

Witness tied to Boston bombing suspect killed by FBI

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Twenty-seven-year-old Ibragim Todashev was shot and killed early Wednesday morning while being interrogated by police and intelligence officials in an Orlando, Florida, apartment. Todashev, a friend of Boston Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev and, like Tsarnaev, an ethnic Chechen, was reportedly being questioned by a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent from the FBI's Boston field office, along with Massachusetts state troopers and counterterrorism officials.

The FBI claims that Todashev had implicated both himself and Tsarnaev in the grisly murder of three men in Waltham, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb, on September 11, 2011. They said he then suddenly pulled a knife and tried to attack the FBI agent questioning him. The attack, according to the FBI, prompted the lethal shooting.

Tamerlan Tsarnaev was killed in a shootout with police four days after two bombs detonated near the finish line of the April 15 marathon in downtown Boston killed three people and wounded 264 others. His younger brother, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, alleged to have participated with Tamerlan in the bombings, is being held in a Massachusetts prison hospital, charged with the capital crime of using a weapon of mass destruction.

One of the three men killed in Waltham in 2011 was a close friend of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, a boxer and martial arts fighter. Brendan Mess, who, like the other two victims of the attack, had his throat slit, was also a boxer and trained at the same gym as Tsarnaev.

Todashev had lived in the Boston area before moving to Florida. A martial arts fighter, like Tamerlan Tsarnaev, he had become friendly with his fellow Chechen. He reportedly last spoke to Tamerlan in April.

There is no reason to accept, as the media has uncritically done, the FBI's version of Todashev's death. The elimination of a witness renders even less credible the official line on the Boston bombings and the role of the FBI, the CIA, the Department of Homeland Security and other police and intelligence agencies. It adds to the miasma of cover-up surrounding the Boston attack.

Khusen Taramov, 22, a friend of Todashev who was also questioned by the FBI, told several Orlando television outlets Wednesday morning that Todashev feared for his life. "He felt inside he was going to get shot," Taramov said of his friend. "I told him, 'Everything is going to be fine, don't worry about it.' He said, 'I have a really bad feeling.'"

The events in Orlando also undermine the official story that Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were "lone wolf" and "self-radicalized" individuals, with no connections to other groups. As the *Orlando Sentinel* reported Wednesday, "FBI sources also told [Orlando television channel] WESH that Todashev has extremist friends overseas."

From the outset, the government has been eager to portray the Tsarnaevs as lone actors in an apparent effort to limit public information about the multiple contacts between federal police and intelligence agencies and the Tsarnaev family in the months leading up to the bombings, and advance warnings of Tamerlan's Chechen separatist and Islamic fundamentalist sympathies and connections.

Once again, as in the September 11, 2001 attacks, the alleged perpetrators were well known to US police and intelligence and were being tracked, and the authorities ignored multiple warnings of an impending terror attack. Now, as then, in lieu of any explanation or accountability for, at the very least, a staggering

intelligence failure, and, more plausibly, something more sinister, the resort is to the threadbare and all-purpose mantra of a “failure to connect the dots.”

Meanwhile, the Marathon bombings were used as a pretext to carry out a day-long lockdown of Boston and its suburbs, in which civil liberties were effectively suspended and state security forces tested out techniques for imposing a military dictatorship. The supposed security “lapses” are being cited as justification for giving the police and intelligence agencies even greater powers to spy on and repress the American people.

It has been acknowledged that in 2011 the FBI and CIA received multiple alerts from Russian authorities about Tamerlan Tsarnaev, and that the elder Tsarnaev brother was placed on a number of terror watch lists. There are also reports of warnings from Saudi Arabian officials.

The FBI claims it conducted an investigation into Tamerlan Tsarnaev in 2011 in which it questioned both Tamerlan and his parents but found nothing suspicious and closed the case. The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security allowed Tamerlan to travel to the volatile North Caucasus region that includes Chechnya in January of 2012 and remain for six months, then return home without being stopped for questioning by customs or security officials on either leg of the trip.

There are multiple reports that while in Russia, Tamerlan sought out and made contact with known Islamist separatists who are waging a terror campaign against Russian authorities.

And yet, according to both Boston police and FBI Director Robert Mueller, Boston authorities were never informed of any of this information regarding the Tsarnaevs in advance of the Marathon, a mass event that attracts tens of thousands of people from all over the world. Instead, the Boston Joint Terrorism Task Force was reportedly tracking Occupy Wall Street activists.

The FBI’s current charge that Tamerlan, and possibly Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, were involved in the triple slaying in Waltham, Massachusetts, in 2011 underscores the unbelievable character of its claim that it could find nothing suspicious about Tamerlan when it carried out its probe that year, and had no reason to reopen its investigation thereafter.

The FBI could not have failed to discover the close

connection between Tamerlan and one of the victims of the triple homicide, making absurd its supposed finding of “no derogatory” information regarding him.

Far more plausible than the official story is the likelihood that US intelligence agencies, including the FBI, were using, or planned to use, Tamerlan Tsarnaev to further their operations with Islamist separatist forces in the North Caucasus, with whom they have been working for many years. These operations include Washington’s machinations in Russia and the former Soviet republics, as well as its use of Chechen Islamist terrorists in its neo-colonial wars in the Middle East, including the current US proxy war in Syria.



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