

= Northwest Airlines Flight 253 =

Northwest Airlines Flight 253 was an international passenger flight from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol in Haarlemmermeer , Netherlands , to Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport in Romulus , Michigan , United States . The flight was the target of a failed al @-@ Qaeda bombing attempt on Christmas Day , December 25 , 2009 , in which a passenger tried to set off plastic explosives sewn to his underwear . There were 290 people on board the aircraft ? an Airbus A330 @-@ 323E operated by Northwest Airlines , which had merged with Delta Air Lines the year before . Had the attempt succeeded , it would have surpassed American Airlines Flight 191 as the deadliest aviation occurrence on U.S. soil and tied Iran Air Flight 655 as the eighth @-@ deadliest of all time . The incident was also the second in 2009 involving an Airbus A330 , after Air France Flight 447 on 1 June . This was also the final accident / incident involving Northwest Airlines as it closed down a month later when it merged with Delta Airlines .

The convicted bomber in the " Christmas Day bombing attempt " was 23 @-@ year @-@ old Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab , a Nigerian who had concealed plastic explosives in his underwear but failed to detonate them properly . A Dutch passenger , Jasper Schuringa , tackled and restrained him and put out the fire with the aid of others . Abdulmutallab was handcuffed while the pilot safely landed the plane . In all , three people were injured : Abdulmutallab , Schuringa , and one other passenger . Upon landing in Detroit , Abdulmutallab was arrested and taken to a hospital for treatment of his burns . On December 28 , 2009 , al @-@ Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for the attempted bombing . On January 6 , 2010 , a federal grand jury indicted Abdulmutallab on six criminal charges , including attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and attempted murder .

Reports indicated that the U.S. had received intelligence regarding a powder bomb planned attack by a Yemen @-@ based Nigerian man . While describing security measures taken by U.S. and foreign governments in the immediate aftermath of the attack , U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security , Janet Napolitano , said , " once the incident occurred , the system worked . " She cited " the actions of the passengers and the crew on this flight " to show " why that system is so important . " After heavy criticism , she stated the following day that the system " failed miserably " , this time referring to Abdulmutallab 's boarding the flight with an explosive device . U.S. President Barack Obama called the U.S. ' s failure to prevent the bombing attempt " totally unacceptable " , and ordered an investigation .

On April 6 , 2010 , it was reported that President Obama had authorized the assassination of Anwar al @-@ Awlaki , a Muslim cleric who was accused by the Obama administration of being a Yemen @-@ based al @-@ Qaeda commander behind the plot . Al @-@ Awlaki was killed on September 30 , 2011 .

= = Incident = =

= = = Getting on Flight 253 = = =

On Christmas Eve , December 24 , 2009 , Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab , a 23 @-@ year @-@ old Nigerian , boarded Virgin Nigeria Flight 804 at Accra Airport in Accra , Ghana and arrived at Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos , Nigeria . Eight days earlier at the KLM Royal Dutch Airlines office in Accra , Ghana , he had paid \$ 2 @,@ 831 in cash for his Lagos @-@ Amsterdam @-@ Detroit round @-@ trip ticket with a January 8 , 2010 return date . Kevin Drum , a political blogger for Mother Jones , said that Ghana and Nigeria are largely cash @-@ based economies , so it would be normal for someone to buy an airplane ticket with cash in those countries .

Abdulmutallab left Lagos on Christmas Eve at 23 : 00 aboard KLM Flight 588 , a Boeing 777 bound for Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam . In Amsterdam , on Christmas Day , Abdulmutallab checked in for Northwest Airlines Flight 253 to Detroit with only carry @-@ on luggage . On March 24 , 2011 , the Associated Press reported that Abdulmutallab chose to attack Detroit because the plane ticket

there was the least expensive of tickets to potential US targets , which included Chicago and Houston . Initially , some media rumored that Abdulmutallab tried to fly to Detroit because it was a major hub of the U.S. automotive industry .

