

## **Two Kazaks Charged in Boston Case**

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Court hears that they hid evidence to protect the younger Tsarnaev brother.

Two students from Kazakhstan have been formally charged with covering up evidence relating to the April 15 Boston bombings.

Dias Kadyrbayev and Azamat Tazhayakov were charged with conspiring to obstruct justice at the May 1 hearing in a Boston court. A United States national, Robel Phillipos, was charged with making false statements to investigators.

Kadyrbayev and Tazhayakov were taken into custody on April 20, a day after Tamerlan Tsarnaev was killed and his brother Jokhar captured in a massive police operation that shut the city down. They were initially questioned as acquaintances of Jokhar Tsarnaev, but were then detained in relation to possible violations of US immigration laws.

US officials and Kazakhstan foreign ministry confirmed this much, but did not identify Kadyrbayev or Tazhayakov at that point.

Now federal officers are accusing them of getting rid of evidence to protect Jokhar Tsarnaev after the fact. The two bombs killed three people and injured 260 in a crowd that had gathered to watch the Boston marathon.

Soon after their initial detention, Tazhayakov and Kadyrbayev were named on social media sites in Kazakhstan, and the latter was pictured.

Kadyrbayev's page on the Russian social networking site Vkontakte indicated that he was from Almaty, Kazakhstan's commercial centre and former capital in the southeast. He attended a prestigious state boarding school for gifted pupils specialising in mathematics and physics.

Tazhayakov's page offered less information, but showed his home town as Atyrau in the oil-rich west of Kazakhstan.

It is unsurprising that students from two Muslim nations of the former Soviet Union, and with Russian as a common language, might be drawn to each other. Beyond that, the charges compiled by US investigators do not suggest the two Kazaks were involved in Islamic radicalism or in planning.

Nevertheless, attention will inevitably turn to Kazakhstan and recent violent incidents in which radical Islam is said to have played a part.

In May 2011, a man blew himself up at a security service office in the western city of Aktobe. The following month, a manhunt following the death two policemen in the same region ended in a firefight and a total of 12 deaths.

Although not directly linked, the suicide bombing and the subsequent clashes both involved men who were devout Muslims and attended mosques that were not part of the state-controlled mainstream – something the authorities see as tantamount to radicalism.

Interviewed by IWPR at the time, local newspaper editor Azamat Maitanov confirmed that many Kazaks in the west of the country had joined Islamist groups. These were fractured and numerous, he said, with ideologies ranging from simple observance of the dress code to advocating jihad. (Read the interview here: **[West Kazakhstan Under Growing Islamic Influence](#)**.)

Later in 2011, a suspected Islamic militant went on the rampage in the southern city of Taraz, killing seven people and finally himself. In 2012, the authorities also blamed a number of smaller incidents on violent extremists.

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