

# **Pulse nightclub shooter's father was an FBI informant**

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Seddique Mateen, the father of Omar Mateen, the 29-year-old security guard who carried out the 2016 Pulse LGBT nightclub shooting in Orlando, one of the worst mass shootings in modern American history, had been a confidential FBI informant for more than a decade, it was revealed this weekend in a court filing. Court testimony also showed that the FBI had considered turning the younger Mateen into an asset several years before the attack.

Since Omar Mateen was killed in a hail of police gunfire, a precise motive for the attack has not been determined, despite early reports which indicated that he may have been motivated by homophobic sentiments or that he had specifically targeted Pulse due to his familiarity with the club. Additionally, Mateen had claimed during negotiations with the police to have carried out the attack in the name of the Islamic State, a fact which was used to promote an escalation of American military operations in the Middle East, but no ties to the organization have been uncovered.

The information about Seddique's relationship with the FBI was revealed in a motion filed by an attorney for Noor Salman, Omar Mateen's wife, for the case against her to be dismissed over her father-in-law's undisclosed relationship with the government. Salman is currently on trial for allegedly aiding and abetting Omar Mateen in killing 49 people and wounding 58 others. She faces the prospect of life in prison.

What has been revealed in the course of the Salman trial is that the attack shares many similarities to other incidents in which the perpetrators were well known to the state or were mentally unstable individuals entrapped by the FBI into carrying out false terror plots concocted by state agents and informants.

Prosecutors had withheld the fact of Seddique's relationship with the FBI from the defense until after

they had rested their case against Salman last week. The government has worked to paint Salman as complicit in the crime based on initial written statements to investigators declaring that she had helped Mateen stake out the night club while deflecting attention from Seddique, including refusing to call him as a witness in the trial.

The defense has presented evidence based on cell phone location data and receipts that Salman was never in the area of the Pulse nightclub and that she had been compelled after hours of interrogation into signing statements written on her behalf by investigators. An FBI agent testified during the trial that they had known within days of the shooting that Salman's statement about staking out the club was false.

The elder Mateen, who was born in Afghanistan and immigrated to the United States in the late 1980s, had served as a source for the FBI between January 2005 and June 2016.

The FBI opened an investigation into Seddique and apparently terminated their relationship with him in the wake of the nightclub shooting, when a search of his home turned up receipts for money transfers to Turkey and Afghanistan made in the week before the shooting.

The motion also stated that the government had received an anonymous tip in November 2012 that Seddique had sought to raise \$50,000 to \$100,000 to fund an attack on the Pakistani government. There is no indication that the FBI sought to stop him or cut off their relationship after receiving this report.

Salman's defense team argued in their appeal for a dismissal that, if they had known about the father's connection to the FBI and the money transfers, they would have "investigated whether a tie existed between Seddique Mateen and his son, specifically whether Mateen's father was involved in or had foreknowledge

of the Pulse attack.”

In fact, prosecutors also withheld information showing that Mateen had used his status as an informant to intervene successfully on his son’s behalf during a 10-month investigation between May 2013 and March 2014 after the younger Mateen had allegedly boasted to co-workers about having connections to Al Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah.

Omar Mateen was interviewed three times by the FBI and local law enforcement, interacted a dozen times with confidential informants and was physically tracked by undercover agents on a daily basis. He told the FBI that he had claimed to belong to the three organizations because he was being harassed at work. Despite admitting that he had lied to FBI agents in a written statement, the agency decided to officially close the investigation into Omar and declare that he was not a threat.

FBI Special Agent Juvenal Martin testified on Monday that he had worked as Seddique’s handler on the ground in Florida since 2006, and had also considered grooming the son as a government informant after finding that he did not actually have any ties to Islamist organizations.

The details that are emerging about the Mateens bears more than a certain similarity with the relations uncovered following the 2014 Boston Marathon bombing, which was carried out by Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, brothers from Kyrgyzstan who grew up in the United States. In that instance, the brothers were known to the FBI through a tipoff from Russian intelligence. They also had a family connection to the CIA through their uncle Ruslan Tsarni who ran supplies to Islamist separatists in Chechnya through an outfit registered at the home of his father-in-law, Graham Fuller, a retired high-level CIA agent.

There are many questions that remain about what exactly Seddique Mateen was doing during his decade as an informant for the FBI and why he was retained as an asset, despite reportedly raising money for an attack in Pakistan. It is significant to note that Mateen hosted a program on a US-based Afghan satellite channel titled “The Durand Jirga Show” in which he advocated for the unification of Pashtuns on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. He also presented himself as the head of a “transitional revolutionary government” of

Afghanistan while dressed in military fatigues in videos posted on social media.



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