

Jury Convicts Man of Impeding Boston Marathon Bombing Investigation

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A federal jury in Boston has convicted a friend of alleged Boston Marathon bomber, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, for impeding the bombing investigation.

Assistant Attorney General John P. Carlin of the Justice Department's National Security Division, U.S. Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz of the District of Massachusetts and Special Agent in Charge Vincent B. Lisi of the FBI's Boston Field Division, made the announcement today.

The jury found Azamat Tazhayakov, 20, guilty of conspiring to obstruct justice and obstructing justice with the intent to impede the Boston Marathon bombing investigation. U.S. District Judge Douglas P. Woodlock scheduled sentencing for October 16, 2014.

In August 2013, Tazhayakov was indicted for obstructing a terrorism investigation. Tazhayakov is a national of Kazakhstan who was temporarily living in the United States on a student visa while attending the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, but at the time of his arrest his visa had been revoked.

The evidence at trial proved that on April 18, 2013, after the release of photographs of the two men suspected of carrying out the Marathon bombings (who were later identified as Tamerlan Tsarnaev and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev), Tazhayakov and others went to Tsarnaev's dormitory room and found items that linked Tsarnaev to the bombing, including fireworks from which "gunpowder" appeared to have been removed and a jar of Vaseline that they believed could be used to make bombs. A forensic examiner testified that Vaseline can be used to make improvised explosive devices. A month before the bombing, Tsarnaev had told Tazhayakov that it would be good to die as shaheed (martyr) and that he knew how to build a bomb. Tsarnaev also identified specific ingredients one could use to make a bomb, including "gunpowder."

After searching Tsarnaev's dormitory room on the evening of April 18, 2013, Tazhayakov helped remove Tsarnaev's laptop and a backpack containing fireworks, a jar of Vaseline, and a thumb drive. Later that night while Tazhayakov was monitoring the manhunt for the Tsarnaev brothers, he discussed getting rid of the backpack containing the fireworks and agreed to get rid of it. The backpack was then placed in a garbage bag and then thrown into a dumpster outside Tazhayakov's New Bedford apartment. The FBI recovered this backpack a week later, after 25 agents spent two days searching a landfill in New Bedford.

The charging statute provides a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison on the obstruction of justice count and five years on the conspiracy count, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000 for each charge. Tazhayakov will also be deported at the conclusion of this prosecution. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

This investigation was conducted by the FBI's Boston Division and member agencies of the Boston Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) which is comprised of more than 30 federal, state and local enforcement agencies. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, Massachusetts State Police, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Department of Public Safety, New Bedford Police Department, Dartmouth Police Department, U.S. Department of Transportation – Office of Inspector General, U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), Essex County Sheriff's Office, and Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations, provided assistance to this investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys B. Stephanie Siegmann and John A. Capin of Ortiz's Anti-Terrorism and National Security Unit with assistance from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.

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