

THE GIRLFRIEND DETENTION METHOD OF COERCION

Remember Ibragim Todashev, the friend of Tamerlan Tsarnaev the FBI shot with pathetically inconsistent explanation?

A woman claiming to be his live-in girlfriend, Tatiana Gruzdeva, of the time has spoken to the press for the first time. There's a lot that's interesting in the account, including that she appears to have come forward to draw attention to the arrest of a Tajik friend, Ashurmamad Miraliev, on Wednesday.

But I wanted to point to what appears to be her several month detention that appears to have been at least, in part, an attempt to coerce Todashev.

One day, the FBI called Todashev back to their office again. Gruzdeva went with him and waited in the lobby, she said. That's when an agent she recognized approached her and asked to talk.

"And I already saw him a couple times so it was normal, so I told him, 'I'm waiting for Ibragim,'" she told me. "And he said, 'So what? It's just going to be a couple minutes. He knows about it.'" So she went with him to an office. Another agent joined them, she said. Then, she says, they questioned her for three hours.

"They asked me again and again about Ibragim and all this stuff. They asked me, 'Can you tell us when he will do something?' I said, 'No! I can't!' Because he wasn't doing anything, and I didn't know anything. And they said, 'Oh, really? So why don't we call immigration.'"

Gruzdev told me that she is from Tiraspol, a town in the former Soviet country of Moldova. She had come to America in 2012 on a student work visa, which had since expired. "I said, 'Come on guys, you cannot do this! You know my visa was expired and you didn't do anything. And now because you need me and I say I don't want to help you, you just call to immigration?' And they said, 'Yeah, that's right.' And they called immigration and immigration came and they put me in the jail."

When Todashev discovered FBI had detained her, according to Gruzdeva, they mocked him.

For the first week, Gruzdeva told me, she was kept in an immigration detention facility. She was allowed to talk to Todashev every day on the phone. She said he told her that when he had come to find her in the lobby the day she was detained, FBI agents mocked him, saying "Where's your girlfriend?"

She said the mocking infuriated Todashev. "He said, 'I want to hit them because I was so mad, why they lie to me? They stole you.'"

The morning after FBI killed Todashev, they moved Gruzdeva from ICE to County detention, but waited a day to tell her of his death.

On May 22, Gruzdeva said, she was transferred from immigration jail to a cell in Glades County Jail in Moore Haven, Florida. There, she said, she was placed in solitary confinement.

"I thought I would be released, because I don't have any crime, I don't have any charges, I was clear," she said. She asked why she had been moved. "And they just said, 'Oh we cannot tell you, we'll tell you tomorrow in the morning.'"

She did not know it yet, but that was the day Todashev had been fatally shot by the FBI.

The next morning, she said, immigration officers and “other officers” came to her cell.

“They said, ‘He’s dead.’

“I said, ‘That’s not true. I just saw him a couple days ago and I talked with him yesterday. He cannot be dead.’

“They said, ‘He died yesterday.’

She was released on August 8 (which strikes me as odd) and is now in line for a work authorization (again, odd). She ignored the Boston Magazine reporter (who was friends with one of the Waltham victims) until Wednesday, when her friend Miraliev was arrested.

The whole story is fascinating (though still largely based on her side of the story).

But if true, it suggests they were using her to pressure Todashev in the week before FBI killed him.

Promise, though, the FBI really did obtain his confession to the Waltham murders willingly, just seconds before they shot him.

Update: In related news, the Intelligence Community, DOJ, CIA, and Homeland Security Inspectors General aren’t ready to release their report about how the Boston attack was missed.