

Federal authorities prepare charges against Boston bombings suspect

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A week following the April 15 bombings in Boston, suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev remains in serious condition at a Boston hospital. Federal authorities are preparing charges against Tsarnaev, 19, a naturalized American citizen of Chechen descent. His brother, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, 26, was killed early Friday in a gunfight with police.

The two bombings set off near the finish line at the Boston Marathon killed three people and injured more than 170 others, about 50 of whom remained in the hospital as of Sunday. Many suffered severe injuries, including loss of limbs, head injuries and hearing loss from the impact of the bombs, made in pressure cookers and containing nails, ball bearings and other projectiles.

Tsarnaev is being held in an isolated intensive care unit at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital, handcuffed to his bed and under police guard. He has suffered injuries to his throat. He is currently intubated and sedated. Interrogators have reportedly begun questioning him, with responses given in writing. It is not clear if he will recover from his injuries and be able to speak again.

Tsarnaev's Miranda rights have been suspended for an indefinite period of time, while some politicians have called for him to be declared an "enemy combatant." (See "Obama administration denies Miranda rights to marathon bombing suspect") Anything he says in the interim can be used against him at trial. Interrogations will be conducted by the Obama administration's High Value Interrogation Group, which includes the FBI, CIA and the military.

Tsarnaev will reportedly face federal terrorism charges, as well as possible state murder charges. At this point, Obama administration officials say he will be tried in federal court. The federal public defender's office in Massachusetts will represent him.

During the manhunt for Tsarnaev, one million people in a 100-square-mile area were told to stay in their homes, businesses were closed and all ground transportation was halted as federal agents and SWAT teams—using Blackhawk helicopters and armored vehicles with machine guns—searched for the lone 19-year-old suspect. One resident recorded the terrifying scene as SWAT teams banged on doors, ordering people out of their homes with their hands raised, and then entered to search for the suspect. Lauren Kelleher told the AP that she observed state police with massive automatic weapons in her backyard. "It was crazy," said her husband, Tim Kelleher. "We had SWAT teams, ATF on our lawn."

Other videos of the operation have also begun to appear online. They make clear that the searches, with automatic weapons drawn, were not "voluntary," and thus were a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution, which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures.

Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev were pursued by police late Thursday night, after the two allegedly carried out a carjacking in Cambridge. Police have also said that the suspects shot and killed an MIT police officer.

The pursuit ended in a gunfight in Watertown, where the older Tsarnaev allegedly hurled explosives at police, was wounded and then taken into custody. He was pronounced dead at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital at 1:35 a.m. Friday. A transit police officer was injured in the incident and remains hospitalized.

The younger brother fled, evading police and creating the occasion for the shutdown of the city and neighboring communities. Police cordoned off a 20-block area of Watertown, conducting warrantless searches in pursuit of the suspect.

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino defended the decision to put the area on lockdown. “We found a pipe bomb at another location in our city of Boston,” he said. “Another individual was taken into custody.” He asserted, however, that the bomb and this individual were not related to the marathon attacks.

Boston Police Commissioner Ed Davis told CBS’s “Face the Nation” that numerous explosive devices were found at the scene of the gunfight early Friday morning in Watertown. He said, “We have reason to believe, based on the evidence that was found at that scene...that they were going to attack other individuals.”

Although Davis told the “Fox News Sunday” program that authorities could not be sure there were not more explosives, in a seemingly contradictory comment he assured the people of Boston that they are “safe.”

In the aftermath of Tsarnaev’s capture, authorities have sought to exploit the area population’s trauma and anger over the suffering caused by the bombings and channel them into a celebration of the police-military operation.

The professional baseball and hockey games cancelled during the lockdown were rescheduled for Saturday and included tributes to law enforcement. Before the Red Sox baseball game at Fenway Park, police officers and state and local politicians were marched out onto the field, scenes of the bombings and its aftermath were projected onto giant screens, and a huge American flag was draped over the outfield wall.

The police presence, though smaller in number, is still apparent throughout Boston. State police are stationed outside MBTA transit stations, and military police conduct random searches of passengers.



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