= = = Pre @-@ boarding event = = = =

Kurt and Lori Haskell , an American couple , said that while waiting to board Flight 253 at Schiphol Airport , they saw a " poor @-@ looking African @-@ American teenager around 16 or 17 , " who Kurt Haskell claims was Abdulmutallab , with a second man , who was " sharp @-@ dressed " , possibly of Indian descent , around 50 years old , and who spoke " in an American accent similar to my own . "

According to Lori Haskell , the second man told the ticket agent : " We need to get this man on the plane . He doesn 't have a passport . " The ticket agent said nobody was allowed to board without a passport . The well @-@ dressed man replied : " We do this all the time ; he 's from Sudan . " Lori Haskell said the two men were directed down a corridor , to talk to a manager . " We never saw him again until he tried to blow up our plane , " Lori Haskell said of Abdulmutallab .

Only U.S. citizens are permitted to board international flights to the U.S. without passports , and even then only if the airline confirms their identity and citizenship , said a spokesperson for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) . A CBP official and spokesman confirmed there were not any Sudanese refugees on the plane . The Dutch counter @-@ terror agency said that Abdulmutallab presented a valid Nigerian passport and U.S. entry visa when he boarded Flight 253 .

Haskell suggested authorities should , " Put the video out there to prove I 'm wrong . " Federal agents later said they were trying to identify and find the well @-@ dressed man . U.S. authorities had initially discounted the passenger accounts , but agents later said there was a growing belief that the man played a role in ensuring Abdulmutallab " did not get cold feet " .

= = = Bombing attempt = = =

Flight 253 , a Northwest Airlines Airbus A330 @-@ 323E twinjet , registered N820NW , with 279 passengers , 8 flight attendants , and 3 pilots aboard , left Amsterdam around 08 : 45 local time . The plane was scheduled to arrive in Detroit at 11 : 40 EST , and was painted in Delta Air Lines ' livery , as Northwest was a subsidiary of Delta at the time .

Witnesses reported that as the plane approached Detroit , Abdulmutallab went into the plane 's lavatory for about 20 minutes . After returning to his seat at 19A (near the fuel tanks and wing , and against the skin of the plane) , he complained that he had an upset stomach . He was seen pulling a blanket over himself .

About 20 minutes before the plane landed , on its final descent , he secretly ignited a small explosive device consisting of a mix of plastic explosive powder and acid . Abdulmutallab apparently had a packet of the plastic explosive sewn to his underwear , and injected liquid acid from a syringe into the packet to cause a chemical reaction . While there was a small explosion and fire , the device failed to detonate properly . Passengers heard popping noises resembling firecrackers , smelled an odor , and saw the suspect 's pants , leg and the wall of the plane on fire .

There were no air marshals on the flight , but several passengers and crew noticed the explosion . Jasper Schuringa from the Netherlands , a passenger on the other end of the same row , saw Abdulmutallab sitting and shaking . He tackled and overpowered him . Schuringa saw the suspect 's pants were open , and that he was holding a burning object . " I pulled the object from him and tried to extinguish the fire with my hands and threw it away , " said Schuringa , who suffered burns to his hands . Meanwhile , flight attendants extinguished the fire with a fire extinguisher and blankets , and a passenger removed the partially melted , smoking syringe from Abdulmutallab 's hand .

Schuringa grabbed the suspect , and pulled him to the business class area at the front of the plane . A passenger reported that Abdulmutallab , though burned " quite severely " on his leg , seemed " very calm , " and like a " normal individual . " Schuringa stripped off the suspect 's clothes to look for

additional weapons , and he and a crew member restrained Abdulmutallab with plastic handcuffs . " He was staring into nothing " and shaking , said Schuringa .

Passengers applauded as Schuringa walked back to his seat . The suspect was isolated from other passengers until after the plane landed . A flight attendant asked Abdulmutallab what he had in his pocket , and the suspect replied : " Explosive device . " When the attack triggered a fire indicator light within the cockpit , the pilot requested rescue and law enforcement . The plane made an emergency landing at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport in the Downriver Detroit community of Romulus , Michigan , just before 13 : 00 local time .

The Toronto Star reported that the plane 's flight route would have had it over Canadian airspace when the attempted bombing occurred . Representatives of two pilot associations told the Star that Detroit Metro airport would have been the nearest suitable airport at which to attempt an emergency landing .

While the plane suffered relatively little damage , the suspect incurred first and second degree burns to his hands , as well as second @-@ degree burns to his right inner thigh and genitalia . Two other passengers were also injured . When the plane landed , Abdulmutallab was handed over to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers , and taken into custody for questioning and treatment of his injuries in a secured room of the burn unit of the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor . Schuringa was also taken to the hospital . One other passenger incurred minor injuries .

