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Questions Mount Over Attempt to Bomb Detroit-bound Jetliner

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Ten days after the failed attempt to explode a bomb onboard Northwest Flight 253 as it approached Detroit—an action that, if successful, would have killed nearly 300 people—there are mounting questions about the actions of US government agencies.

According to the official story, propagated by the Obama administration and uncritically parroted by the US media, the various components of the US national security apparatus were incapable of bringing together the following known facts:

• In May, the British government withdrew its student visa for Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a young Nigerian who had studied at University College, London, and placed him on a watch list, barring him from reentering the country.
• In August, US intelligence agencies learned of Al Qaeda discussions of an operation against a US target to be organized from Yemen, using a "Nigerian."
• On November 19, the father of Abdulmutallab, a prominent Nigerian banker, visited the US embassy in Abuja and told State Department and CIA personnel that his son had fallen under the influence of radical Islamists, gone to join them in Yemen, and broken off contact with his family.
• Based on the father's report, State Department and CIA officers at the embassy informed Washington on November 20 and a security file was opened on Abdulmutallab at the National Counterterrorism Center, the main Washington clearinghouse for terrorism information.
• On December 16, Abdulmutallab visited a ticket office in Ghana and paid $2,831 in cash for a ticket on a Northwest Airlines flight from Lagos through Amsterdam to Detroit, landing on Christmas Day.
• On December 25, Abdulmutallab boarded the flight in Amsterdam with only a carry-on bag for a trans-Atlantic journey. Following standard procedure, the US Department of Homeland Security was notified at least an hour before departure that he was a passenger on the flight.

No intelligent person can believe the official US government account of its failure to stop the attempted bombing of Northwest Airlines Flight 253. The claim that US intelligence agencies were unable to detect the bomb plot, despite so many warnings months in advance, is simply not credible.

The official discussion repeats the same rhetorical trope employed to cover up the role of US intelligence agencies before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001—that they failed to "connect the dots." This metaphor suggests a highly abstruse process in which many small details, each seemingly innocent in itself, are correlated through sophisticated analysis by

experts familiar with the patterns of terrorist operations.

No such operation was required to detect the Northwest Airlines bomb plot. The facts listed above were a series of fire alarms, each sufficient in itself to give the alert. To stop Abdulmuttalab from boarding the US-bound jetliner was a routine police matter, one that would ordinarily be executed without difficulty by the government of any middle-sized country, let alone by the most powerful military/intelligence apparatus on the planet.

If the Nigerian was allowed to board the jet in Amsterdam, it was because at some level within the US military/intelligence apparatus, the decision was made to allow him to do so.

The real failure to "connect the dots" is the refusal to draw any conclusions from the inaction of the US intelligence apparatus. Who made the decision not to act? Why did they make this decision? Was the intention that the would-be bomber succeed or fail? Was it a deliberate attempt to undermine the Obama administration? Was it a deliberate attempt to provide a pretext for further US military action in the Middle East?

In the world's major intelligence agencies—the Russian FSB, the British MI-5, the Israeli Mossad, the French SGDN, China's Second Intelligence Department—these are the questions that are being asked, along with a further question: Is the Obama administration in control of its own national security apparatus? These agencies undoubtedly dismiss the official US account of the abortive Christmas Day bombing for what it is: disinformation generated to delude American public opinion.

We do not claim to have the answers to all these questions. But they are the starting point of any serious investigation. If they are ruled out in advance, as is the case now in the American media, the result must inevitably be a whitewash, as with the myriad official "investigations" into the 9/11 attacks.

Typical in this respect is the editorial published Saturday in the *New York Times*, under the headline, "Why Didn't They See It?" The editorial swallows whole the claim of a failure on the part of the intelligence and homeland security bureaucracy to put together the information about Abdulmutallab.

"No doubt sorting through heaps of information and determining what is urgent or even worthy of follow-up is daunting," the *Times* commented. "Still, it is incredible, and frightening, that the government cannot do at least as good a job at swiftly updating and correlating information as Google."

Actually, it is literally "incredible," i.e., not credible. And it is doubtful that even the editors of the *Times* believe it, although they are constrained from saying so by the informal but virtually complete self-censorship of the American capitalist media.

In a series of appearances on the Sunday morning network television programs, Obama's chief White House counterterrorism adviser, former top CIA official John Brennan, declared that the US government's data-handling methods were at least as good as those of Google and Amazon.com. This only begs the question again: who made the decisions that allowed Abdulmutallab to board the Northwest jet?

Additional facts reported in the media this weekend make this decision still less susceptible to innocent explanation.

The *Washington Post* cited a "family cousin" quoting this warning from Abdulmuttalab's father to the US government: "Look at the texts he's sending. He's a security threat."

Given the vast powers of the US National Security Agency to pore through the world's email traffic—amplified by the USA Patriot Act—there is little doubt that such a tip would have led quickly to the surveillance of all electronic communications by, with or about the young Nigerian.

There have also been reports that the father supplied US representatives with the number of his son's Nigerian passport, which was communicated to the National Counterterrorism Center. However, neither the State Department nor the NCTC checked whether the younger Abdulmutallab had a valid US visa—a fact readily determined from internal US government databases—or made any effort to rescind it.

Time magazine, citing a "source close to the family" of the bomber, wrote that "it was an alleged threat to blow up an American plane that apparently alarmed his parents and supposedly resulted in his father going to warn the US embassy." This suggests that US officials had warning a month ahead of time about the specific target of attack.

Newsweek magazine reported that the Saudi counterterrorism chief, Muhammad bin Nayaf, gave a briefing to Brennan in the White House sometime last fall about the specific technique used by the Northwest bomber, concealing PETN explosive in his undergarments, which was used in a failed Al Qaeda attempt to assassinate bin Nayaf himself.

Moreover, according to *Newsweek*, the NSA had intercepted telephone communications between Abdulmutallab and Mohammed al-Awlaki, the radical US-born Islamic cleric, now living in Yemen, who had been in communication with Major Nidal Malik Hasan in the months before his assault on military personnel at Ft. Hood, Texas, which took 13 lives. Al-Awlaki issued a statement in November predicting a Christmas "surprise" that would make Yemen a key arena of struggle against the United States.

As in the case of the 9/11 attacks, no confidence can be placed in any agency of the US government or in the American media to provide an honest or probing account of what has taken place. This fact testifies to the continued erosion of democratic rights in the United States, and the enormous danger this represents to the American people and the people of the world.

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