

Boston bombing suspect gets death penalty charge

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Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the 19-year-old surviving suspect in the Boston Marathon bombings, was formally charged Monday with use of and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction resulting in death, a federal offense that carries the death penalty.

The twin bombings of April 15 killed three people and wounded over 170 more. The other suspect in the bombings, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's older brother Tamerlan, died after a shootout with police.

A federal judge was brought to Tsarnaev's hospital bed along with an assistant US attorney and a public defender for the formal presentation of the charges. Tsarnaev, who suffered multiple wounds before his capture last Friday, remains in serious condition, on a ventilator and under sedation. He is reportedly unable to verbally communicate because of a gunshot wound to the throat.

With one brother dead and the other wounded so he cannot speak, there is no one to contradict the official story that the two operated alone and without any knowledge of US intelligence agencies.

The hospital hearing marked the first time since his capture that Tsarnaev, a US citizen, has seen a lawyer. The Obama administration announced its intention not to read him his Miranda rights to remain silent and be represented by an attorney on the pretext of a "public safety" exemption, even though law enforcement officials in Boston assured the public that they were in no further danger. This gave an FBI-CIA interrogation team unfettered access to Tsarnaev, who was reportedly able to respond only by moving his head or writing down answers.

In his formal statement announcing the charges, Attorney General Eric Holder paid tribute "to the valor of state and local police, the dedication of federal law enforcement and intelligence officials, and the vigilance of members of the public." John Carlin, the acting assistant attorney general for national security, added,

"The events of the past week underscore in stark terms the need for continued vigilance against terrorist threats both at home and abroad."

But even as the Justice Department and the FBI were patting each other on the back, a group of lawmakers raised pointed questions as to how and why the FBI failed to prevent the bombing after the older brother, Tamerlan, had been identified to the agency by the Russian government as a terrorist suspect.

In a letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, the Republican chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Michael McCaul of Texas, and its former chairman, Republican Congressman Peter King of New York, demanded all material related to Tsarnaev's case, including classified reports. The two wrote:

"The FBI interviewed Tamerlan Tsarnaev at the request of a foreign liaison service, on the basis of suspicions that Tsarnaev was involved in terrorist activities. Tsarnaev subsequently traveled to and from Russia and posted jihadist materials on his social media. Yet Tsarnaev remained at liberty in this country to conduct the Boston attack, and it took days to publicly identify him as a suspect."

In a television interview Sunday, McCaul asked, "If he [Tamerlan] was on the radar and they let him go, if he was on the Russians' radar, why wasn't a flag put on him, some sort of customs flag?"

The FBI has publicly claimed that it interviewed Tamerlan only once, in 2011, but found no evidence that he was of any concern. It also claimed that the Russian government failed to provide any further information substantiating its warning.

Every aspect of this official story has been called into question in the wake of the Boston bombings.

The mother of the two brothers has stated in interviews that the FBI maintained continuous contact with her elder

son over the course of three to five years. “They were controlling his every step,” she said. She also recounted that FBI agents had told her that “Tamerlan was an extremist leader and they were afraid of him.”

The Moscow-based correspondent of *Newsweek* and the *Daily Beast*, Anna Nemtsova, interviewed a “well-placed security source” in Russia, who said that when Tamerlan visited Dagestan for six months in 2012, Russian security services and police in Dagestan were “watching him closely for five months and three weeks” and had compiled an extensive dossier on him.

The Tsarnaev family had its roots in neighboring Chechnya, the scene of two bitter separatist wars in the 1990s that gave rise to an armed Islamist movement. Neither the parents nor the two brothers, who grew up largely in the US, had ever lived there.

NBC News, meanwhile, reported that Tamerlan had been monitored by Russian police agencies as he visited a “known Islamic militant” in a mosque in Dagestan during his six-month visit. It further quoted a local police official as saying that an extensive case file on the 26-year-old had been sent to the FBI, together with a request for information. The FBI reportedly never replied.

Britain’s Channel 4 News reported on Sunday, quoting the father of the two brothers, that days after the bombings, Tamerlan received a phone call from the FBI accusing him of being responsible for the attack.

The multiple reports indicating far more extensive contact with Tamerlan Tsarnaev and knowledge of his activities than the FBI has admitted raise a number of questions.

Why did the FBI effectively ignore the Russian warning, as well as, apparently, a dossier detailing contacts with Islamist elements? Why did it conceal its sustained contact with the 26 year old?

An attempt to cover up gross incompetence is certainly not excluded. However, a more plausible explanation is that US intelligence agencies had developed plans for using their knowledge about Tamerlan’s activities to their own advantage.

Given its covert support for separatist movements in the Caucasus, it is entirely possible that Washington decided not to interfere with someone who could be viewed as an asset in furthering these movements. The Chechen Islamists have also supplied substantial numbers of fighters for the war for regime-change in Syria, which Washington is backing.

It is also possible that the FBI could utilize such intelligence to blackmail Tsarnaev into working as its

confidential informant in the US itself.

One side of the Boston Marathon bombings that the corporate media has virtually blacked out is the extraordinary security measures that were in place before any bombing took place. A number of participants have noted that bomb-sniffing dogs were present both at the starting and finish line, as well as police spotters on rooftops, something they had never seen at previous marathons. Indeed, announcements were made at the beginning of the race telling participants not to be concerned and that the extraordinary security was part of “a training exercise.”

Also blacked out from media coverage is the participation in this “exercise” of a shadowy Blackwater-style security/mercenary outfit by the name of Craft International. Photographs of operatives of this firm, dressed in identical black jackets, combat fatigue pants and desert combat boots, and wearing shirts and caps bearing its logo—a bleeding skull with a target site in its eye socket—have been widely posted on the Internet.

Photographs of these mercenaries show them wearing large black backpacks that are similar to those that were said to have carried the pressure-cooker explosive devices that blew up at the marathon’s finish line.

The question arises as to whether the Tsarnaev brothers were the witting or unwitting participants in an exercise that went wrong, or one that was organized by the American state with the aim of producing precisely the results that it did.

What were those results? The US military and intelligence apparatus was able to utilize an isolated terrorist incident to carry out the most massive deployment of militarized police in the country’s history, subjecting an entire metropolitan area of over one million people to what amounted to martial law.

Under conditions of mounting social tensions driven by the protracted economic crisis and ever deepening social inequality, such a deployment provides training and experience for use in confronting the future eruption of class struggle.



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