

Tamerlan Tsarnaev's burial angers Virginia Muslims

by [Gary Strauss](#) in the [June 12, 2013](#) issue

Officials and local residents of a rural Virginia county say they're surprised and angered that the body of Boston Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev was buried in a local cemetery.

Tsarnaev, 26, died following an April 19 getaway attempt after a gun battle with police. His younger brother, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, is in custody and is charged with the April 15 bombings.

Their uncle, Ruslan Tsarni of Maryland, took responsibility for the body after Tsarnaev's wife, Katherine Russell, said she wanted it released to her in-laws. Tsarnaev was buried in a cemetery in Doswell, Virginia, with the help of a faith coalition. "The body's buried," Tsarni said. "That's it."

The Islamic cemetery, located in a rural community 30 miles north of Richmond, contains only 47 graves. All are covered with reddish-brown mulch except for two that appear newly dug. Neither of those has any kind of marking; presumably one of them is Tsarnaev's.

Caroline County sheriff Tony Lippa Jr. and Floyd Thomas, chair of the county's board of supervisors, said they learned of the burial through the media. Lippa said his department would provide security at the cemetery to protect the grave site from being vandalized. "It's become a public safety issue," Lippa said.

Thomas said he would have preferred the body be buried elsewhere. "We feel the same way most of America feels," Thomas said. "We're very angry over the bombings."

The burial ended a frustrating search for a community willing to take the body, which had been kept at a funeral parlor in Worcester, Massachusetts. Cemeteries in Massachusetts and several other states refused to accept the remains, fearful about grave site vandalism and backlash from the public.

Worcester police said May 9 that “as a result of our public appeal for help, a courageous and compassionate individual came forward to provide the assistance needed.”

Martha Mullen, of Richmond, told the Associated Press that she offered to help after seeing news reports about towns and cemeteries refusing to allow burial. She said she is not the only person who helped with arrangements. “It was an interfaith effort,” she said. “Basically because Jesus says love your enemies.”

Imam Ammar Amonette of the Islamic Center of Virginia said that his group was never consulted and that Mullen reached out to a separate group, the Islamic Society of Greater Richmond.

“The whole Muslim community here is furious. . . . It was all done secretly behind our backs,” Amonette said, adding it “makes no sense” that Tsarnaev’s body was buried in Virginia. —USA Today

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