Immediately after his arrest , Abdulmutallab talked to authorities about the plot for about 50 minutes , without having been informed of his Miranda rights . After emerging from surgery , he was informed of his rights and stopped talking to investigators for several weeks .

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents arrived at the airport after the plane landed . The aircraft was moved to a remote area so authorities could re @-@ screen the plane , the passengers , and the baggage on board . A bomb @-@ defusing robot was first used to board the plane , and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) interviewed all passengers . Another passenger from the flight was placed in handcuffs after a dog alerted officers to his carry @-@ on luggage ; he was searched , and released without charges . For several days following , federal officials denied that this second handcuffing had occurred , they later reversed this position , confirming that a second passenger had been handcuffed .

= = = Analysis of explosives = = =

The substance that the suspect tried to detonate was more than 80 grams (2 @.@ 8 oz) of pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) , a crystalline powder that is often the active ingredient of plastic explosives , the high explosive triacetone triperoxide (TATP) , and other ingredients . PETN is among the most powerful of explosives , and chemically resembles nitroglycerin . The powder was analyzed by the FBI at Quantico , and an FBI affidavit filed in the Eastern District of Michigan reflected preliminary findings that the device contained PETN . The authorities also found the remains of the syringe . The suspect apparently carried the PETN onto the plane in a 6 @-@ inch (15 cm) -long soft plastic container , possibly a condom , attached to his underwear . Much of the container was lost in the fire . ABC News cited a government test indicating that 50 grams (1 @.@ 8 oz) of PETN can blow a hole in the side of an airliner , and posted photos of the remains of Abdulmutallab 's underwear and explosive packet .

In a public test conducted by the BBC , the test plane 's fuselage remained intact , indicating that the bomb would not have destroyed the aircraft , though it did show window damage that would likely have led to cabin depressurization . This test was undertaken at ground level , with zero pressure differential between the cabin and the surrounding environment . This was claimed to have no effect on the overall result of the test , which aimed to simulate the explosion at 10 @,@ 000 feet (3 @,@ 000 m) . It was not demonstrated what would happen at a typical cruising altitude of between 31 @,@ 000 feet (9 @,@ 400 m) and 39 @,@ 000 feet (12 @,@ 000 m) , where the pressure differential would have caused the fuselage to be under a far greater stress than at ground level .

Al @-@ Qaeda member Richard Reid (the " Shoe Bomber ") had tried to detonate 50 grams of the same explosives in his shoes during an American Airlines flight on December 22 , 2001 .

= = = Verbally disruptive passenger incident = = =

On December 27 , 2009 , two days after the original incident , the crew of another Flight 253 requested emergency assistance with a Nigerian passenger whom they said had become " verbally disruptive " . The crew questioned the passenger after other passengers expressed concern that he had been in the lavatory for over an hour . It was later determined that the man was a businessman who had fallen ill from food poisoning during the flight , and did not pose any security risk .

= = Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab = =

The suspect in the attempted bombing was Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab , a 23 @-@ year @-@ old Nigerian born into a middle @-@ class family . Abdulmutallab was raised in Kaduna , in Nigeria 's Muslim @-@ dominated north , a place he returned to on his vacations .

In high school at the British International School in Lomé , Togo , Abdulmutallab was known to be a devout Muslim , who frequently discussed Islam with schoolmates . He visited the U.S. for the first time in 2004 .

For the 2004 ? 05 academic year , Abdulmutallab studied at the San 'a Institute for the Arabic Language in Sana 'a , Yemen , and attended lectures at Iman University . He began his studies at University College London in September 2005 , where he was president of the school 's Islamic society in 2006 and 2007 , during which time he participated in , along with political discussions , such activities as martial arts and paintballing . During those years , he came to the attention of MI5 , the UK 's domestic counter @-@ intelligence and security agency , for radical links and connections with Islamic extremists . To protect his privacy , they did not pass the information along to American officials .

On June 12 , 2008 , Abdulmutallab applied for and received from the U.S. consulate in London a U.S. multiple @-@ entry visa , valid to June 12 , 2010 , with which he visited Houston , Texas , from August 1 ? 17 , 2008 . In May 2009 , Abdulmutallab tried to return to Britain , supposedly for a six @-@ month " life coaching " program at what the British authorities concluded was a fictitious school ; accordingly , his visa application was denied by the United Kingdom Border Agency . His name was placed on a UK Home Office security watch list , which meant he was not permitted to enter the UK , though he could pass through the country in transit and was not permanently banned . The UK did not share the information with other countries .

