



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 22, 2013

Russian FSB Reportedly Contacted FBI About Tamerlan Tsarnaev

The FSB — Russia's primary domestic security agency and successor to the old Soviet KGB — informed the FBI in early 2011 that it had information indicating that Tamerlan Tsarnaev (shown, left), the elder brother suspected in the Boston Marathon bombings, was a follower of radical Islam, said two law enforcement officials on April 20.



An AP report carried by the *Washington Post* said that the two officials, presumably with the FBI, spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to be quoted on the record about the matter. The newspaper noted that although the FBI did not name the foreign government, the two law enforcement officials identified the FSB as the source of the information provided to one of the FBI's field offices and also to FBI headquarters in Washington.

An [FBI news release](#) issued on April 19, headlined "2011 Request for Information on Tamerlan Tsarnaev from Foreign Government," provided the following details:

Once the FBI learned the identities of the two brothers today, the FBI reviewed its records and determined that in early 2011, a foreign government asked the FBI for information about Tamerlan Tsarnaev. The request stated that it was based on information that he was a follower of radical Islam and a strong believer, and that he had changed drastically since 2010 as he prepared to leave the United States for travel to the country's region to join unspecified underground groups.

In response to this 2011 request, the FBI checked U.S. government databases and other information to look for such things as derogatory telephone communications, possible use of online sites associated with the promotion of radical activity, associations with other persons of interest, travel history and plans, and education history. The FBI also interviewed Tamerlan Tsarnaev and family members. The FBI did not find any terrorism activity, domestic or foreign, and those results were provided to the foreign government in the summer of 2011. The FBI requested but did not receive more specific or additional information from the foreign government.

[CBS News](#) correspondent John Miller reported that it is likely that Russia asked to have Tsarnaev vetted by the FBI because it suspected he had ties to Chechen extremists. The investigation included an interview with Tsarnaev. According to Miller, the investigation most likely produced a written report that the FBI would have sent to the Russian government.

According to CBS, the FBI initially denied contacting Tsarnaev, but this apparently changed after his



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mother, Zubeidat Tsarnaeva, said they had contacted her son in an interview with Russia Today (RT).

[Mrs. Tsarnaeva](#), speaking with typical maternal deniability concerning Tamerlan's actions, said in her interview with RT: "My son would never do this. It is a set-up." Her next statement went beyond the *atypical*, however:

He was controlled by FBI for like, three, five years. They knew what my son was doing. They knew what actions and what sites on the Internet he was going. He used to come home, they used to come and talk to me. They used to tell me that, you know, that they are controlling his — they were telling me that he's really a serious leader and they're afraid of him. They said, they told me that whatever he is, whatever country decides, whatever is there, whatever information he's getting, they are controlling him, so how could this happen? How could they — they were controlling every step of him, and they're telling today that this is a terrorist act. Never, ever! This is not true. My two sons are innocent.

A [writer for RT](#) speculated about the FBI's surveillance of Tsarnaev, linking to a video featuring Fox News analyst Judge Andrew Napolitano talking about the "FBI Fake Terror Plot History":

It would be indeed strange to suggest somebody so closely watched by the FBI could have plotted terrorist acts without setting off alarm bells. The FBI, however, has in the past been accused of enticing socially-alloof Muslims into plotting a terror act and then "disclosing" and jailing them, claiming they just saved the world from another villain (watch Fox News [report](#)). Could it be another such case that went incredibly wrong?

Of course, it is impossible to determine, at this point, if any such relationship between the Tsarnaev brothers and the FBI existed, beyond the admitted interview of Tamerlan.

As the FBI works to put together its case against Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (shown, right), the younger brother who is in the hospital in police custody as he recovers from wounds sustained in the brothers' stand-off with police, President Obama has asked Russian President Putin for Russian cooperation in the investigation.

A readout of Obama's phone conversation was posted on the [White House website](#), stating:

President Obama spoke by phone tonight with President Putin of Russia. President Putin expressed his condolences on behalf of the Russian people for the tragic loss of life in Boston. President Obama thanked President Putin for those sentiments, and praised the close cooperation that the United States has received from Russia on counter-terrorism, including in the wake of the Boston attack. The two leaders agreed to continue our cooperation on counter-terrorism and security issues going forward.

The Tsarnaev brothers suspected in the bombing were ethnic Chechens who lived in Russia's Dagestan region before moving to the United States with their family 10 years ago.

An interesting aspect of the case was reported on April 22 by the [Atlantic Wire](#), which noted that Tamerlan Tsarnaev left the United States [for six months last year](#), and spent part of that time in Dagestan, a federal subject of Russia located between Chechnya and the Caspian Sea. The brothers' father, Anzor Tsarnaev, lives in Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala.

What makes this of interest, notes the report, is that Makhachkala was the home of Abu Dujana, who was believed to have links to several separatist movements in the region, including a number of Chechen terrorist groups. Dujana and several of his associates were killed by Russian security forces in



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a firefight last December. Some have theorized that because Tsarnaev's YouTube channel had linked to videos of online speeches by Dujana, that Tsarnaev may have regarded him as a heroic figure.

In a report in the [Business Insider](#) headlined "The Mystery Of Tamerlan Tsarnaev's Trip To Dagestan" posted on April 20, the writer, Adam Taylor, noted that the FBI questioned Tamerlan before the trip, at the request of a country (widely presumed to have been Russia) "based on information that he was a follower of radical Islam and a strong believer, and that he had changed drastically since 2010 as he prepared to leave the United States for travel to the country's region to join unspecified underground groups."

Taylor asks, rhetorically, "Could Tamerlan have met up with radical groups while he was in Dagestan and Chechnya?" He then summarizes the speculation: "Even if he did not actively meet with any extremist groups in Russia, there are some signs that he may have idolized them," and points to the two videos on a playlist called "terrorists" that Tsarnaev had linked to, including the one featuring the late Abu Dujana (who was also known as Gadzhimurad Dolgatov).

As the investigation into what (or who) motivated the Tsarnaev brothers to launch their deadly attack, federal prosecutors went to Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's room at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital today and charged him with using a weapon of mass destruction to kill — a federal crime that carries a possible death sentence.

[CBS News](#) cited a statement from White House spokesman Jay Carney that since Tsarnaev is a naturalized U.S. citizen, and that under U.S. law, American citizens cannot be tried by military tribunals, he will be tried in a federal civilian court.

Since many questions remain about the motivations of the Tsarnaev brothers, and whether they acted alone or in association with others, it serves the interest of finding that truth and recording this infamous event correctly in the history books that at least one of the brothers has lived to face charges in open court, where questions may be freely asked and answered.

Photo of Tamerlan Tsarnaev (left) and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (right): AP Images



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