

CLAIRE MCCASKILL: WHY AREN'T WE CALLING SANDY HOOK TERROR?

Janet Napolitano is testifying before the Senate Homeland Security Committee, purportedly on the budget. Not surprisingly, she's getting a ton of questions about the Boston Marathon attack and immigration.

But in a smart series of questions that will undoubtedly be controversial, Claire McCaskill challenged Napolitano to explain why we so quickly called Boston a terrorist attack, but wouldn't call Sandy Hook a terrorist attack. Noting that we still don't know the motive behind either attack, McCaskill asked (these are my immediate transcriptions),

Other than weapon, is there any difference between Sandy Hook and Boston?

[snip]

We are so quick to call Boston terror, why aren't we calling man w/high capacity magazine a terrorist?

[snip]

As I look at it w/eyes of prosecutor, I find it troubling that one is treated to cause so much more fear than other.

[snip]

It's possible both had same motive, just one chose military weapon, the other chose homemade explosive.

It's a provocative, but necessary question. The crime of terrorism relies on having a political motive. In both these attacks, we don't know motive. But two days after Boston, we're treating it as terrorism, while the attack that killed 20 children in their school still isn't

called such.

My inclination would be to call neither terrorism. McCaskill is right that the term just serves to generate fear.

But I'm glad she asked the question.