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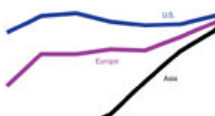


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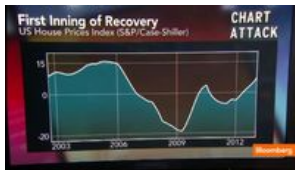


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A photo, showing Tamerlan Tsarnaev as a baby, accompanied by his father Anzor, left, mother Zubeidat and uncle Muhamad Suleimanov, right, in this photo courtesy of the Suleimanova family in Makhachkala, April 22, 2013. Photograph: Suleimanov Family via Landov

Bloomberg News

Tamerlan Tsarnaev's Family Crumbled Before Boston Bombs

By Julie Bykowicz, Annie Linskey and Prashant Gopal
April 23, 2013

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Tamerlan Tsarnaev attracted attention around the boxing rings he loved. In 2009, it was for showing up at a Golden Gloves tournament in leather pants and snakeskin boots. About a year later, it was for kneeling beside a gym treadmill on a prayer blanket.

“Every fighter, no matter what their belief is, prays before a fight,” said Julian Pollard, 31, a professional heavyweight boxer from Brockton, Massachusetts, who knew him during that time. “He talked about his faith 10 times more than I’d ever heard him talk about it before.”

Tsarnaev is now dead at 26, following a shootout with police after the Boston Marathon bombings that killed three and injured more than 200 on April 15. His 19-year-old brother, Dzhokhar, faces possible execution for the attack, one of the highest-profile acts of terrorism since Sept. 11, 2001. It was a violent nadir for the troubled family of ethnic Chechens living in a third-floor apartment at 410 Norfolk St. in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In 2009, Tsarnaev was charged with assaulting a live-in girlfriend. Another woman, whom he married in 2010, worked 80-hour weeks as Tsarnaev cared for their child. He stopped boxing -- and in 2011, a close friend in the sport had his throat cut.

That same year, parents Anzor and Zubeidat Tsarnaev, who came to the U.S. about a decade ago to find a better life for their two boys and two girls, divorced. Zubeidat Tsarnaeva left the U.S. for Russia while facing shoplifting charges filed last year. Her husband did likewise.

Angry Noise

At the family’s apartment yesterday, a third-story storm window was shattered and dangling from its frame and a side walkway was littered with trash, mildewed luggage and construction debris.

Tsarnaev had lived there since 2002, according to public records, when the family immigrated. It was described on a blog by one visitor, Alyssa Lindley Kilzer, as “filled with noises of arguing.”

Zubeidat Tsarnaeva, 45, who about six years ago stopped working at a Boston-area spa, used the space as a makeshift salon. She gave facials, according to the post by Kilzer, a former customer.

In one session, Tsarnaeva started relating a conspiracy theory, saying she thought the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon were created by the U.S. government to foment hatred for Muslims.

“My son knows all about it,” Tsarnaeva said, according to the blog. “You can read about it on the Internet.”

Unconfronted Charges

In 2011, Zubeidat and Anzor Tsarnaev, 47, ended their 25-year marriage, divorce records show. The couple had no personal property to divide, no retirement or pension benefits and no real estate. They gave the reason for their split as “irretrievable breakdown of the marriage” with “no chance of reconciling our differences.”

In June, Tsarnaeva was accused of trying to steal seven designer dresses, valued at \$1,600, from a Lord & Taylor department store in suburban Natick. She skipped bail and, in October, a court issued a warrant for her arrest.

As Tsarnaeva’s marriage dissolved, her husband returned to Russia. Their four children remained in the U.S.

The sisters, Bella and Ailina Tsarnaeva, range in age between Tamerlan and Dzhokhar, who is known as Jahar.

The boys attended Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, a public high school. Tamerlan Tsarnaev applied for admission to the University of Massachusetts Boston for fall 2006 and was rejected, a person familiar with the application said, and he turned to boxing with a passion.

Exhibitionist Exerciser

In Cambridge, Tamerlan Tsarnaev had the nickname “pull-up boy,” said Matt Stuber, 29, a next-door neighbor on Norfolk Street. He would use a garden trellis for his exercises in full view of passers-by.

“He was very image-oriented,” Stuber said. Tamerlan drove a silver C-Class Mercedes-Benz, and when he wasn’t wearing workout gear, he chose “boisterous, fancy clothes.”

During his peak years as a boxer, Tsarnaev displayed a temper, court records show.

On July 28, 2009, a live-in girlfriend called 911 from her mobile phone. She told a dispatcher that Tsarnaev had beaten her. She “was crying hysterically,” according to a police report.

Tsarnaev told police he had slapped the woman, now 25, because she had “been yelling at him because of another girl.”

A district court judge dismissed the case Feb. 8, 2010, for lack of prosecution.

‘No Inkling’

That same year, Tsarnaev found a wife: Katherine Russell, known as Katie, her lawyer, Amato DeLuca, said in an interview yesterday in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. She converted to Islam and wears a black headscarf, he said, and has a 2 1/2-year-old

daughter.

Russell, 24, worked as much as 80 hours a week as a home health aide, DeLuca said. Tsarnaev watched their girl, he said. That was the routine last week, too, the lawyer said, after the April 15 bombings.

DeLuca said Russell “knew nothing about this.”

“No indication, no inkling, no inclination, no hint, no nothing,” he said.

Before Russell and Tsarnaev married, he traded his flashy outfits for jeans and a hooded sweatshirt, said Pollard, the boxer. Pollard met Tsarnaev in 2009 at the New England Golden Gloves Championship in Lowell, Massachusetts, where he showed up dressed to impress -- and won the heavyweight title.

Prayer Rug

By 2010, Tsarnaev seemed more interested in discussing Islam, Pollard said.

Dan Magnarelli, who often sparred with Tsarnaev at Wai Kru Mixed Martial Arts in Boston, said he was taken aback when Tsarnaev set down a blanket beside a treadmill and started praying.

Tsarnaev had few friends at Wai Kru, save for a man about his age named Brendan Mess, said Michael Berezin, the gym’s general manager.

On Sept. 11, 2011, Mess and two others were found dead in a suburban apartment, their throats slashed. Investigators are looking into whether Tsarnaev may have been involved, said Stephanie Guyotte, a spokeswoman for the Middlesex County district attorney’s office.

After last week’s spasm of violence, Tsarnaev’s relatives are left to sort out a suddenly reordered existence.

Hadn’t Spoken

Ailina Tsarnaeva, now 22 and living in West New York, New Jersey, told the Federal Bureau of Investigation that she hadn’t spoken with her brothers “in a while,” Michael Indri, the police director there, said in a telephone interview yesterday.

He said he visited her April 19, when authorities were still looking for her surviving brother and the following day, after the massive manhunt in Boston was over.

“She seems very overwhelmed,” Indri said. “She had her whole world turned upside down. She was crying.”

Tsarnaev’s wife, who is staying with her child at her parents’ home in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, is “very upset, very distressed,” DeLuca said. “It’s so hard for her, you know. She’s got this little girl. She’s just trying to get her mind around these events -- people dying, people maimed, her husband dying.”

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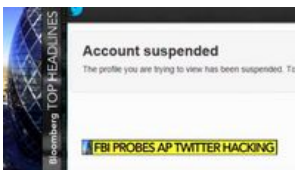
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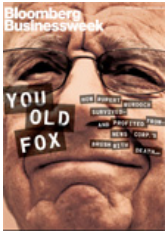
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