

Boston Marathon Bombing Suspect's Friend Indicted

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BOSTON — Prosecutors portray a friend of the surviving Boston Marathon bombing suspect as a liar who misled terrorism investigators, but his lawyers said after his indictment Thursday that it would be clear in time that authorities should not have charged him.

Authorities said Robel Phillipos faces up to 16 years in prison in connection with two federal counts of lying to authorities investigating the deadly April attack. Defense lawyers Derege Demissie and Susan Church said the 19-year-old would continue to fight the allegations against him after efforts to get authorities to dismiss the charges failed.

"In time, it will be clear that this prosecution should not have been brought in the first place," they said in an e-mailed statement.

Following Phillipos' May arrest on one count of lying to authorities, a judge ordered him to be released on \$100,000 bond, putting him on home confinement and electronic monitoring.

Phillipos and 20-year-old bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were members of the 2011 graduating class at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School before becoming students at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

In arguing for bail in May, Phillipos' lawyers portrayed him as a frightened and confused young man "who was subjected to intense questioning and interrogation, without the benefit of counsel, and in the context of one of the worst attacks against the nation."

Friends and relatives have described him in court documents as a considerate and thoughtful person who was the son of a single mother who moved from Ethiopia to the United States. Court records also showed that Phillipos had experience working as a receptionist in a community center, as a math tutor and as a teacher's assistant at a child care center and that he had been majoring in marketing and minoring in sociology at college.

Two other friends of Tsarnaev's who are nationals of Kazakhstan, Dias Kadyrbayev and Azamat Tazhayakov, already have pleaded not guilty to allegations that they conspired to obstruct justice by agreeing to destroy and conceal some of his belongings as he evaded authorities following the marathon attack, in which pressure cooker bombs loaded with shrapnel exploded near the finish line, killing three people and injuring more than 260 others.

Tsarnaev's older brother, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who authorities say orchestrated the April 15 marathon bombing with him, died following a gun battle with police three days after the attack.

Authorities have alleged Phillipos was with Kadyrbayev and Tazhayakov in Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's dorm room on April 18 and the three left with items including Tsarnaev's laptop and a backpack with fireworks. They claim that Phillipos concealed that the three went to the dorm room and took Tsarnaev's backpack and that he repeatedly lied to investigators during interviews.

But Phillipos' lawyers said Thursday that it was clear he had nothing to do with taking the backpack or destroying potential evidence in the case against Tsarnaev, an ethnic Chechen from Russia.

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