

# Surveillance video of FBI shooting in Boston leaves unanswered questions

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A security recording released to the public Monday by the Boston Police Department (BPD) depicts the June 2 shooting of Usaama Rahim by members of the Boston Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Rahim was gunned down while on his way to work by an FBI agent and police officer who approached him without a warrant to question him about an alleged plot to commit “ISIS-inspired” terrorist acts in the city.

In the aftermath of Rahim’s death, media accounts breathlessly echoed claims by law enforcement that the suspect had been linked to a terrorist plot to “behead” police officers involving multiple plotters, citing suspicious social media activity as well as recorded statements he had made while under investigation. “This guy had malicious intent, and our officers were really faced with that,” Boston Police Commissioner William Evans told CNN after the video was released.

But rather than confirming claims by the FBI and police that Rahim had been involved in a terror plot and that when approached Rahim responded violently, unsheathing a machete-like weapon and lunging at the officers, the video—lacking audio, taken by a fast food security camera over 50 yards away and partially obscured by rainfall—shows no evidence of any aggression on the part of Rahim.

Rather, the video shows Rahim being approached by a group of plainclothes officers in a threatening manner, after which several seconds elapse before the victim’s body collapses to the pavement from what is assumed to be police gunshots.

“The video does not show Mr. Rahim possessing, holding, or brandishing a weapon of any sort, much less a knife,” declares a statement released by lawyers representing Rahim’s family. “The video does not show Mr. Rahim plotting, scheming, or planning an attack on law enforcement officers. To the contrary, the

video depicts Mr. Rahim walking toward a bus stop on the way to work.”

The statement goes on to note that “whatever the public, law enforcement, or the courts ultimately conclude about Mr. Rahim’s alleged involvement with illegal activity, important questions central to our democratic traditions remain. We do not live in a police state or totalitarian country.”

A comment published by the *Intercept* notes “a profoundly disturbing aspect of this incident” in which “the police can now accost someone in the street who, by all accounts, was doing nothing wrong at that moment, kill him, and then just scream ‘ISIS’ and ‘Terrorist’ and ‘beheading’ enough times and no real questions will be asked.”

Rather than resolve questions about Rahim’s alleged terrorist sympathies and behavior leading to his death, the video leaves significant questions unresolved. Why hadn’t extensive police surveillance of the suspect produced enough evidence of his wrongdoing to result in a warrant for his arrest? Why did members of the JTTF attempt to accost a supposedly dangerous suspect in a busy public area, where someone was sure to be harmed?

Claims that Rahim had expressed sympathy for Islamic extremism on social media are also undermined by his previous statements publicly denouncing violence. According to The Associated Press, the suspect declared on a Facebook post that “killing people is anti-Islamic... we do not fight evil with that which causes a greater evil.” In a Facebook post dated November 7, 2012, in which he speaks of US government attempts to monitor and speak to him without a warrant, Rahim warns that “[the U.S. government will] have you making statements about things that could get you jail-time, [things] that in fact,

you were preaching AGAINST i.e., violence and terrorism.”

Since 9/11, the high-profile “foiling” of terrorist plots, which later turn out to have been entirely fabricated or even instigated by police provocateurs, have served the function of whipping up a political atmosphere of fear and paranoia, in order to justify ongoing wars abroad under the fraudulent framework of the “war on terror.”

FBI officials in Boston had extensive contact with Boston Marathon bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev before the 2013 attack that killed 4 and wounded 264 others. Last year, defense lawyers for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was sentenced to death in April for his involvement in the bombing, filed papers with the U.S. District Court alleging that the FBI had tried to recruit Tamerlan as an informant in the period leading to the 2013 attack.

The killing of Rahim raises troubling parallels with the May 2013 killing of Ibragim Todashev by the FBI. Interrogators claimed that Todashev, an associate of Tsarnaev, had attempted to attack his interrogators with a knife. It later emerged that Todashev was unarmed and had been shot execution-style by FBI agents.



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