

## Don't be so quick to judge the FBI

Boston's law enforcement is getting a lot of praise for their apprehension of the bombing suspects late last week, and deservedly so, but the Federal Bureau of Investigation is catching a lot of flak.

Simple tricks and nonsense

Kevin Bottrell



The FBI investigated one of the bombers in 2011. Information has come to light that Russian authorities had informed the FBI that Tamerlan Tsarnaev – one of the Chechans who may have been responsible for last week's bombing at the Boston marathon – may have been "radicalized."

The FBI checked into Tsarnaev, but a red flag was never put on his name. The FBI says they did their due diligence, and that Russian authorities stopped cooperating. Nevertheless, Tsarnaev was allowed to leave the United States in 2010 and allowed back in.

It's a bit of a cliché to say the FBI's failures are public, but its successes are not, however it's one of those clichés that rings true. We don't tend to hear about the crimes the FBI prevents. After all, why would we? Those crimes never happened.

What we hear about are the ones that get through. The FBI could stop 99 out of 100 bombers, but still get crucified in the national press for the one that got away, with little mention of its success rate.

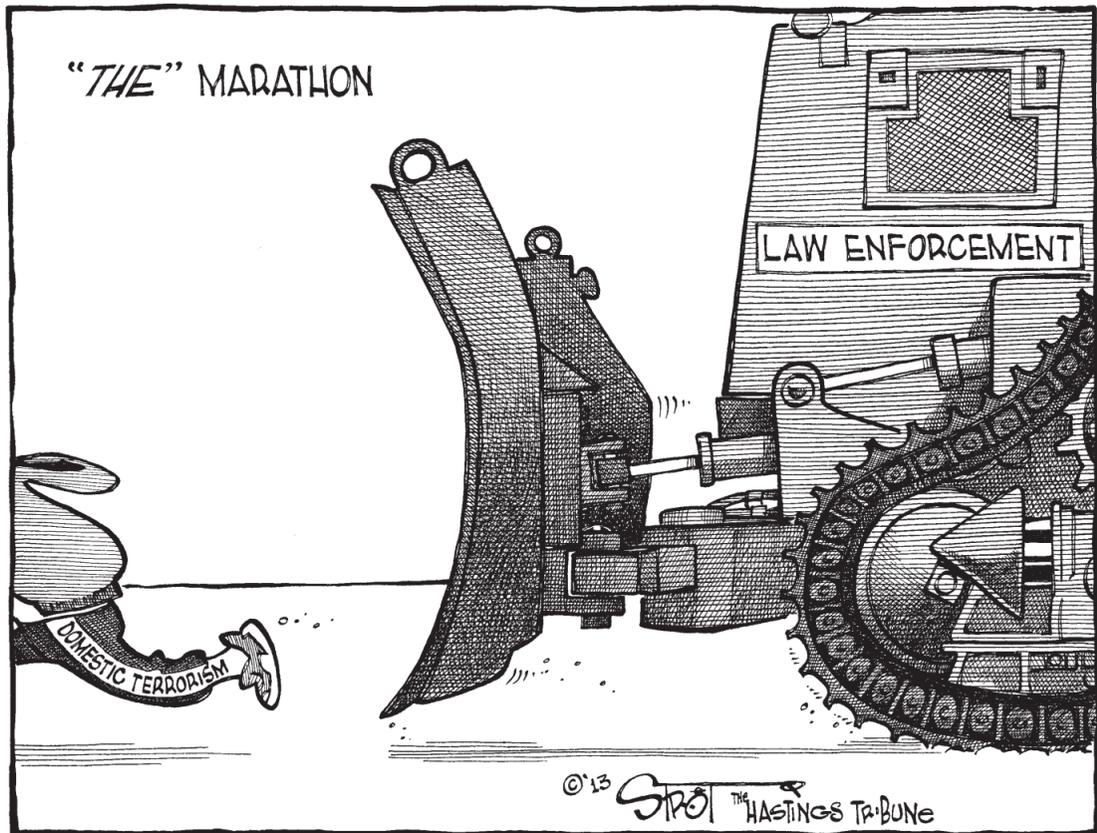
How was anyone to know that this 26-year-old flagged by Russian authorities two years ago would go on to plan this tragedy? The FBI likely gets hundreds of possible leads each day, and who knows which one will actually lead to something? It's all well and good to say "well they should run down every lead," but saying it and doing it are vastly different things.

But that doesn't stop criticism when something happens. It seems to be human nature to armchair quarterback after a national tragedy. Already the bombings are being used to play politics in the immigration debate. The national media, special interest groups and lawmakers are quick to jump on any tragedy as a means to blame.

The answer isn't necessarily easing restrictions on what the FBI can and can't do. The agency is heavily regulated and rightly so, those regulations protect the civil liberties of law abiding citizens. Living in a police state is not a fair price for a little security.

Don't judge the FBI too harshly. They have a difficult job to do, and their effectiveness is often hampered by many factors outside their control. The bottom line is no agency could guarantee preventing every crime. All we should ask is that they try.

