Florida law enforcement agencies refuse to probe killing of Boston Marathon bombing witness

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Attempts made by the American Civil Liberties Union to obtain an independent probe into the killing of Ibragim Todashev have been rebuffed by representatives of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). Todashev, the 27-year-old Chechen and associate of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, was killed by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents during an interrogation on May 22.

A letter sent Tuesday by FDLE Commissioner Gerald M. Bailey to the ACLU stated, "This is an active federal investigation; it would be inappropriate for [the state] to intervene" in the probe currently being carried out by the FBI into the circumstances surrounding the killing. Referring any subsequent questions to the FBI, the FDLE commissioner refused to make any additional comments.

The stonewalling prompted the ACLU of Florida's Executive Director Howard Simon to comment, "Secrecy fosters suspicion and the people of Florida deserve better than to be left without an explanation from their government about what led to a person being shot to death."

Simon told the media that Bailey's refusal to investigate makes it likely that Todashev's family would pursue legal action.

Calls for an investigation have likewise been refused in Massachusetts, where the witness had been in contact with the deceased Boston Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Similarly, the FBI has refused to release a copy of the autopsy report on the killing to the media. Effectively, the US government has left the FBI to investigate itself.

Todashev had been questioned numerous times by federal agents in the weeks after the April 15 bombing. Official reports state that in the early morning of May 22, Todashev was in the process of confessing to a triple murder he and the elder Tsarnaev had committed in 2011 in Waltham, Massachusetts, when he "flipped out," attacking a federal agent before being shot dead.

Conflicting reports, dutifully parroted in the press before being dropped entirely, portrayed Todashev as menacing agents with a knife or sword. The sword was subsequently reported as a pole or a broomstick. Other accounts said he had nothing in his hands when he lunged across a table at his interrogators.

These versions of events were all contradicted by autopsy photos documenting wounds suggesting that the young man had been shot while he was on the ground at point-blank range. Todashev had told his roommate before the interrogations began that he feared for his life.

The official claims of Todashev's involvement alongside the Boston Marathon bombing suspect in a triple homicide in 2011 raise many questions contradicting the original assertions by law enforcement officials that Tsarnaev was unknown to the authorities.

It has already been reported that U.S. officials in the CIA and FBI had been contacted by Russian as well as Saudi Arabian security forces regarding the Islamist proclivities of Tsarnaev as early as March 2011, to which they did not reply. In November of that same year, the FBI closed an investigation of Tsarnaev claiming it found nothing suspicious. In 2012, Tsarnaev was allowed to travel to the North Caucasus without being detained, where he attempted to establish contacts with various Islamist separatist movements in the region before returning to the U.S. six months later.

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On July 10, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 20, pleaded not guilty to 45 charges related to his alleged involvement in the events in Boston. The prosecution for the Obama administration insists that the brothers acted alone in carrying out the deadliest terrorist attack on US soil since September 11, 2001—which, like the Boston Marathon bombing, resulted in sweeping attacks on democratic rights, and has never been adequately explained by authorities.

Many signs point to the involvement of the intelligence agencies. At a Senate hearing July 10, for example, Boston Police Commissioner Ed Davis testified that the FBI made no attempts in the lead-up to the events to warn the city's law enforcement about the existence of a possible terror suspect in its midst although the intelligence agencies were tracking Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Nor did it make an attempt to apprehend the suspect or make his presence known to Russian authorities upon his journeying to the North Caucasus in search of extremist ties a year earlier.

In light of the most recent developments, the official story regarding the background of the Boston events, and subsequent murder of an eyewitness is the least likely to be believed. Far more likely is that Todashev held knowledge of the elder Tsarnaev's involvement with various Federal intelligence agencies, who were attempting to cultivate the youth for activities carried out against the U.S.' regional rivals in the North Caucasus and surrounding areas, including in nearby Syria, where the United States is currently funding an Islamist-fueled civil war aimed at toppling the countries' ruler, Bashar al-Assad.

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