

Beat: Local

DEFENSE TEAM: BOSTON MARATHON BOMBERS FAMILY WAS TROUBLED

TSARNAEV DEPICTED AS SWEET KID

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USPA NEWS - Defense attorneys for Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev continued their quest to depict a troubled Tsarnaev family by recalling witness Sam Lipson, whose mother rented a three-bedroom Cambridge apartment to the Tsarnaevs for more than a decade.

Lipson, who was on the stand Tuesday when court recessed for the day, had testified that he first met Dzhokhar when he was eight years old. He described him as "a very sweet kid," skinny and a little shy.

He went on to describe transformations he observed in other members of the family between 2002 and 2012. Older brother Tamerlan had been "charismatic" and "gregarious" at first, but became "withdrawn" and avoided making eye contact in the hallway.

Mother Zubeidat and Father Anzor were no longer optimistic about their futures in America, Lipson said. Anzor was no longer physically strong and was burdened by physical pain. Zubeidat had traded colorful prints in her wardrobe for dark, plain clothing and was moving in the direction of becoming hysterical, he said.

"It was fairly obvious to talk to her that there was an anxiety," Lipson testified. "Her fears and concerns came out. These were anxious conversations."

Tsarnaev was convicted April 8 on all 30 counts related to the Boston Marathon bomb attacks of April 2013, the murder of MIT security officer Sean Collier and a shootout in Watertown during a manhunt for the two brothers.

The same jurors who convicted him are now hearing testimony in the penalty phase as they prepare to deliver one of two sentences: life in prison with no possibility of parole or the death penalty.

With the start of court proceedings delayed, Tsarnaev entered the courtroom at 10:10 am. He was wearing his usual dark-colored sport jacket and avoided eye contact with the galley.

His defense team is preparing to call to the witness stand members of his family who traveled to the United States from Russia last week. Whether the family members will testify this week or at a later time is unknown. They are currently receiving federal protection under a program that enables defendants to put on a case.

In an effort to show that Tsarnaev was not the leader of the Boston attack, but was following his brother's lead, the defense brought out more details from Tamerlan Tsarnaev's trip to Russia in 2012. The defense team introduced excerpts from a June 2013 FBI interview with a distant cousin in Russia.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.

3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168

Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA

(702) 943.0321 Local

(702) 943.0233 Facsimile

info@unitedpressassociation.org

info@gna24.com

www.gna24.com