

WAS THERE EVEN A BB GUN?

Over the weekend, we heard the story that when Tamerlan Tsarnaev rushed the small group of cops who were trying to arrest him, he was strapped with a suicide vest. In addition, we were told, the brothers had two handguns, an M-4 rifle, and a BB gun. The brothers, we were told, were planning further attacks.

At this point, the support for the claim Tamerlan had a suicide vest has disappeared (as it should have as soon as his brother ran over him with the SUV, though that detail, too, may not be entirely true). Ray Kelly – who never met a fear he didn't want to magnify – tells us the brothers were headed out not to conduct further attacks, but to party in NYC. And according to the AP, just one handgun was found at the site of the shootout, and none was found on Dzhokhar when he was arrested.

Officials also recovered a 9 mm handgun believed to have been used by Tamerlan from the site of an April 18 gunbattle that injured a Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority officer, two U.S. officials said.

The officials told the AP that no gun was found in the boat where Dzhokhar was hiding. Boston police Commissioner Ed Davis said earlier that shots were fired from inside the boat.

Asked whether the suspect had a gun in the boat, Davis said, "I'm not going to talk about that."

But Kurt Schwartz, director of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, said a police officer was shot within half a mile of where Tsarnaev was captured, "and I know who shot him."

Authorities had previously said Dzhokhar

exchanged gunfire with them for more than an hour Friday night before they captured him inside a tarp-covered boat in a suburban Boston neighborhood backyard. But two U.S. officials said Wednesday that he was unarmed when captured, raising questions about the gunfire and how he was injured.

All that's not to say the brothers weren't dangerous. There is still the matter of the additional pressure cooker bomb thrown at the site of the shootout, and some pipe bombs thrown during the chase, some of which exploded. They had already shot a cop at point blank range, apparently in a failed attempt to get a second handgun (though, as the NYT version of this story makes clear, the video from that murder don't even conclusively show that it was the brothers). The NYT even notes that Dzhokhar was not – as reported Friday – outside the search perimeter in Watertown, but within it.

But a number of the original details describing how dangerous the two were haven't survived as the fog of the chase has lifted.

How much of that earlier picture arose from embarrassment that Dzhokhar escaped the police shootout, leading to the shutdown of all of Boston? How much of it arose from a long-cultivated image of what Islamic terrorists do, as distinct from what two disgruntled American immigrants might do?

Especially given Sean Collier's murder, I'm not faulting the cops for being careful. But to what extent are we running from ghosts the terror industry has created over the last 10 years?