Abdulmutallab returned to the San 'a Institute to study Arabic from August to September 2009 . " He told me his greatest wish was for sharia and Islam to be the rule of law across the world " , said one of his classmates at the Institute . Abdulmutallab left the Institute after a month , but remained in Yemen .

Earlier , his family had become concerned in August when he called them to say he had dropped the course , but was remaining there . By September , he routinely skipped his classes at the institute and attended lectures at Iman University , which intelligence officials from the United States suspected to have links to terrorism .

The San 'a Institute obtained an exit visa for him at his request , and arranged for a car that took him to the airport on September 21 , 2009 (the day his student visa expired) , but the school 's director said , " After that , we never saw him again , and apparently he did not leave Yemen " . In October , Abdulmutallab told his father via text message saying that he did not want to attend business school in Dubai , and wanted instead to study Islamic law and Arabic in Yemen . When his father refused to pay for it , Abdulmutallab said he was " already getting everything for free " . He text @-@ messaged his father , saying " I 've found a new religion , the real Islam " , " You should just forget about me , I 'm never coming back " , and " Forgive me for any wrongdoing , I am no longer your child " . The family was last in contact with their son in October 2009 .

On November 11 , 2009 , British intelligence officials sent the U.S. a message indicating that a man

named " Umar Farouk " had spoken to Anwar al @-@ Awlaki , a Muslim spiritual leader supposedly tied to al @-@ Qaeda , pledging to support jihad , but the notice did not mention Abdulmutallab by name .

On November 19 , his father reported to two CIA officers at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja , regarding his son 's " extreme religious views " , and told the embassy that Abdulmutallab might be in Yemen . Acting on the report , the US added Abdulmutallab 's name in November 2009 to its 550 @,@ 000 @-@ name Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment , a database of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center . It was not added , however , to the FBI 's 400 @,@ 000 @-@ name Terrorist Screening Database , the terror watch list that feeds both the 14 @,@ 000 @-@ name Secondary Screening Selectee list and the U.S. ' s 4 @,@ 000 @-@ name No Fly List . Abdulmutallab 's U.S. visa was not revoked either .

Yemeni officials said that Abdulmutallab left Yemen on December 7 (flying to Ethiopia , and two days later to Ghana) . Ghanaian officials said Abdulmutallab was there from December 9 until December 24 , when he flew to Lagos .

Two days after the attack , Abdulmutallab was released from the hospital in which he had been treated for burns sustained during the attempted bombing . He was taken to the Federal Correctional Institution , Milan , a federal prison in York Charter Township , Michigan , near Milan .

= = = Ties to Anwar al @-@ Awlaki = = =

A number of sources reported contacts between Abdulmutallab and Anwar al @-@ Awlaki , the late Muslim lecturer and spiritual leader who the US accused as a senior al @-@ Qaeda talent recruiter and motivator. al @-@ Awlaki , previously an imam in the U.S. , who had moved to Yemen , also had links to three of the 9 / 11 hijackers , the 2005 London subway bombers , a 2006 Toronto terror cell , a 2007 plot to attack Fort Dix , and the 2009 suspected Fort Hood shooter , Nidal Malik Hasan . In 2006 , he was banned from entering the UK ; al @-@ Awlaki repeatedly used a video link for public speeches from 2007 to 2009 .

The Sunday Times reported that Abdulmutallab first met and attended lectures by al @-@ Awlaki in 2005 , when he was in Yemen to study Arabic . He attended a sermon by al @-@ Awlaki at the Finsbury Park Mosque . The two are also " thought to have met " in London , according to The Daily Mail . Fox News reported that Abdulmutallab repeatedly visited Awlaki 's website and blog . CBS News and The Daily Telegraph reported that Abdulmutallab attended a video teleconference talk by al @-@ Awlaki at the East London Mosque . University of Oxford historian and professor of international relations Mark Almond wrote that the suspect was " on American security watch @-@ lists because of his links with ... Al Awlaki " .

CBS News reported that the two had communicated in the months before the bombing attempt , and other sources have said that at a minimum , al @-@ Awlaki was providing spiritual support for Abdulmutallab and the attack . According to federal sources , over the year prior to the attack , Abdulmutallab had repeatedly communicated with al @-@ Awlaki .

