

THE DOG ATE CHARLES MCCULLOUGH'S HOMEWORK

Let's take the narrative the Federal Government wants to tell us about the Boston Marathon attack.

Both FBI and CIA got tips from Russia in early- and mid-2011 implicating Tamerlan Tsarnaev in extremism which FBI, which appropriately has jurisdiction, investigated and entered into the relevant databases accessible to Joint Terrorism Task Force partners.

Later that year, the government alleges (based on the word of a guy they killed immediately thereafter), Tamerlan and Ibragim Todashev – and possibly Tamerlan's brother Dzhokhar – knifed three friends and associates to death on 9/11 while they waited for pizza from a place the brothers may have once worked; while several of the people on both sides of that killing were involved in selling drugs, the presumed motive for that killing (especially given the date) pertains to Islamic extremism, not a drug and money dispute, in spite of or perhaps because of the pot and money left at the scene. After the killing, Tamerlan disappeared from the scene in Cambridge and was never interviewed by the cops. Senate Intelligence Committee members allege Russia passed on another warning about Tamerlan after October 2011, though the FBI insists it kept asking for more information to no avail.

The next year, Tamerlan left for Russia and Chechnya and Dagestan, but the Homeland Security dragnet missed him because Aeroflot misspelled his name (an issue that contributed to their missing the UndieBomb, too; Russia's original tip to the FBI had gotten his birthdate wrong). While in Russia, Tamerlan met a bunch of Chechen extremists, several of whom were killed shortly after he met them. Then, Tamerlan returned to Boston, and he and his brother made some bombs

out of pressure cookers and fireworks in his Cambridge flat (testimony of their cab driver notwithstanding), and then set them off near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing 3 and maiming hundreds.

In spite of the thousands of videos of the event, FBI's prior investigation, and immigration records on the brothers including pictures, the government's facial recognition software proved unable to find them (in spite of claims "FBI" officials were asking around Cambridge already), so the government released their pictures and set off a manhunt that resulted in Tamerlan's death and the arrest of Dzhokhar.

That's the story, right?

Two weeks after the attack, James Clapper tasked the Intelligence Community Inspector General, Charles McCullough, with investigating the attack to see if it could have been prevented (note, after the 2009 UndieBomb attack, the Senate Intelligence Committee conducted such an investigation but I've heard no peep of them doing so here). Also involved in that investigation are DOJ, DHS, and CIA's IG, but not NSA's IG, in spite of the fact that the Russians, at least, reportedly intercepted international texts implicating Tamerlan in planning jihad (though there's no reason to believe the non-US side of those texts – a family member of the brothers' mother – would have been a known CT target). (Note that, even as McCullough has been conducting this investigation, which ultimately involves information that has been leaked to the press, James Clapper has him conducting investigations into unauthorized leaks – does anyone else see the huge conflict here???)

Back on September 19 (perhaps not coincidentally the day after Ibragim Todashev's friend Ashurмамad Miraliev was arrested in FL and questioned for 6 hours without a lawyer), McCullough wrote Congress to tell them that because "information relevant to the review is

still being provided to the review team," the review would be indefinitely delayed.

According to the BoGlo, McCullough is offering a new excuse for further delay: the shutdown.

Officials said the shutdown has hampered various agencies' ability to conduct interviews, undertake research, or pay support personnel who are responsible for reviewing the operations of the government's terrorism databases before the Marathon attack and determining whether information on the bombing suspects was properly handled.

[snip]

Last month congressional oversight communities were informed that while officials were "working diligently" to complete the review, the process of interviewing counter-terrorism officials and reviewing computer files had turned out to be more challenging than expected. McCullough, the intelligence community's inspector general, said at the time that "information relevant to the review is still being provided to the review teams."

A senior Senate staffer, who was not authorized to speak publicly, said briefings recently scheduled for intelligence officials to brief key congressional committees on the progress of the review were canceled.

So here we are over 6 months after the attack, and an inquiry purportedly reviewing whether our CT information sharing (led by the National Counterterrorism Center, which reports to Clapper, to whom McCullough also reports as a non-independent IG) did what it was supposed to, is still having trouble reviewing the actual databases (!?!?), ostensibly because they had to furlough the support people doing that rather than allow them to figure out how to fix

problems to prevent the next terrorist attack.
(Remember, James Clapper testified he had
furloughed 70% of civilian IC staff, to the
shock of Chuck Grassley and others.)

Perhaps that's the problem. Perhaps it is the
case that in 6 months time, IC support personnel
had not yet been able to access and assess the
database counterterrorism professionals are
expected to monitor and respond to almost
instantaneously. If that is the case, it, by
itself, ought to be huge news.

Or perhaps there's something about the Waltham
investigation that has made it newly
embarrassing that warnings before and – if
blathery Senators are to be believed – after the
murders didn't focus more attention on Tamerlan
Tsarnaev.