

Bombing suspect captured after military-police lockdown of Boston

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Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, a suspect in Monday's bombing at the finish line of the Boston Marathon, was captured yesterday after a massive manhunt by law enforcement agencies. Thousands of National Guard troops, FBI and other federal agents, and state and local police placed Boston in an unprecedented lockdown yesterday, after Dzhokhar, 19, and his brother Tamerlan, 26, engaged in a firefight with police.

In the space of a few hours, a major American city was transformed into a virtual armed camp and placed under the equivalent of martial law. The massive scale of the military and police mobilization—replete with Blackhawk helicopters, armored vehicles with machine guns, and SWAT teams pointing automatic weapons—seemed vastly disproportionate to the threat posed by one teenage youth.

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, a Democrat, issued a “shelter in place” order early Friday, shut down Boston's mass transit, and recommended that businesses close. According to the “shelter in place” order, Boston residents had to stay inside with their doors locked and not open them to anyone but a properly identified police officer. The order was progressively extended over some 100 square miles of the Boston metropolitan area, covering approximately 1 million people.

Heavily-armed forces swarmed the city's empty streets. Local reporters compared the scene to videos of US-occupied Baghdad.

Particularly in Watertown, police went house to house, carrying out searches with assault rifles drawn. The *New York Times* commented, “Watertown found itself an odd combination of ghost town and police state on Friday morning.”

Bus service between New York and Boston was shut down, and Amtrak train service north of New York

City was halted. Taxis were ordered off the streets during the morning hours. The Boston Bruins hockey and Red Sox baseball games were cancelled.

Area universities—including Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston University, Suffolk University, Boston College and University of Massachusetts-Boston—were closed. UMass-Dartmouth, where the younger bombing suspect was a student, was shut down and evacuated, with some students with nowhere to go housed at the local high school. Area public schools were already closed for vacation.

Late Thursday afternoon, police had released videos from security cameras showing the suspects leaving bags near the scene of the bombing. According to the authorities, the Tsarnaev brothers carjacked a Mercedes sports utility vehicle later Thursday night, and police pursued them to the northwest Boston suburb of Watertown. Tamerlan was mortally wounded in a firefight with police, during which he reportedly hurled explosives, and died at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital at 1:35 AM Friday. Dzhokhar fled the scene of the shoot-out.

According to early media reports, police had identified the Tsarnaev brothers as suspects after video emerged of a robbery at a convenience store at 10 PM Thursday. Shortly afterwards, a campus security officer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sean Collier, was found dead, shot in his police cruiser. A mass transit security officer was also shot and seriously wounded.

In a video interview with *Russia Today*, the brothers' mother, Zubeidat Tsarnaeva, said she believed her sons had been “set up.” She claimed that the FBI had “controlled” her son Tamerlan over a period of three to five years, monitoring his Internet use and repeatedly visiting their house to question him.

Late yesterday evening, the FBI confirmed that it had interviewed Tamerlan Tsarnaev in 2011 at the request of an unidentified foreign government.

Bostonians had been told the “shelter in place” order was necessary because they had at all costs to avoid Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was described as “armed and dangerous.” At 6 PM yesterday, however, Patrick suddenly lifted the “shelter in place” order at a press conference attended by Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and Massachusetts Police Colonel Timothy Alben, although they had not apprehended Tsarnaev or any other suspect. They did not explain why they considered the streets to be safer after their press conference than before.

Alben also contradicted earlier reports that the Tsarnaev brothers had carried out the armed robbery at the convenience store.

Shortly after the lifting of the order, however, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was found hiding under a tarp in a boat in the backyard of a private home in Watertown, covered in blood. Tactical police forces were called in, set up a perimeter, and fired a series of shots at Tsarnaev before taking him into custody and placing him in an ambulance. He is reportedly in critical condition.

Later in the evening, television outlets showed large numbers of people leaving their homes in relief and celebrating in the streets of Boston.

In carrying out this extraordinary and sinister police state exercise, the Obama administration, the military, the police and state and local officials relied on the media to create a climate of fear and anxiety so as to discourage careful consideration by the public of its long-term implications.

Notwithstanding the horrific character of the crimes involved in the Boston bombings, these implications are very real. The staggering police-military mobilization was clearly the result of years of planning and coordination between various military, intelligence and police agencies that have been relentlessly built up in the decade since the 9/11 attacks. It is now clear that, based purely on their say-so, a major American city can be placed under what would have been called, in a Latin American military dictatorship, a state of siege.

The events in Boston have lifted the veil on the degree to which, behind an eroding veneer of democracy, American society has been thoroughly

militarized.



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