

The Istanbul terror attack, the Boston Marathon bombings and the Chechen connection

Nick Barrickman
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The June 28 triple suicide bombing at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport, which claimed 44 lives and injured another 230 people, raises numerous questions regarding the murky and sinister relations between Western intelligence agencies and anti-Russian jihadists recruited from the North Caucasus to fight for the Islamic State and other terrorist groups.

Akhmed Chatayev, a 35-year old Chechen Islamist, has been named by Turkish authorities as the alleged planner of the attacks in Istanbul. The three suicide bombers are said by Turkish officials to have been from the Russian republic of Dagestan and the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

This points to the prominent role being played by members of CIA-backed armed separatist groups in Chechnya and Dagestan in the US-orchestrated war for regime-change in Syria, Russia's only Arab ally in the Middle East and the home of a critical Russian naval base. Chechens and other Northern Caucasians are also playing leading roles in US-backed anti-Russian militias in the civil war in eastern Ukraine.

According to Russian officials, there are as many as 7,000 fighters from former Soviet republics among the anti-government forces in Syria.

US officials have revealed that Chatayev was a top lieutenant in the Islamic State's armed wing, overseeing several hundred Russian-speaking fighters in northern Syria. In 2003, he obtained Austrian citizenship and a passport after being released from a Russian prison. According to the Swedish *Kristianstadsbladet*, he was sentenced to 16 months imprisonment in 2008 for attempting to smuggle arms in Sweden, for which he served only 10 months. Chatayev disappeared after serving time in a Georgian

prison in 2012, resurfacing last year in Syria as a leading operative of the Islamic State.

"He's... probably the number one enemy in the Northern Caucasus region of Russia. He's traveled to Syria on many occasions and became one of the top lieutenants for the minister of war for ISIS operations," said US House Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Michael McCaul in an interview with CNN.

Yet, like the perpetrators of the recent ISIS attacks in Paris and Brussels, who were well known to French, Belgian and European police and intelligence agencies but were allowed to move back and forth without hindrance between the Middle East and Europe as part of the Western regime-change operation in Syria, Chatayev to all appearances enjoyed the protection of US intelligence.

Overwhelmingly, the victims of such imperialist operations and the reactionary jihadist forces mobilized by Washington to carry them out are unarmed civilians, whether in mass killings in countries such as Syria or terrorist atrocities in other parts of the world, such as the attacks in Paris, Brussels and Istanbul.

There is ample evidence that the unholy alliance of US intelligence agencies with anti-Russian jihadist elements in the North Caucasus has also produced at least one fatal terror attack within the borders of the United States—the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, which killed three people and wounded 264 others.

The perpetrators of that attack, the brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, were of Chechen descent. Contrary to US government officials' self-serving claims that the bombings at the finish line of the marathon in downtown Boston were yet another

example of the FBI and CIA failing to “connect the dots,” there is a considerable evidence that the older brother, Tamerlan, if not an active agent of US intelligence, was being groomed to serve as a possible “penetration agent” against US-targeted governments, including that of the Russian Federation.

Dzhokhar was sentenced to death in 2015 for his role in the bombings, while Tamerlan was killed in a shootout with police several days after the attack occurred.

According to court statements by lawyers representing Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the FBI made attempts to recruit Tamerlan “to be an informant, reporting on the Chechen and Muslim community” in the New England area. Prior to the bombings, Tamerlan Tsarnaev had been the subject of several threat assessments conducted by the FBI after the FBI and CIA received warnings from Russian and Saudi intelligence of Tsarnaev’s terrorist leanings.

The first assessment occurred in summer of 2011. FBI investigators monitored Tsarnaev’s telephone conversations and Internet activities and conducted interviews with the suspect and his family. After several months, the case was shut, with the investigators reporting they had found nothing suspicious. A 2014 comment published in the *Boston Globe* by House Committee on Homeland Security members McCaul and Bill Keating asserted, “Had even a simple Internet search been performed, Tsarnaev’s increased posting of radical propaganda would have been uncovered.”

A second threat assessment was opened in late 2011 after several more warnings from Russian intelligence, which requested that it be notified if Tamerlan Tsarnaev attempted to travel to Russia. Tsarnaev was allowed to do just that, boarding a flight in early 2012 from New York’s Kennedy Airport to Russia, where he remained for over six months and attempted to establish contact with anti-Russian Islamist circles in Dagestan.

This occurred despite Tsarnaev having been placed on an FBI “no fly” list, with explicit directions to “detain and immediately call the lookout duty officer at NTC [National Counter-Terrorism Center]” should he attempt to leave the country. Not only was he not blocked from flying, he was neither detained nor questioned either upon leaving the US or returning

from Russia’s North Caucasus.

This was despite official suspicions that Tamerlan Tsarnaev was involved in a grisly triple homicide that occurred in the Boston suburb of Waltham on September 11, 2011, the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The FBI posthumously named the older Tsarnaev brother as a prime suspect in the killings.

Finally, there is the role played by Ruslan Tsarni, the uncle of Dzhokhar and Tamerlan. During the 1990s, Tsarni ran supplies to anti-Russian rebels in the Northern Caucasus through his Congress of Chechen International Organizations, an outfit run from the suburban Maryland home of Tsarni’s father-in-law, former National Intelligence Council Vice Chairman Graham Fuller. Fuller worked as CIA station chief in Kabul in the 1980s, aiding the agency’s efforts to overthrow the Soviet-backed Afghan regime utilizing Islamist jihadist forces, including Osama bin Laden.



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