

Why is the American press silent on the Israeli role in NW Flight 253?

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Nearly a week ago, on January 10, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* carried a news article by correspondent Yossi Melman pointing out the role of an Israeli security firm, International Consultants on Targeted Security (ICTS), in the failed attempt to detonate a bomb on board Northwest Airlines Flight 253.

ICTS subsidiaries I-SEC and PI are responsible for security screening of passengers at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, where accused suicide bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab boarded the Detroit-bound jet. The company uses screening technology to profile passengers and identify security risks, based on the experience of the Israeli intelligence services. Former El Al Airlines and Shin Bet security personnel established ICTS in 1982 to market their expertise, and many US airlines use their services or technology.

According to *Ha'aretz*, Abdulmutallab was screened by ICTS, but the security agents failed to identify him as a threat, despite ample evidence.

"Even if US intelligence failed and the name of the Nigerian passenger was not pinpointed as a suspect for the airline, he should have stirred the suspicion of the security officers," the newspaper wrote. "His age, name, illogical travel route, high-priced ticket purchased at the last minute, his boarding without luggage (only a carry on) and many other signs should have been sufficient to alert the security officers and warrant further examination of the suspect. However, the security supervisor representing I-SEC and PI allowed him to get on the flight."

The Israeli connection has been widely reported in the Israeli and European press. In addition to *Ha'aretz*, the *Jerusalem Post* noted the role of ICTS in Amsterdam in an article December 27, and Israeli

television interviewed a company director, who confirmed that Abdulmutallab had been given a security screening.

Reports subsequently appeared in newspapers and Web news sources in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy. But there has been nothing in the main American media outlets—nothing in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal* or any other major daily newspaper, and nothing on any of the television or cable news networks.

The contrast between the press treatment in Europe and in America is an indication that the role of ICTS is not merely an unimportant detail. Clearly, the word is being passed to keep quiet on the subject, either in the form of a direct order from the US security services, or indirectly through the system of media self-censorship that operates no less effectively for being "voluntary."

What reason could there be to conceal the role of ICTS?

First, some relevant facts: ICTS handled security at the Charles de Gaulle Airport outside Paris when "shoe bomber" Richard Reid boarded a US-bound plane on December 22, 2001. The company also handled security for London's bus system during the July 7, 2005, suicide bomb attacks. And ICTS shared security duties on September 11, 2001, at Boston's Logan Airport, where two of the four suicide hijackings originated.

At the very least, these are curious coincidences, particularly given the supposed expertise of the Israeli security services in identifying and forestalling terrorist attacks. ICTS has had its personnel on the scene in four of the most notorious terrorist attacks of the past decade, and on each occasion, they failed to take action to stop the terrorists.

In its 28 years of operation, ICTS has expanded to 22 countries, servicing airports in France, Britain, Spain, Hungary, Romania and Russia, and employing more than 11,000 security agents. It held contracts at several US airports until after 9/11, when passenger screening was taken out of private hands and assigned to the newly created federal Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

The silence on the role of ICTS is only the most curious aspect of a more general shift by the media away from any reporting on the background to the attempted bombing of Northwest Flight 253. There was a noticeable turn away from an examination of the Christmas Day incident even before the Haitian earthquake became—legitimately—the main focus of media attention.

The official story of Northwest Flight 253, as presented by the Obama White House and the intelligence agencies, is so incredible that it seems there has been a concerted effort to drop the subject and divert public attention in other directions. In that context, the total silence on the role of the Israeli security company raises even more questions about the role that US and other intelligence agencies played in the period leading up to the Christmas Day incident, which nearly cost the lives of some 300 people.



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