Intelligence officials suspected that al @-@ Awlaki may have told Abdulmutallab to go to Yemen for al @-@ Qaeda training . One government source described intercepted " voice @-@ to @-@ voice communication " between the two during the fall of 2009 , saying that al @-@ Awlaki " was in some way involved in facilitating [Abdulmutallab] ' s transportation or trip through Yemen . It could be training , a host of things . "

Abdulmutallab reportedly told the FBI that he had trained under al @-@ Awlaki at an al @-@ Qaeda training camp in Yemen .

Yemen 's Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Affairs , Rashad Mohammed al @-@ Alimi , said Yemeni investigators believe the suspect traveled in October to Shabwa , where he may have obtained the explosives and received training . He met with suspected al @-@ Qaida members in a house built by al @-@ Awlaki and used by al @-@ Awlaki to hold religious meetings . " If he went to Shabwa , for sure he would have met Anwar al @-@ Awlaki , " al @-@ Alimi said . Al @-@ Alimi also said he believed al @-@ Awlaki was alive . And Abdul Elah al @-@ Shaya , a Yemeni journalist , said a healthy al @-@ Awlaki called him on December 28 and said that the

Yemeni government 's claims as to his death were " lies " . Shaya declined to comment as to whether al @-@ Awlaki had told him about any contacts he may have had with Abdulmutallab . According to Gregory Johnsen , a Yemeni expert at Princeton University , Shaya is generally reliable .

At the end of January 2010 , a Yemeni journalist , Abdulelah Hider Sha ' ea , said he met with al @-@ Awlaki , who told Sha ' ea that he had met and spoken with Abdulmutallab in Yemen in late 2009 . Al @-@ Awlaki also reportedly called Abdulmutallab one of his students , said that he supported what Abdulmutallab did but did not tell him to do it , and that he was proud of Abdulmutallab . A New York Times journalist who listened to a digital recording of the meeting said that while the tape 's authenticity could not be independently verified , the voice resembled that on other recordings of al @-@ Awlaki .

Al @-@ Awlaki released a tape in March 2010 , in which he said , in part :

To the American people ... nine years after 9 / 11 , nine years of spending , and nine years of beefing up security you are still unsafe even in the holiest and most sacred of days to you , Christmas Day

Our brother Umar Farouk has succeeded in breaking through the security systems that have cost the U.S. government alone over 40 billion dollars since 9 / 11 .

Beginning December 18 , 2009 , President Obama authorized attacks on suspected Al @-@ Qaeda bases in Yemen . On April 6 , 2010 , The New York Times reported that President Obama had authorized the targeted killing of al @-@ Awlaki . Al @-@ Qaeda in Yemen released a video in 2010 that showed Abdulmutallab and others training in a desert camp . The tape includes a statement from Abdulmutallab justifying his actions against " the Jews and the Christians and their agents . " Al @-@ Awlaki was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Yemen on September 30 , 2011 .

= = = Al @-@ Qaeda involvement = = =

On December 28 , 2009 , Obama , in his first address after the incident , said that the event " demonstrates that an alert and courageous citizenry are far more resilient than an isolated extremist " . On the same day , Al @-@ Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) announced that it was responsible for the attempted bombing . AQAP said that the attack , during " their [Americans '] celebration of the Christmas holidays " , was to " avenge U.S. attacks on the militants in Yemen " .

On January 24 , an audio tape said to be from Osama bin Laden praised the bombing attempt and warned of further attacks against the United States , but did not claim responsibility for it . The short recording , which was broadcast on Al Jazeera television , said : " The message delivered to you through the plane of the heroic warrior Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was a confirmation of the previous messages sent by the heroes of the September 11 . " An adviser to the U.S. President said he could not confirm whether the voice was that of bin Laden . In the past , the CIA has usually confirmed Al Jazeera reports on tapes attributed to bin Laden .

While in custody , Abdulmutallab told authorities he had been directed by al @-@ Qaeda . He said he had obtained the device in Yemen , and was told to detonate it when the plane was over the United States . Abdulmutallab said he had contacted al @-@ Qaeda through a radical Yemeni imam (who according to The New York Times on December 26 was not believed to be al @-@ Awlaki) whom he had reached through the internet .

