

One year since the Boston Marathon bombing

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One year ago today, two pressure cooker bombs exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing three people and wounding another 264. That criminal act became the occasion for an unprecedented state operation, in which for the first time a major American city was placed under de facto martial law.

Four days after the bombings, on April 19, 2013, the city of Boston and its surrounding communities were flooded with thousands of heavily armed police and National Guard troops. They occupied the streets, backed up by machine-gun mounted armored vehicles, Humvees and Black Hawk helicopters.

Residents of an area with a population of over one million were ordered to “shelter in place,” while police, with automatic weapons drawn, carried out warrantless house-to-house searches. Those who strayed out of doors were surrounded by police and instructed to go home. The mass transit system was shut down, passenger train service along the northeastern corridor was halted, and businesses, schools, universities and other public facilities were closed.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted at the time, the scene resembled the American occupation of Baghdad. The massive mobilization of federal, state and local police power was deployed, ostensibly, to track down one 19-year-old suspect.

The lockdown of Boston, the cradle of the American Revolution and the country’s leading center of higher education, lasted for the better part of a day. It began shortly after one of the suspects, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, a 26-year-old ethnic Chechen, was killed in an early morning shootout with police in Watertown, a Boston suburb. It ended shortly before his younger brother, Dzhokhar, was captured after being badly wounded by police bullets.

There was at the time no protest from within the political or media establishment against the suspension of democratic rights and military occupation of Boston. Few, if any, commentators noted the wildly disproportionate scale of the response—four days after the bombings—to the actual level of the threat, which suggested that the bombings were the pretext for, not the cause of, the lockdown.

Outside of the WSWs, virtually no one pointed out that the agreement of the entire establishment that democratic norms cannot be maintained in the face of violence by a handful of people testified to the advanced stage of the breakdown of American democracy.

One year later—despite the exposure of multiple advance warnings of the terrorist inclinations and jihadist sympathies of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and extensive contacts between the alleged bomber and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as the intervening revelations of a vast police state spying operation carried out by the National Security Agency (NSA)—no second thoughts on the events of April 19, 2013 are being expressed by the political or media establishment.

On the contrary, the transformation of Boston into a besieged city is being widely hailed as a brilliant “success” and model of efficient and effective anti-terror response. The run-up to the anniversary of the bombings has seen the release of a flurry of reports rubber-stamping the lockdown of the city and whitewashing the intelligence and police agencies’ failure to prevent the bombings, despite their extensive knowledge of Tsarnaev’s activities and direct contact with him and his family.

Last week, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released an internal report that lauded the response of federal and state agencies to the bombings. The report declares: “The City of Boston was well positioned to respond to emergency situations given the significant planning, exercises and training focused on similar, large-scale, complex events it had undertaken in recent years.”

The previous week, Harvard University’s Kennedy School published a report entitled “Why was Boston Strong?” that defends the “shelter-in-place” order as an appropriate and politically innocent means of locating and capturing Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and praised the police and troops for being “courteous and highly professional throughout the day.”

Also last week, the US inspector general of the intelligence community released a declassified version, substantially redacted, of an internal review of the role of the FBI, CIA, Homeland Security Department and other security and intelligence agencies in the period preceding the Boston bombings. The report noted the warnings issued by the Russian security agency FSB to both the FBI and CIA in 2011 of Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s radical jihadist politics and his intention to travel to Russia’s North Caucasus to link up with Islamist separatist and terrorist organizations there. It described the subsequent failure of US agencies to in any way hinder his six-month visit to Dagestan in 2012, despite his having been placed on a terrorist watch list, or even question him upon his

departure from the US or his return.

It also noted that the FBI agent in charge of investigating Tsarnaev and his mother in 2011, who officially closed the probe after having supposedly found no “derogatory information,” failed to ask Tsarnaev about his travel plans and “did not take certain steps during the assessment, including contacting local law enforcement, visiting the mosque that Tsarnaev attended, and conducting interviews of Tsarnaev’s wife, and the former girlfriend he had been arrested for assaulting in 2009, as well as other friends and associates.”

The report further pointed out that the FBI agent emailed an Immigration Services Officer in October 2012 saying, “There is no national security concern related to [Tsarnaev] and nothing that I know of that should preclude” approval of Tsarnaev’s application to become a naturalized US citizen. This is despite the fact that on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, September 11, 2011, Tsarnaev’s “best friend,” in his own words, was killed along with two other men in a triple slaying in the Boston suburb of Waltham. All three were Jewish.

Nevertheless, the report concluded that “the FBI, CIA, DHS and NCTC (National Counterterrorism Center) generally shared information and followed procedures appropriately.”

This followed a report released at the end of March by the House Committee on Homeland Security that made certain criticisms of the FBI and other agencies, but concluded that their failure to prevent the Boston bombings was another case—à la 9/11—of a failure to “connect the dots.”

Finally, there are the whitewashes issued last month by both the US Justice Department and the Florida state attorney absolving the FBI of any criminal liability in the killing of Ibragim Todashev, a friend of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and also a Chechen, who was shot to death by an FBI agent (whose name has never been released) while being questioned in his Florida apartment about his ties to Tsarnaev. The FBI now claims that both Tsarnaev and Todashev were involved in the Waltham triple slaying.

Why that event failed to alert the authorities as to the danger posed by Tsarnaev has never been explained. Nor have other anomalies and contradictions in the official story too numerous to list here.

That story is utterly implausible. Far more likely is the claim made by Tsarnaev’s mother and the defense lawyers for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev that the FBI sought to recruit the older brother as an informant and protected him so that he could promote Washington’s anti-Russian intrigues among Chechens and other Islamic minorities. This is buttressed by the fact that his uncle, Ruslan Tsarni, was the head of a CIA-linked organization that shipped supplies to anti-Russian insurgents in Chechnya. Foreign subversion aims would not preclude allowing the bombing plot to proceed in order to provide a pretext for testing out long-developed plans for imposing dictatorial rule within the US.

One year on, the analysis made by the WSWWS within days of

the bombings has been fully confirmed:

The events in Boston have laid bare the modus operandi for the establishment of dictatorial forms of rule in the US. One or another violent act carried out by disoriented or disaffected individuals, perhaps with the help of elements within the state, is declared a terrorist event. A state of siege is imposed suspending democratic rights and establishing military-police control.

So deeply implicated are all of the organs of the state in these plans that little in the outer trappings of political life would have to be changed. It would not be necessary to overthrow the president or shut down Congress. These institutions would readily play their assigned role, and the imposition of a military dictatorship would be sanctioned by the US Supreme Court.

The media would simply continue to do what it normally does—functioning as a de facto arm of the state and providing the necessary pretexts, while whipping up the requisite fear and panic within the public.

The basic causes of the breakdown of American democracy—the colossal growth of social inequality and the eruption of US militarism—have only grown more malignant in the intervening year. The social and class tensions in America—and the fear within the ruling class of social upheavals—have intensified, driving the financial-corporate elite further along the road to dictatorship.

The criminal foreign policy of American imperialism—including using Islamist terrorist forces from the Russian Caucasus in its war for regime-change in Syria and its drive to isolate and weaken Russia—continues to increase the danger of terrorist violence against civilians in the US.

It is necessary to draw the appropriate conclusions. Capitalism, which breeds inequality and war, is incompatible with democracy. It must be ended and replaced with socialism.



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