

# Tsarnaev found guilty on all counts in Boston bombing trial

Barry Grey  
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A Boston jury on Wednesday found Dzhokhar Tsarnaev guilty on all 30 counts laid against him in connection with the bomb blasts near the finish line of the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon, which killed three people and wounded another 264. The verdict followed 11 hours of deliberations over two days.

The dead included a 29-year-old restaurant manager, Krystle Campbell, who was watching her boyfriend run the marathon; Lingzi Lu, a 23-year-old Boston University graduate student from China; and eight-year-old Martin Richard, who was watching the race with his family. The dead boy's sister lost a limb as a result of the bomb detonated by Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, one of 17 people who lost limbs in the two blasts.

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's older brother Tamerlan, who was killed in a shootout with police on April 18, detonated the bomb that killed Campbell.

Tsarnaev was also convicted of murdering a Massachusetts Institute of Technology police officer three days after the bombings, when he and Tamerlan were seeking to flee in the face of a massive police dragnet.

Seventeen of the counts carry a possible death sentence, and the same jury of seven women and five men that convicted the 21-year-old Tsarnaev will hear arguments in the sentencing phase of the trial, expected to begin as early as next week and last two or more weeks.

That the defendant would be convicted on most, if not all, of the charges had not been in doubt. While Tsarnaev had pleaded not guilty, in both her opening and closing arguments in Federal District Court, the lead defense lawyer, Judy Clarke, had conceded that her client had participated in the bombings.

In her April 6 closing argument, Clarke told the jury: "We don't deny that [Dzhokhar] fully participated in

the events... When you go back to the jury room, we're not asking you to go easy on [Dzhokhar]. The horrific acts that we've heard about, the death, destruction and devastation that we've heard about, deserve to be condemned, and the time is now."

She argued, however, that the mastermind behind the bombings was Tamerlan, who had used his overweening influence to lure the younger Tsarnaev into the bombing plot. Clarke told the jury, "But if not for Tamerlan, it would not have happened."

From the start of the trial, which began March 4, the strategy of the defense team has been to concede their client's guilt while laying the basis for pleading extenuating circumstances in the second, sentencing phase of the proceedings. The goal is to convince at least one juror to reject a sentence of death by lethal injection, resulting in a penalty of life in prison without parole.

Of the 95 witnesses called in the course of 15 days of testimony, the prosecution called 92 and the defense only 3. The entire defense case in the first phase lasted barely 5 hours.

Massachusetts does not have a death penalty and there has traditionally been broad opposition to it within the state. The current proceeding, however, is a federal trial, which can result in execution.

The federal prosecutors are pressing for the death penalty. Their case in the first phase centered on graphic testimony from survivors, family members of victims and rescuers describing the carnage and suffering caused by the bombings. They argue that the younger Tsarnaev brother was no less motivated by Islamist jihadist ideology and no less involved in the planning and execution of the crime than Tamerlan.

There is no doubt that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is guilty of participating in a horrific crime. But the more

fundamental political issues in the bombing atrocity are being excluded from the voluminous media coverage of the trial and were not alluded to by the defense team in the first phase of the proceedings.

These relate to the response of the authorities to the bombings and unanswered questions concerning previous warnings received by the FBI and CIA about the terrorist sympathies of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, as well as extensive links between the FBI and CIA and the older brother, and the Tsarnaev family more generally.

The bombings became the occasion for a massive mobilization of police and military forces in Boston and its suburbs. A state of siege was imposed for most of April 19, ostensibly in pursuit of one 19-year-old suspect. Metropolitan Boston was occupied by heavily-armed police and National Guard troops.

They deployed in the streets, supported by armored vehicles, Humvees and Black Hawk helicopters. Residents were ordered to “shelter in place” while police, with automatic weapons drawn, carried out warrantless searches. The transit system was shut down, passenger train service was halted, and businesses, schools, universities and other public facilities were closed.

The Boston events had the character of a dry run for dictatorship. The virtual silence on this police state operation in the media commentary on the current trial is consistent with the lack of any significant criticism at the time from within the political or media establishment.

So too is the media silence on a host of unanswered questions about prior warnings and links between Tamerlan Tsarnaev and state agencies. These include:

\* Why did the FBI and CIA fail to respond to warnings from Russian security in 2011 and 2012 concerning Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s support for Islamist separatist and terrorist organizations in Russia’s North Caucasian regions? Why did they ignore Russia’s request that Tsarnaev, an ethnic Chechen, be prevented from traveling to these regions?

.\* Why did the FBI clear Tamerlan Tsarnaev of harboring terrorist sympathies in 2011 after supposedly carrying out an intensive investigation? Why did the agency claim there was no “derogatory” information against him, even though it suspected him of having participated in the Waltham, Massachusetts murder of three Jewish men on the tenth anniversary of the 9/11

attacks?

\* Why was Tamerlan Tsarnaev allowed to travel to Dagestan in January of 2012, without even being questioned at the airport? He remained there for six months and reportedly made contact with Islamist groups that have carried out terror attacks against Russian targets. Why was he allowed to return to the US without even being stopped at the airport and questioned on his return?

\* Why did the FBI, CIA and Homeland Security Department fail to inform their state and local counterparts on the Boston joint terrorism task force of their contacts with Tamerlan Tsarnaev prior to the Boston Marathon?

These unanswered questions suggest that US intelligence was seeking to use Tamerlan Tsarnaev to further its covert anti-Russian operations among Chechen and Dagestan separatists. These regions also supplied many of the foreign fighters recruited by the CIA for its proxy war for regime change against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Last year, defense lawyers for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev filed papers with the Federal District Court alleging that the FBI had tried to recruit Tamerlan as an informant. The defense has requested all information relating to the FBI’s investigation of Tamerlan, but the government has blocked the release of such documents.

There is another connection between the Tsarnaev family and US intelligence. Ruslan Tsarni, the uncle of the Tsarnaev brothers, ran a US group in the 1990s called the Congress of Chechen International Organizations, which helped supply anti-Russian insurgents in Chechnya with military equipment. The organization was registered at the home of his father-in-law, Graham Fuller.

Fuller had been vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the CIA under President Reagan and had worked for the agency in a number of countries, including serving as CIA station chief in Kabul.



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