



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on April 16, 2013

Boston Marathon Bombings: Questions Remain Unanswered

The motive behind the April 15 twin bombings at the Boston Marathon, which [killed at least three and injured more than 175](#), remains shrouded in mystery as of Tuesday afternoon. Although law enforcement officials reportedly have a Saudi national [in custody](#) as a “person of interest,” it remains unclear whether the bombings are an act of terrorism or simply the actions of a lone insane bomber without political motivation. The bombings apparently included a pressure cooker in a backpack, with some type of ball bearing or other shrapnel in it.



The presence of a Saudi national at the marathon event is not by itself suspicious or unusual, as many people come to Boston from around the world for both the marathon and for college study. Boston is largely an international college town, with some 53 colleges and universities within the city and its inner highway Route 128 loop. Several dozen additional colleges and universities are within the outer Route 495 highway loop of the Boston metropolitan area as well.

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick [debunked](#) early news stories that claimed other explosive devices were found. “Two and only two explosive devices were found yesterday,” Patrick [said](#) at an April 15 evening press conference. “There were no unexploded explosive devices found.” Early reports that a fire at the JFK Library in Dorchester — several miles from the marathon route — was related proved to be untrue. The library fire was [ruled](#) a “mechanical fire” after an initial investigation.

At least one eyewitness to the event, University of Mobile’s cross country coach Ali Stevenson, claimed in an interview with a local television network that he saw bomb-sniffing dogs and unprecedented security even before the bombs exploded.

President Obama said in an April 16 [press conference](#) that the bombing was a “cowardly act” and stressed that “the FBI is investigating it as an act of terrorism.” Obama also noted that he had no information as of Tuesday morning about the perpetrator(s) or the motive. “What we don’t yet know, however, is who carried out this attack, or why,” Obama [said](#). “Clearly, we are at the beginning of our investigation.... In the coming days, we will pursue every effort to get to the bottom of what happened.”

The media was quick to speculate about the motives behind the unknown bombers, with Wolf Blitzer [suggesting](#) on CNN within moments of the bombing report that since the bombing was on April 15, it could have been carried out by a tax protester or related to the Patriots’ Day holiday in Massachusetts. “It is a state holiday in Massachusetts today called Patriots’ Day and,” Blitzer told his CNN audience, “who knows if that had anything at all to do with these explosions?” [ABC News has suggested similar motivations](#). Blitzer’s speculations were couched in advice not to draw conclusions, but it drew a [call](#)



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[from Congressman Steve Stockman for an apology](#) from Blitzer. Indeed, this week is an anniversary to a number of terrorist incidents, such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the Waco massacre.

The bombing drew [condemnation from across the Muslim world](#), though one former Salafist prisoner in Jordan praised the bombing. “Let the Americans feel the pain we endured by their armies occupying Iraq and Afghanistan and killing our people there,” Mohammad el-Chalabi told local press after the bombing.

Obama claimed in his April 16 [press conference](#) that “We also know this: The American people refuse to be terrorized.” Yet the pattern after most terrorist incidents is a call for security, even if it does away with traditional civil liberties.

Boston is no stranger to terrorist actions, as two of the four planes that crashed during the September 11 attacks on 2001 took off from Boston’s Logan Airport. It was also the site of a 2007 bomb scare, later determined to be a harmless prank. Moreover, Boston was a target for bombings before and during the “Red Scare” nearly 100 years ago, which involved more than 100 bombings — most through the mail — against major U.S. cities between 1917 and 1920.

Photo of emergency workers aiding victims of the Boston bombing: AP Images



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