



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

May 9, 2013

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas),
Committee on Homeland Security**

“The Boston Bombings: A First Look”

**May 9, 2013
Remarks as Prepared**

The attacks in Boston shook this nation, and brought back memories of that day in September, 2001, that changed our lives forever. I am confident that we will emerge from this tragedy stronger than ever before. Anyone who thinks they can execute an attack on this country and change our way of life, greatly underestimates our spirit and our resolve.

It is the responsibility of this committee to provide oversight and investigate what happened, what went wrong and what we can do to better protect American lives. The victims and their families deserve no less.

We will never forget April 15th. But we must do more than remember, we must hold accountable those who did us harm, as well as the terrorists who inspired them. We must also demand more than just answers for any mistakes made. We must find solutions so that it does not happen again.

In the chaos following the blasts, the American people, including myself, were amazed at the courage of first responders and civilians who ran towards the explosion, instead of away. These men and women motivate us all to pick up the pieces and move forward.

Commissioner, we applaud you, as well as the first responders and law enforcement officials who risked their lives to save others. We owe all of you a debt of gratitude.

In order to move forward, today we look back. The families who lost loved ones, and the over 260 wounded deserve answers about how this happened, and what can be improved in the future. Almost three weeks after the smoke cleared on Boylston Street, many questions remain.

What we know today is that radical Islamists still threaten our homeland. While we don't know if this attack was foreign-directed, we certainly know it was foreign-inspired. Tamerlan Tsarnaev's trip to the Chechen

region; the radical videos proclaiming the Caliphate that he posted when he returned; and the type of bombs he and his younger brother used, all signal an al Qaeda-inspired terrorist attack.

While mystery continues to surround what happened on the older brother's trip to Dagestan, much can be drawn from what we know about the region. Many Chechen rebels have forged a bond with the al Qaeda jihadist movement. These lethal warriors have fought side-by-side with al Qaeda and the Taliban against U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, my constituent's son, Marine Sergeant Byron Norwood, was killed by nine Chechen rebels in Iraq.

Perhaps most appalling, are the suspect's reported statements following his capture. These men who hate our values used our freedoms to kill Americans.

Since the bombing, questions have been raised about whether dots were connected before and after the attack. We know that Russian intelligence warned the FBI about Tamerlan, and that he may travel outside the United States to meet with extremists. We know he was then investigated and interviewed by the FBI, but when he travelled to the Chechen region in 2012, the FBI was unaware. The CIA also received an alert from Russian intelligence and the agency asked that he be added to a terror watch list.

We now know that D.H.S. was alerted to his trip overseas, but nothing was done. In other words, he was on our radar and then he was off. What remains unanswered is whether this information was shared between federal agencies and state and local officials.

Almost nine months after Tamerlan returned, he and his brother Dzhokhar, executed the largest terrorist attack on our soil since 9/11. This demonstrates that the radical jihad movement is alive and well around the world and in the homeland.

We learned over a decade ago, the danger in failing to connect the dots. The cornerstone of the 9/11 Commission Report was that agencies had "stove-piped" intelligence, which prevented us from seeing potential terrorist plots. In fact, the DHS was created in the wake of 9/11 to help fix this problem. My fear is that the Boston bombers may have succeeded because our system failed. We can and must do better.

Equally concerning is the emerging narrative which downplays the spread of the global jihadist movement. From the attack at Fort Hood, to the tragedy at Benghazi, the Boston bombings are our most recent reminder that we must call terrorism what it is, in order to confront it. You cannot defeat an enemy you refuse to acknowledge.

I was disturbed in the days following the attack to read that some "officials" had closed the case on whether there was a "foreign connection," when the FBI had just begun its investigation. As a former federal counterterrorism prosecutor, this rush to judgment was both premature and irresponsible.

The American people demand and deserve accountability. And while we investigate what may have gone wrong, we must also pay tribute to what went right. Just as tragedy often exposes our weaknesses, it also reveals our character. The acts of heroism in Boston in the minutes and days after the attack made us all proud to be Americans.

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