The New York Times reported on December 25 that a counter @-@ terrorism official had told them Abdulmutallab 's claim of connection with al @-@ Qaeda " may have been aspirational " . But U.S. Representative Jane Harman (D @-@ Calif .) , Chairman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence , Information Sharing , and Terrorism Risk Assessment , said the following day that a federal official briefed lawmakers about " strong suggestions of a Yemen @-@ al Qaeda connection " with the suspect . On January 2 , 2010 , President Obama said that AQAP trained , equipped , and dispatched Abdulmutallab , and vowed retribution .

In reaction to suggestions that the U.S. launch a military offensive against the alleged terrorists ' sanctuary in Yemen , The Washington Post noted that Yemeni forces equipped with U.S. weapons and intelligence had carried out two major raids against AQAP shortly before the bombing attempt ,

and that the terror group may have lost top leaders in a December 24 , 2009 airstrike .

On March 24 , 2011 , the Associated Press reported that before Abdulmutallab set off on his mission , he visited the home of al @-@ Qaeda manager Fahd al @-@ Quso to discuss the plot and the workings of the bomb . In addition , the AP said that Abdulmutallab targeted Detroit because the plane ticket there was cheaper than the tickets to either Houston or Chicago . This suggests that al @-@ Qaeda in Yemen chose to attack " targets of opportunity , " rather than Osama bin Laden 's preference of " symbolic targets . "

= = Jasper Schuringa = =

Jasper Schuringa , who was en route to Miami , Florida for a vacation , stopped Abdulmutallab from causing too much damage and received burn injuries in the process . In a statement , Schuringa , who was in seat 20J on the flight , said he was able to locate Abdulmutallab , help to extinguish the fire that the explosive had caused , and helped to restrain Abdulmutallab using plastic cuffs . Schuringa lives in Amsterdam , and was born in 1977 in Curaçao , Netherlands Antilles . Schuringa is a graduate of Leiden University , Leiden . He is a film director of low @-@ budget Dutch films for an Amsterdam @-@ based media company , and was the assistant director for National Lampoon 's Teed Off Too .

Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Wouter Bos phoned Schuringa on behalf of the Dutch government the day after the attack , and conveyed the government 's compliments and gratitude for Schuringa 's part in overpowering the suspect . Dutch Member of Parliament Geert Wilders called Schuringa " a national hero " who " deserves a royal honor " , which Wilders said he would ask the Dutch government to award . According to the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant , Queen Beatrix expressed her feelings of gratitude towards Schuringa . On May 21 , 2010 , Schuringa received the Honorary Medal of the city Amsterdam from then @-@ acting mayor of Amsterdam , Lodewijk Asscher , for his " extraordinary heroism . " In December 2010 , Schuringa was also awarded the Silver Carnegie Medal from the Dutch division of the Carnegie Hero Fund .

= = Reactions and investigations = =

= = = US response = = =

The U.S. investigation into the incident is being managed by the Detroit Joint Terrorism Task Force , which is led by the FBI and includes U.S. Customs and Border Protection , U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement , the Federal Air Marshal Service , and other law enforcement agencies . Among other questions , they were attempting to find out what training he received , who else (if anyone) was in the training program , are others preparing to launch similar attacks , was the attack part of a larger plot , was it a test run , and who assisted him .

President Barack Obama was notified of the incident by an aide while on a vacation in Kailua , Hawaii , and spoke with officials from the Department of Homeland Security . He instructed that all appropriate measures be taken in response to the incident . While the White House called the attack an act of terrorism , U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder has not declared the incident an official terrorist act .

The U.S. is examining what information it had before the attack , why its National Counterterrorism Center did not make a connection between the warning from Abdulmutallab 's father and intercepts by the National Security Agency of conversations among Yemeni al @-@ Qaida leaders about a " Nigerian " to be used for an attack (months before the attack took place) , and why the suspect 's U.S. visa was not withdrawn .

