

# More “missed clues” in the Northwest Flight 253 bomb plot

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The *New York Times* on Monday published an extensive article based on its own investigation into the abortive plot to blow up Northwest Flight 253 as it made its approach to Detroit on Christmas Day.

The article reveals new information, beyond that released by President Obama January 7 in the unclassified version of a government review of the security “failure” that allowed Nigerian student Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to board the flight in Amsterdam with explosives sewn into his underwear.

Among the revelations in the article, headlined “Review of Jet Bomb Plot Shows More Missed Clues,” is the fact that US intelligence authorities say they learned in early November from a communications intercept of Al Qaeda followers in Yemen that a man named “Umar Farouk” had volunteered for a coming operation.

This staggering fact alone is sufficient to explode the official version of the plot—which the *Times* itself continues to promote in the article on its investigation—that the failure to take any measures to prevent Abdulmutallab from boarding the plane was the result of mistakes, inadvertent omissions and an inability to “connect the dots.”

The dots metaphor suggests a failure to relate obscure bits of information that, taken singly or not properly meshed, would not provoke an immediate response. What we are dealing with here, however, are neon warning signs that could hardly have been inadvertently missed.

The claim, universally accepted by the media, that mere incompetence, rather than deliberate decisions taken by elements within the intelligence/national security apparatus, accounts for the near destruction of a commercial jet and its nearly 300 passengers and crew, already strained credulity when it was revealed within hours of the abortive plot that the accused bomber’s father had informed CIA and US State Department

officials in Nigeria more than a month earlier that his son had likely joined up with Islamist extremists in Yemen and constituted a security threat.

This revelation was followed by many others, showing that the US had a wealth of information both on Abdulmutallab and on terrorist threats emanating from Yemen, targeting the US, and timed for the Christmas holiday period. Such information rendered entirely non-credible the hackneyed metaphor about “connecting the dots”—carried over from the official whitewash of the role of US intelligence and police agencies in the 9/11 attacks.

The new information contained in the *Times* article further undermines the official story and makes clear that the American people are being lied to.

Among the new pieces of information contained in the article are the following:

- “Worried about possible terrorist attacks over the Christmas holiday,” Obama met December 22 with top officials of the CIA, FBI and Department of Homeland Security to review potential threats.
- In a separate White House meeting the same day, Obama’s homeland security adviser, John Brennan, held talks on Yemen, “where a stream of disturbing intelligence had suggested that Qaeda operatives were preparing for some action, perhaps a strike on an American target on Christmas Day.”
- In September, a United Nations expert on Al Qaeda warned Washington that “the type of explosive device used by a Yemeni militant in an assassination attempt in Saudi Arabia could be carried aboard an airliner.”
- In late December, more intercepts of Al Qaeda operatives in Yemen mentioned the date of December 25, and suggested that they were “looking for ways to get somebody out” or “move people to the West.”

The article further states that from the beginning of the Obama administration, US officials had focused on Yemen, and that after the failed attack by a Yemeni on the

Saudi counterterrorism chief last August, Washington stepped up its electronic eavesdropping and “other spying” in Yemen.

Moreover, the government ordered a review of any contacts between possible extremists and Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical American-born cleric living in Yemen, after it was discovered that Major Nidal Malik Hasan, who killed 12 soldiers at Ford Hood in Texas in early November, had been in contact with al-Awlaki.

The intercept from November that spoke of “Umar Farouk” said he had “recently been in contact with Mr. Awlaki about volunteering for terrorist operations.”

The *Times* writes that in carrying out its inquiry, it conducted more than two dozen interviews with White House and US intelligence officials and with counterterrorism officials in Europe and Yemen. It cites as the sources for its revelations unnamed intelligence officials and senior Obama administration officials.

The article gives an indication of the vast apparatus of spying and intelligence gathering that somehow proved unable to “connect the dots” and order elementary measures to search and question the would-be bomber before he boarded the plane.

The National Counterterrorism Center, it notes, gathers “streams of information from more than 80 databases across the government.” Two teams of intelligence analysts are deployed there, with nearly 325 analysts working full-time to monitor information and draw up “watch lists” on potential terrorists.

“Inside their electronic files, which contain tips on tens of thousands of cases,” the *Times* reports, “the analysts at the counterterrorism center also had a draft CIA memorandum with biographical information about the man (Abdulmutallab).”

The article is accompanied by a timeline showing more than a dozen pieces of alarming information on Abdulmutallab that were known to US and international intelligence and police agencies in the months leading up to the Christmas Day attack. It begins with the fact that the British government in May of 2009 rejected his application to renew his student visa and placed him on a watch list to prevent him from reentering the UK.

Nevertheless, the newspaper attempts to put the most innocent possible face on the case, using words and phrases such as “lapse,” “misjudgment,” “never connected the links,” “failed to stitch together pieces of information” and “inability to pull the data together.”

Why however, in the face of a mass of evidence pointing in the opposite direction, should anyone assume

that the failure to act on the evidence leading to Abdulmutallab involved merely “mistakes,” and not something far more sinister?

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote on December 31 (See “The Northwest Flight 253 intelligence failure: Negligence or conspiracy?”): “The key to this event may well lie in bitter struggles over policy taking place within the ruling establishment at the state. Despite all that Obama has done to continue the policies of the Bush administration, both in terms of aggressive war abroad and the buildup of police state powers at home, there are elements who want to go much further.”

The *Times* article, in fact, speaks of bitter divisions between different intelligence agencies and between the agencies and the Obama White House. It cites “one senior Obama official” as faulting Dennis Blair, the director of national intelligence, and adds, “For their part, some senior intelligence officials bristled at what they saw as a White House effort to place blame for the breakdown solely on American spy agencies.”

Ruling out in advance even the possibility of a deliberate decision by elements within the intelligence apparatus and the state to allow a terrorist incident, as the *Times* and the rest of the media do, is the prerequisite for a cover-up, not a serious investigation. It goes hand in hand with the efforts of the Obama administration to whitewash the intelligence agencies, naming no names of individuals who made decisions that allowed a near catastrophe to occur and holding no individuals or government agencies accountable.

There are many unanswered questions that are of vital import to the American people. Is the Obama administration in control of its own national security apparatus? Was the Christmas Day plot a deliberate attempt to destabilize the administration? Was it a deliberate attempt to provide a pretext for further US military action in the Middle East and further attacks on democratic rights at home?

Two things are certain: The American people are not being told the truth, and no confidence can be placed in any agency of the US government or in the media to provide an honest and serious account of what took place.



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