

Case 7 ♦ Final Rest

Tamerlan Tsarnaev died on April 19, 2013, after a gunfight with the police. Four days earlier he and his brother had allegedly detonated two bombs near the Boston Marathon finish line. For nearly three weeks Tsarnaev's body was held in a funeral home waiting for burial, as "protesters kept vigil outside the building."¹ Cremation was not an option for Tsarnaev, for he was an observant Muslim. Boston-area cemeteries refused to allow the interment of Tsarnaev's body, claiming that media presence and protests at such an event would prevent the "the residents of the City of Cambridge...[from returning] to a peaceful life."² Even the governor of Massachusetts and some local mayors refused to give the family permission to bury the body within state lines.

In early May, a cemetery in rural Virginia decided to accept the body, and, in order to avoid protests, arranged for its stealthy transfer from Massachusetts to the burial grounds. Many residents and the representatives of the Virginia town expressed their discontent with this situation. A Chairman of the Caroline County Board of Supervisors said that she did not "want the county to be remembered as the resting place for the remains of someone who committed a terrible crime."³ However, Charles H. Abdel-Alim, whose house abuts the Virginia cemetery, disagreed and suggested that a proper burial is owed to all human beings: "The person is one thing; the body is another."⁴

Case from the 2013 Regional Ethics Bowl. Copyright, Association for Practical and Professional Ethics.

<http://appeonline.com/ethics-bowl/regional-ethics-bowl/>

¹ Abby Ohlheiser, "Officials Finally Found a Place to Bury Tamerlan Tsarnaev's Body," Slate, May 9, 2013, http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2013/05/09/tamerlan_tsarnaev_burial_funeral_home_finds_plot_for_boston_bombing_suspect.htm

² Mark Memmott, "Boston-Area Cemeteries Say No to Burying Bombing Suspect," NPR, May 6, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/05/06/181542151/boston-area-cemeteries-say-no-to-burying-bombing-suspect>

³ Mark Memmott, "Emotions Run High after Boston Bombing Suspect Burial," NPR, May 11, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/05/11/183118085/emotions-run-high-after-boston-bombing-suspects-burial>

⁴ Brian MacQuarrie, "Bombing Suspect Burial Divides Virginia Resident," The Boston Globe, May 11, 2013, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/05/11/virginia-authorities-say-tsarnaev-burial-appearslegal/KtqUFqK5G6LrVVgyyub1xO/story.html>