

Florida prosecutor's report whitewashes FBI killing of Ibragim Todashev

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On Tuesday, the state attorney for Florida's Ninth Judicial Circuit, Jeffrey L. Ashton, announced his decision not to prosecute an unnamed FBI agent who shot and killed Ibragim Todashev, the Chechen-born friend of Boston Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev, on May 22 of last year during an interview with law enforcement officials.

Ashton's decision came in the form of a five-page letter to FBI Director James Comey explaining the results of his investigation and couching his dubious conclusions in bogus legal phraseology. Ashton's letter was released the same day as a similar, if lengthier, whitewash by the Department of Justice, whose determinations were leaked to the media late last week. On a number of points, including how many officers were inside Todashev's apartment and what they did prior to and during the latter's alleged attack, the two reports differ.

The timed release of both reports and their eagerness to clear the officers involved of any wrongdoing are no accident. Rather, they reflect the agreement at the highest levels of the state to cover up the murder of a possible source of incriminating, or at least embarrassing, information about what the intelligence agencies knew about the Boston Marathon bombing suspects—Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev—before the April 2013 tragedy.

Even if one assumes for the sake of argument that all of Ashton's factual findings are true, the official story is highly implausible. The Justice Department's report fares no better.

According to both reports, Todashev was shot six times in the torso and once in the head after more than four hours of questioning by a special agent of the FBI and officers with the Massachusetts State Police, who were taking video of the meeting. According to the Florida report, the video recorder was for some reason turned off immediately prior to the bullet barrage that killed Todashev, or, if one believes the Justice Department

report, the recorder either ran out of battery power or out of available disk space.

Todashev was cooperative, according to both reports, implicating himself and Tamerlan Tsarnaev in a September 11, 2011 triple-murder in Waltham, Massachusetts.

Shortly after Todashev reportedly confessed to involvement in the 2011 homicides, one of the two Massachusetts officers left the apartment to inform the district attorney of the development. The remaining state police officer claims he observed changes in Todashev's demeanor and sent the following text message to officers outside the apartment:

"Be on guard. He is in a vulnerable position to do something bad. Be on guard now. I see him looking around."

As this officer was occupied with his phone, the FBI agent reportedly sat on the other side of a coffee table from Todashev in a folding chair, taking notes. The latter sat on a mattress placed directly on the floor and used the coffee table as a surface on which to write his confession. Then, the reports state, with both officers momentarily distracted, the coffee table flew into the air and hit the FBI agent on the back of the head, severely injuring him. Todashev ran past the state police officer toward his front door and kitchen and supposedly fumbled through drawers for something with which to attack the officers.

The state police officer never fired his pistol, nor did the officers outside the apartment enter at this time. According to the Justice Department report, the state trooper claims he was unable to draw his pistol. The Ashton report, however, says he was pointing the gun at Todashev but fired no rounds.

Todashev is alleged to have grasped a metal "utility pole" in a threatening manner, as if holding a javelin, and to have run at the state police officer, at which point he was shot four times by the FBI agent's .40 caliber pistol.

Todashev then allegedly got up and lunged once again at the state trooper, prompting another three shots from the FBI agent. Of the seven shots, one went through the top of Todashev's head and two entered the back of his torso.

In addition to this seemingly unlikely account, other aspects of the two reports point to a cover-up:

- * There was no canvassing of witnesses in the apartment building at any time after the shooting.

- * The FBI, not the local police, conducted all pertinent forensic work, controlling the crime scene and the physical evidence.

- * The FBI continues to block the release of Todashev's autopsy, which was completed in July.

- * There is no reference in either report to any attempt at corroborating the claim that the recording device ran out of batteries or storage space.

- * Todashev had supposedly confessed to murder on video and waived his Miranda rights, but was not placed under arrest, allegedly so that more information could be obtained from him. If that was the case, why would the video recorder be turned off, as alleged in the Ashton report?

- * In the Justice Department version of events, Todashev went upstairs and took a bathroom break after the confession and was patted down by the lone state police officer. This episode is totally absent from the Ashton report.

The reports' concluding remarks further suggest a cover-up. Ashton writes, for example: "The explanation for stopping the recording just prior to the attack is also supported by the records of phone calls made just after the recording ceases and moments before the attack begins *and I find nothing suspicious in that* (emphasis added)."

In reference to evidence that does not conform to the officers' narrative, Ashton uses dismissive pseudo-legal jargon, saying that none of it sheds any "substantial doubt on the testimony of the eyewitnesses." In other words, Ashton begins with the officers' story and views all unresponsive evidence as automatically suspect. No theory in conflict with the FBI/state police narrative merits serious investigation. The one eyewitness who might have contradicted this account is, of course, no longer among the living.

The Justice Department report finds that two of the rounds fired entered Todashev's body in the back right part of his torso. The report concludes, however, that "the shooter was neither standing over Todashev nor behind him when the shots were fired." Thus, the Justice Department report summarily excludes the possibility that

Todashev was intentionally shot in the back.

Whatever the exact circumstances surrounding Ibragim Todashev's killing, the official reports raise far more questions than they answer. In the case of the Boston bombings, US intelligence services were warned by both Russian and Saudi counterparts about Tamerlan Tsarnaev's links to radical Islamist groups in Chechnya and Dagestan. His uncle, Ruslan Tsarni, has close ties to the CIA and founded an umbrella group of Chechen Islamist forces. Tamerlan Tsarnaev was on government terror watch lists prior to the Boston bombings, a fact about which the Boston police were not made aware prior to the Boston Marathon.

Despite the fact that the FBI and CIA received warnings from Russia about Tamerlan Tsarnaev, he was allowed in 2012 to travel freely to and from Dagestan in Russia's North Caucasus, where he made contact with known Islamist separatist terrorists. Moreover, the FBI says it investigated Tsarnaev in 2011 and gave him a clean bill of health, but police officials suspected him of involvement in the September 11, 2011 triple-murder in Waltham, a suburb of Boston. This is the crime to which Todashev allegedly confessed just before he was killed.

The logical thread that runs through the Boston bombings and subsequent lockdown of the city, the police killing of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and then of Todashev, and the deportation of the latter's closest friends from the US, is the strong possibility that the American military/intelligence apparatus either allowed the Boston attacks to occur in order to have a pretext for a trial run of martial law, or that Islamist forces with which intelligence agencies were working got out of control and the connections between the US government and terrorist groups threatened to come to light.



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