

Attempted bombing of Flight 253: Terror Suspect Kept Visa to Avoid Tipping off Larger Investigation

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Washington –The State Department didn't revoke the visa of foiled terrorism suspect Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab because federal counterterrorism officials had begged off revocation, a top State Department official revealed Wednesday.

Patrick F. Kennedy, an undersecretary for management at the State Department, said Abdulmutallab's visa wasn't taken away because intelligence officials asked his agency not to deny a visa to the suspected terrorist over concerns that a denial would've foiled a larger investigation into al-Qaida threats against the United States.

"Revocation action would've disclosed what they were doing," Kennedy said in testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security. Allowing Abdulmutallab to keep the visa increased chances federal investigators would be able to get closer to apprehending the terror network he is accused of working with, "rather than simply knocking out one soldier in that effort."

The committee's hearing continues a series across Capitol Hill that started last week, all looking into the events leading up to and after the attempted bombing of Flight 253 over Detroit. Law enforcement officials say Abdulmutallab tried to detonate an explosive hidden in his underwear on board the flight from Amsterdam shortly before its landing at Detroit Metropolitan Airport in Romulus on Christmas Day.

Since the failed attack, criticism has swirled around leaders of the U.S. intelligence community who have indicated they were warned by the suspect's father about a month before the flight of a potential terror threat, but failed to stop Abdulmutallab, despite other warning signs like the fact that he purchased a one-way ticket to Detroit with cash.

Politicians have also criticized the decision to treat Abdulmutallab as a civilian after the arrest in Michigan, with Miranda rights being read to him after less than an hour of interrogation and without input from the intelligence community.

Rep. Candice Miller, R-Harrison Township, the only Michigan House member on the Homeland Security Committee, said in a Tuesday statement that she planned to question officials on that matter at today's hearing.

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