On January 7 , 2010 , James L. Jones , the National Security Advisor , said Americans would feel " a certain shock " when a report detailing the intelligence failures that could have prevented the Christmas Day attack were released that day . He said that President Obama would be " legitimately and correctly alarmed that things that were available , bits of information that were available ,

patterns of behavior that were available , were not acted on . "

The U.S. also increased the installation and use of full @-@ body scanners in many of its major airports as a result of the attack . The scanners are designed to be able to detect bombs under clothing , and 11 airports , including O 'Hare International Airport in Chicago , began to receive the machines in March 2010 . The TSA said that it had plans to have 1 @,@ 000 of the machines in airports by the end of 2011 . Before , the U.S. had only 40 scanners across 19 airports . The government also said that it planned to buy 300 additional scanners in 2010 and another 500 in the following fiscal year , starting October 2010 . It costs around an estimated \$ 530 million to purchase the 500 machines and hire over 5 @,@ 300 workers to operate them . However , the U.S. government has stated that being scanned is voluntary and that passengers who object to the process could choose to undergo a pat @-@ down search or be searched with hand @-@ held detectors . Under new rules prompted by the incident , airline passengers traveling to the U.S. from 14 nations would undergo extra screening : Afghanistan , Algeria , Cuba , Iran , Iraq , Lebanon , Libya , Nigeria , Pakistan , Saudi Arabia , Somalia , Sudan , Syria , and Yemen . The inclusion of non @-@ Muslim Cuba on the list was criticized .

= = = International response = = =

Gordon Brown , Prime Minister of the United Kingdom , said that the UK would take " whatever action was necessary " . The day after the attack , British police searched a family @-@ owned flat where Abdulmutallab had lived while in London .

Dutch counter @-@ terrorism agency NCTb said that it had started a probe into where the suspect originated . Dutch officials also said that they will now use 3D full @-@ body scanning X @-@ ray technology on flights departing to the U.S. , despite protests from privacy advocates . Dutch officials said that security must take priority over the privacy of the individuals being scanned , but the scanners are not designed to compromise an individual 's privacy , as the imagery resolution is only high enough to detect non @-@ metallic objects under clothing , such as powdered explosives . Members of the Second Chamber (Lower House) of the Dutch parliament demanded an explanation from Minister of Justice Hirsch Ballin , asking how the suspect managed to smuggle explosives on board , despite Schiphol 's reportedly strict security measures .

The incident also raised concerns regarding security procedures at Nigeria 's major international airports in Lagos and Abuja . In response to criticism , Nigerian civil aviation officer Harold Demuran announced that Nigeria would also set up full @-@ body scanning X @-@ ray machines in Nigerian airports .

In response to the incident and to comply with new U.S. regulations , the Canadian government said it would install full body scanners at major airports . The first 44 scanners were planned to be installed at airports in Vancouver , Calgary , Edmonton , Winnipeg , Toronto , Ottawa , Montreal , and Halifax .

= = = Other agencies = = =

Delta Air Lines , which owned Northwest until all operations were merged into Delta on January 31 , 2010 , said its Detroit group did not handle security for the flight . It released a statement calling the incident a " disturbance , " and saying that Delta was " cooperating fully with authorities " . Delta 's CEO , Richard Anderson , said in an internal memo that " Having this occur again [after 9 / 11] is disappointing to all of us ... You can be certain we will make our points very clearly in Washington . "

In January 2010 , ICTS International , a security firm that provides security services to Schiphol airport , and G4S (Group 4 Securicor Aviation Security B.V.) , another security firm , traded blame over the security oversight , as did authorities at Schiphol Airport , the Federal Aviation Authority , and U.S. intelligence officials . According to Haaretz , the failure was twofold : An intelligence failure , as Obama stated , in the poor handling of information that arrived at the State Department and probably also the CIA from both the father of the would @-@ be bomber and the British security

service ; and a failure within the security system , including that of ICTS .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Criminal charges and conviction = = =

On December 26 , a criminal complaint was filed against Abdulmutallab in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan , charging him with two counts : placing a destructive device in , and attempting to destroy , a U.S. civil aircraft . Abdulmutallab was arraigned and officially charged by U.S. District Court Judge Paul D. Borman later the same day at the University of Michigan Hospital .

On January 6 , 2010 , a federal grand jury indicted Abdulmutallab on six criminal counts including attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and attempted murder . " Not guilty " pleas were entered on the behalf of Abdulmutallab at the hearing . If convicted , Abdulmutallab could face a life sentence plus 90 years . He faced his first court hearing , a detention hearing , on January 8 , 2010 .

