Questions surrounding 2011 triple murder point to government cover-up in Boston Marathon bombing

Thomas Gaist, Barry Grey
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The *New York Times* published a front-page article Thursday ("In 2011 Murder Inquiry, Hints of Missed Chance to Avert Boston Bombing") that raises new questions about the alleged perpetrators of the April 15 Boston Marathon bombing and adds to the evidence of a government cover-up in the explosions that killed three people and wounded more than 260 others.

Citing "senior law enforcement officials," the article asserts that the elder of the two Tsarnaev brothers alleged to have detonated two bombs near the finish line of the marathon, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, was involved in the murder of three men in Waltham, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, on September 11, 2011—the tenth anniversary of the terror attacks on New York and Washington DC.

The ostensible occasion for the article was the arraignment on Wednesday of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, Tamerlan's younger brother, on multiple terrorism charges before a federal judge in Boston. Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 19, was captured on April 19 following a shootout in which his older brother was killed. He pled not guilty to 30 counts, most of which potentially carry the death penalty. (See: "Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev arraigned in federal court").

The *Times* article published Thursday asserts that Ibragim Todashev, a friend of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and, like Tsarnaev, an ethnic Chechen and martial arts fighter, was also involved in the triple slaying. The authors of the article repeat the official story that Todashev confessed to the involvement of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and himself in the gruesome killings during hours of interrogation at his Florida apartment last May 22. The questioning ended with a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) operative repeatedly shooting and killing Todashev.

The *Times*, which, like the rest of the US media, has remained silent for weeks on the state execution of Todashev, presents as fact the FBI claim that Todashev "flipped out" after confessing to the murders and attacked the FBI agent. The newspaper passes quickly over the murder of someone who might have shed much light on Tsarnaev and his connections to others, including US intelligence and police agencies, merely referring to "circumstances that remain unclear," and noting "skepticism" among "some close to the victims" about the official account of Todashev's death.

The FBI has detained and is currently preparing to deport Todashev's roommate Tatiana Gruzdeva, a fact that has been buried by the US media, including the *Times*. Civil liberties groups believe Gruzdeva has valuable knowledge regarding Todashev's interactions with the FBI. Hassan Shibly of the Counicl on American-Islamic Relations told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the moves against Gruzdeva have been made to prevent her from speaking publicly about the case. "There is a lot of mystery around the detention," Shibly said. "There appears to be some sort of cover-up going on."

The bulk of the *Times* article discusses the failure of the authorities to question Tamerlan Tsarnaev in the course of their investigation into the triple murder, which it describes as "the most brazen crime in the memory of this Boston suburb." It quotes or cites numerous acquaintances of the three victims and Tsarnaev who either urged the police to question Tsarnaev, were bewildered over the police's failure to do so, or felt shock and concern over Tsarnaev's absence from the funeral of his slain friend and his callous attitude toward the murder.

The authors note that had the local authorities pursued a "more vigorous" investigation into the slayings, Tamerlan Tsarnaev might have been apprehended and "the bombings might never have happened."

What the *Times* entirely leaves out, however, is the fact that federal security and intelligence agencies had already been warned of Tamerlan Tsarnaev's radical Islamist beliefs and his desire to link up with Islamist separatist and terrorist groups operating in his North Caucasus, Russian homeland. The newspaper nowhere suggests that the FBI, CIA or Homeland Security Department bears any responsibility for the unexplained failure to investigate Tsarnaev's role in the Waltham killings.

This omission and the article's perfunctory treatment of the Todashev killing mark the piece as an attempt at damage control, aimed at shoring up the badly discredited official cover-up of the Boston bombing.

On September 12, 2011, the bodies of three men—Brendan Mess, Erik Weissman, and Raphael Teken—were discovered in their Waltham apartment with their throats slit. It was determined that the killings had occurred the previous day.

Crime scene investigators concluded that the killings had been carried out by perpetrators who were skilled in the martial arts and known to the victims, enabling them to gain entry without a

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struggle. According to the *Times*, Tamerlan Tsarnaev was one of Mess' "closest friends and a frequent visitor to the Harding Avenue apartment."

Tsarnaev was strangely unmoved by the death of his close friend, according to several sources cited by the *Times*, including Tsarnaev's wife.

The newspaper quotes an unidentified friend as saying: "We did mention Tamerlan again to the police after he was not there for Brendan's services… I felt that the police were not really looking in the right places."

