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Boston Marathon Bombing Trial Begins With Jury Selection

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Boston Marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is pictured in an undated FBI handout photo.

BOSTON — Some 1,200 potential jurors are due to report to federal court in Boston beginning on Monday as selection begins for the trial of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, charged with the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing that killed three people and wounded more than 260 others.

Tsarnaev, a 21-year-old ethic Chechen who is a naturalized U.S. citizen, could get the death penalty if convicted. He has pleaded not guilty to all 30 charges against him.

Tsarnaev, due to be in court on Monday, is accused of detonating a pair of homemade bombs placed amid a crowd of thousands of spectators at the race's finish line on April 15, 2013.

U.S. District Judge George O'Toole will seek to winnow down the field of 1,200 people to a panel of 12 jurors and six alternates to hear a trial expected to last three to five months.

The large size of the jury pool, which has already been through an initial round of screening through surveys sent out by mail, reflects the intense interest in the case.

Tsarnaev's attorneys had sought to have the proceedings moved out of Boston. They argued it would be impossible to find an impartial local jury because of intense news coverage and the fact that thousands of people attended the race or hid in their homes during a day-long lockdown in the greater Boston area after the bombing.

Tsarnaev was arrested four days after the bombing. Prosecutors say he and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, his 26-year-old brother, later shot and killed a university police officer. The brother died after a wild gun battle with police.

The Tsarnaev brothers were Muslims whose family emigrated to the United States about a decade before the attack, settling in Cambridge, Massachusetts, just outside Boston. According to prosecutors, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev wrote messages inside of the hull of the drydocked boat where he was discovered hiding four days after the attack indicating the attack was politically motivated.

The messages included "the U.S. government is killing our innocent civilians" and "I can't stand to see such evil go unpunished," according to court papers.

Three people died in the bombing: restaurant manager Krystle Campbell, 29; graduate student Lingzi Lu, 23; and Martin Richard, 8. Massachusetts Institute of Technology police officer Sean Collier, 27, was fatally shot three days later.

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