When asked about his decision to prosecute Abdulmutallab in federal court rather than have him detained under the law of war , U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder defended his position , saying that it was " fully consistent with the long @-@ established and publicly known policies and practices of the Department of Justice , the FBI , and the United States Government as a whole , " and that he was confident that Abdulmutallab would be successfully prosecuted under the federal criminal law . Holder had originally been asked by U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell , as well as several others , about his choice .

On February 16 , 2012 , Abdulmutallab , who had pleaded guilty but remained unrepentant , was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole .

= = = Effect on travel = = =

The U.S. government did not raise the Homeland Security Advisory System terrorist threat level , orange at the time (high risk of terrorist attacks) , following the attack . The Department of Homeland Security said that additional security measures would be in place for the remainder of the Christmas travel period . The TSA detailed several of the measures , including a restriction on movement and access to personal items during the last hour of flight for planes entering U.S. airspace . The TSA also said that there would be more officers and security dogs at airports .

On December 28 , Transport Canada announced that for several days it would not allow passengers flying to the U.S. from Canada a carry @-@ on bag , with some exceptions . British Airways said that passengers flying to the U.S. would only be permitted one carry @-@ on item . Other European countries increased baggage screening , pat @-@ down searches , and random searches for passengers traveling to the U.S. A spokesperson for Schiphol Airport said that heightened security would be in place for " an indefinite period " . However , in spite of the extra measures said to have been put in place to prevent a follow @-@ up attack , Stuart Clarke , a photoreporter from the British newspaper Daily Express , claimed to have smuggled a syringe containing fluid , which could have been a liquid bomb detonator onto another plane . On January 3 , 2010 , Clarke said he boarded a jet from Schiphol Airport bound for Heathrow Airport just five days after the Christmas Day attack , and that the airport appeared to have imposed no additional security , such as precautionary pat @-@ downs which could easily have discovered the syringe which he claimed he kept in his jacket pocket throughout .

= = = U.S. political fallout = = =

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano said several times on Sunday talk shows that " the system had worked " , a statement that

engendered some controversy . The next day they retracted the statements , saying that the system had in fact " failed miserably . " According to Napolitano , her initial statement had referred to the rapid response to the attack that included alerts sent to the 128 other aircraft in U.S. airspace at the time , and new security requirements for the final hour of flight , rather than the security failures that allowed the attack to happen . Napolitano had originally stated on This Week that " once this incident occurred , everything went according to clockwork " and that " once the incident occurred , the system worked " .

The day after the attack , the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee and Senate Commerce , Science , and Transportation Committee both announced that they would hold hearings in January 2010 to investigate how the device passed through security , and whether further restrictions should be placed on air travel ; the Senate hearings began on January 21 .

Four days after the attack , Obama said publicly that Abdulmutallab 's ability to board the aircraft was the result of a systemic failure that included an inadequate sharing of information among U.S. and foreign government agencies . He called the situation " totally unacceptable . " He ordered that a report be delivered detailing how some government agencies had failed to share or highlight potentially relevant information about the suspect before he allegedly tried to blow up the airliner . Two days later Obama received the briefing , which included statements that information about the suspect had failed to cross agency lines , and that the failures to communicate within the U.S. government had led to the threat posed by Abdulmutallab not being known by certain agencies until the attack . Obama said he would meet with security officials and specifically question why Abdulmutallab was not placed on the U.S. no @-@ fly list , despite the government having received warnings about his potential al @-@ Qaeda links .

On January 27 , 2010 , an official from the U.S. State Department said that Abdulmutallab 's visa was not revoked because federal authorities believed that it would have compromised a larger investigation . The official , Patrick F. Kennedy , said intelligence officials had told the State Department that letting Abdulmutallab keep his visa would allow for a greater chance of exposing the terrorist network .

= = = Alleged subsequent plot = = =

On May 7 , 2012 , American officials claimed that they had thwarted another Al Qaeda plot that would have targeted a civilian passenger plane not unlike Northwest Airlines Flight 253 . American officials stated that the attack would have involved a more sophisticated bomb , also planted in undergarments , and would have been deployed near the anniversary of the killing of Osama Bin Laden . Officials did not state whether any persons had been arrested or charged in their operation .

An American official told MSNBC that the bomb was received by American security personnel in April , " was never near a plane " and " never posed a risk . " They speculated that the bomb might have been constructed by Ibrahim al @-@ Asiri , who is accused of constructing the explosives used by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in 2009 .