

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev indicted on 45 counts in Boston Marathon bombing

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State and federal prosecutors announced at a press conference Thursday in Boston that they have obtained grand jury indictments of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev on 45 separate counts: 30 charges under federal law and 15 state charges.

Because the state of Massachusetts has no death penalty, federal prosecutors headed by US Attorney Carmen Ortiz are expected to take the lead role in legal action against Tsarnaev. Seventeen of the 30 federal charges carry possible death sentences. Others carry possible terms of life in prison for the 19-year-old.

Ortiz said Attorney General Eric Holder will decide whether to pursue the death penalty against Tsarnaev, who will be arraigned on July 10. Holder issued a statement hailing the indictment, declaring that it “proves our unyielding resolve to hold accountable, to the fullest extent of the law, anyone who would threaten the American people or attempt to terrorize our great cities.”

Tsarnaev is jailed at a military prison at Fort Devens, 40 miles west of Boston. He was shot multiple times while hiding unarmed in a boat and arrested April 19, four days after the April 15 bombing. His brother Tamerlan, 26, was killed in a clash with police the night before.

The charges relate to both the Boston Marathon bombing, which killed three people and wounded 260, and the subsequent murder of Massachusetts Institute of Technology police officer Sean Collier, as well as the kidnapping and robbery of a motorist whom the Tsarnaev brothers allegedly carjacked in an effort to escape the Boston area.

The charges include using a weapon of mass destruction resulting in death, bombing a place of public use resulting in death, malicious destruction of property resulting in death, and conspiring to carry out

those crimes. Other charges include use of a firearm during and in relation to a violent crime and carjacking resulting in serious injury.

The federal indictment maintains the official cover story that the Tsarnaev brothers were “self-radicalized” through reading radical Islamist material on the Internet, and obtained all their information about bomb-making from Internet sources as well. The bombs were allegedly assembled from pressure cookers, black explosive powder gleaned from fireworks, nails and ball bearings.

The Boston Marathon bombings became the occasion for the shutdown of the city of Boston, as heavily armed swat teams patrolled parts of the city and engaged in mass searches in violation of basic democratic rights.

There is no reference in the indictment to Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s travel to the Caucasus in 2012, where he spent six months in Dagestan, next door to war-torn Chechnya. The Tsarnaev family was of Chechen origins, although they left Chechnya in the mid-1990s, during the years of heavy fighting between Russian forces and Chechen rebels, and neither brother had lived there since.

The Russian authorities contacted US agencies in 2011, first the FBI and then the CIA, with concerns about Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s possible connections with Islamist militants in the Caucasus. The FBI interviewed the elder Tsarnaev, but officials claim there was no evidence of radical sympathies, let alone terrorism, at that time.

By the official account, Tamerlan Tsarnaev returned from his six months in Dagestan without sparking any interest on the part of US security services, and he was able to buy weapons, large quantities of high-explosive fireworks, and purchase detonators by mail to his

home, without any interference.

A spokeswoman for the US Attorney's office, asked by the media why the indictment was silent on Tamerlan Tsarnaev's travel and the possibility that he had received training from Islamist militants in Dagestan, refused to answer.

The official cover story serves two interrelated purposes for the US government. Claiming that the Tsarnaevs acted in complete isolation helps to deflect attention from the mounting evidence of connections between the Boston Marathon bombers and US intelligence operations (See: "Who is Ruslan Tsarni?")

Secondly, by in effect "blaming the Internet" for facilitating the ideological and practical preparation for the bombing, the government seeks to justify its ongoing and massive surveillance of email and telecommunications, in the name of combating terrorism.



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