—Kevin Bottrell



## Think twice before doing it yourself

When your efforts to save a few pennies end up costing you more than it's worth, it's time to rethink your strategy.

Remember when I shared my mozzarella cheese making experiment? After my investment in all the enzymes and organic products that cheese cost about \$20 an ounce. After the initial taste testing, I told Jim, "You better enjoy that."

That's where I am now. This time it's raisins and corned beef.

Directions on making your own raisins caught my eye. Instead of merely drying them, the method called for a 30-second dip in boiling water; then a dunk into an ice bath; then spread on parchment paper and set in the oven to dry.

Twenty-four hours later I had raisins. And quite tasty ones I might add. However, at what cost? Well, there was the initial cost of the grapes. At \$2.99 a pound, I already had a \$6 investment. Add in the gas units used to boil the water; the power used to make the ice cubes; and finally, the electricity consumed to dry what ended up being two cups of raisins. I figure those raisins are worth about ten bucks.

Not really, though. They're only worth about a dollar. I checked, and the price of a two-pound bag at the store is

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



only \$4.99.

I should have heeded Jim's advice. He said, "Doesn't it say on the bag, 'Sun Dried'?" Maybe you ought to try that method and quit trying to save us money. We can't afford it."

The jury is still out on the corned beef. It hasn't been taste tested, yet. A recipe for "Homemade Corned Beef" was in the San Antonio Sunday paper. I clipped it out and resolved to try it as soon as we got home. Not wanting to risk a 10-pound brisket, I opted for a half-batch and picked up a five-pounder. After making a brine of water, salt and a multitude of spices the beef was submerged, sealed and set in the fridge for 10 days. Yes, 10 days. Any meat left in my refrigerator for 10 days gets pretty close scrutiny before consumption.

Sunday morning was the deadline. I carefully opened the bag and took a whiff. So far, so good. Nothing putrid or revolting, just a strong "clovy" aroma. Down the drain went the brine

and after a thorough rinsing, into the crockpot went, what I hoped would be, the corned beef. Water to cover, a sliced onion and some carrots, the heat set on low, and the full expectation of corned beef for Sunday supper.

We left the house at 8:30 a.m., and didn't return until about 6 p.m. I fully expected to be greeted with the mouth-watering fragrance of perfectly cooked brisket when we opened the door. Not so much. Evidently, the low setting on my crockpot is very low. The carrots weren't even done and the brisket was still as tough as whang leather. I cranked the crockpot to "High" and as of midnight, when this column is being written, it's still not done. Maybe by lunchtime Monday it will be. If so, Jim will get to be the judge, as I will be at the office.

Yes, it was fun to try all these "cost-saving" ideas. But, in the end, I don't think I saved a dime. In fact, it probably cost us money. So, before I send us to the "poor house," I better just resign myself to the fact that "homemade" might not always be best.

Postscript: I read "OutBack" to Jim before I submit it for publication and he had something to add. "You've got to put in there," he said, "except for homemade ice cream. That is the best."

## The family that eats together stays together

When we think of eating a meal today, images of a person dashing toward the door while chomping down the last bite and yelling good-bye, is an all too common picture. But again, that is only part of the story.

While some folks have sounded its demise, eating together at the family dinner table may not become extinct. Plenty of families still take the time to eat together four or five times a week despite the distractions of work schedules and after-school activities.

Preparing dinner and eating together as a family is important. Having dinner together has been a tradition with many families for countless generations. It has always been considered a valuable way to keep families together. It's another way busy parents can communicate with busy children.

In the helter-skelter world of the 21st Century, when family members are moving in different directions, it's more important than ever to make the most of family mealtime. Doing so calls for planning and implementation.

One of the first things to do is to turn off the television, put down the smart phones and turn off the computers.

### Insight

John Schlageck



Sitting down together to share a meal is a great way for family members to share news and engage in conversation. Turning off distracting electronic devices will make it easier for the family to talk and listen to one another.

Look forward to dinner. Having meals together can be a happy memory most people carry from childhood. Time spent with the family around the dinner table can help keep the family intact.

Set a specific time. While many cultures eat their large family meal at midday, Americans typically eat the evening meal together. No matter which meal your family eats together, try to schedule it at the same time each day. That way all family members can plan for the meal in advance.

It is important to assign everyone

a job. One person should never be responsible for all the meal preparations and cleanup. Assigning each family member a job can make this a true tradition.

Historically the family meal has been a way to honor family members who work both inside and outside the home. Every family member should have a special position at the table. Make sure to honor all family members by assigning each his or her own spot at the table, and sit in the same seats each night.

Give special honor to the cook who prepared the meal by complimenting on the food and presentation.

Another way to make the evening meal rich with tradition is to develop a unique way to call everyone to the table. Consider a dinner bell to call children in from outside. Letting the family know that dinner is ready may also be a specific assignment. Avoid yelling.

Finally, hand this mealtime tradition down to the next generation. Rituals often evolve over the history of a family. Meal traditions you establish now may last long into the future.

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