more information, as the FBI has more information, as our out counterterrorism teams have more information, we will make sure to keep you and the American people posted.

Thank you very much, everybody.