John Allan, the owner of the Wai Kru martial arts gym where Mess, Tsarnaev and Todashev all worked out, said that Tsarnaev seemed totally untroubled by the death of his friend, not displaying any signs of grief. "As I said something, there was kind of a smile on Tamerlan's face, and he laughed it off," Allan said.

According to *Times*, relatives and friends of the victims believe the investigation was called off prematurely without reason, and that "basic policing work could have solved the case." Neither the favored lunch spot of Mess nor the mixed martial arts gym frequented by Mess and Tsarnaev was visited by officers in charge of the investigation. The mother of one of the victims, Bellie Hacker, is quoted describing the stance of the investigators as "passive and waiting."

Of Todashev, who was introduced to the gym by Tsarnaev, Allan said: "He's got a bad temper, he clearly has anti-American sentiment, a radical-style Muslim who was training with Tamerlan at this gym, and at the end praying towards Mecca with him."

Jamal Abu Rubieh, who owns a diner in Brookline that was frequented by Mess together with Tsarnaev and Weissman, said investigators "never called us over here at his hangout place or came to ask questions."

Susan Zalkind, a friend of Erik Weissman who has been researching the case since 2011, told the *Times* she has been surprised by the absence of a real investigation, saying, "Despite being one of the most gruesome and unusual crimes of the year, I saw the least amount of public outreach."

Mess' girlfriend of nine months told the *Times* that she had informed investigators that Tamerlan Tsarnaev was a regular guest at the apartment where the murders occurred. She said law enforcement authorities never attempted to follow up with her on this matter.

A host of questions arise from the account presented by the *Times*. Why did the government suppress the investigation of the Waltham killings? Who made the decision not to pursue the multitude of leads connecting Tamerlan Tsarnaev to the victims, as any standard criminal investigation would?

The failure to investigate Tsarnaev in connection with the murders is all the more inexplicable given what the FBI already knew about him. It had been warned by Russian intelligence in March 2011 that Tamerlan Tsarnaev was a dangerous radical Islamist with possible terrorist inclinations or connections. The FBI claims, according to congressional testimony by FBI Director Robert Mueller, to have conducted a "thorough" investigation of Tsarnaev, including questioning him and other members of his family.

The FBI says it found nothing suspicious about Tsarnaev and closed the case. Even if one accepts this dubious claim, how is it to be explained that the grisly murder that September, on the anniversary of 9/11, of one of Tsarnaev's best friends and two others, both Jewish, did not arouse the agency's suspicions? Why was the FBI investigation not reopened and why did the agency make no effort to ensure that Tsarnaev was questioned in relation to the killings?

Four months later, in January of 2012, Tsarnaev was allowed to travel unhindered to Dagestan in Russia's North Caucasus and remain there for six months, establishing contacts with Islamist separatist and terrorist groups. This was so despite the fact that his name had been placed on at least two terrorist watch lists.

Finally, in advance of last April's Boston Marathon, a major international event that attracts tens of thousands of participants and spectators from around the world, the FBI failed to inform state and local officials on the Joint Terrorism Task Force of its contacts with Tsarnaev or his stay in Russia.

There has been no serious attempt to explain these staggering contradictions and anomalies. Instead, the same red herring used to cover up the role of US intelligence agencies in allowing the 9/11 attacks to take place—failure to "connect the dots" or "communicate"—has been trundled out once again before an incredulous public.

The official story—upheld by the *Times*—is the least likely explanation for the Boston bombing, an event that became the pretext for an unprecedented military-police lockdown of a major American city.

The most plausible explanation is that Tamerlan Tsarnaev was a US intelligence asset working with the FBI and/or other agencies. He was protected because he was deemed useful, perhaps in furthering US covert operations in the North Caucasus or other criminal US imperialist operations. Chechen Islamist terrorists make up a significant contingent of the foreign forces funneled by the CIA into Syria to help wage the current US-backed war for regime-change.

Like virtually every other terrorist attack launched in the US, the Boston bombing was ultimately bound up with the global machinations of US imperialism. 9/11 and Al Qaeda had their roots in the CIA-backed mujahidin war against a pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The latest atrocity was likely linked to US efforts, mobilizing the most reactionary forces, to destabilize the Caucasus and establish American hegemony across the Middle East.

And as with 9/11, the Boston bombing has been used to intensify the assault on the democratic rights of the American people and develop the means for mass repression and dictatorial rule.

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