

Who Would Benefit Politically from a Terrorist Incident on American Soil? The Strange Case of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab

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Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Terrorism](#)

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Despite some \$40 billion dollars spent by the American people on airline security since 2001, allegedly to thwart attacks on the *Heimat*, the botched attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to bring down Northwest Airlines Flight 253 over Detroit on Christmas Day was foiled, not by a bloated counterterrorist bureaucracy, but by the passengers themselves.

Talk about validating that old Wobbly slogan: Direct action gets the goods!

And yet, the closer one looks at the available evidence surrounding the strange case of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the more sinister alleged “intelligence failures” become. As this story unfolds it is becoming abundantly clear that U.S. security officials had far more information on the would-be lap bomber than we’ve been told.

The Observer [revealed](#) January 3 that the British secret state had Abdulmutallab on their radar for several years and that he had become “politically involved” with “extremist networks” while a student at University College London, where he served as president of the Islamic Society.

Examining “e-mail and text traffic,” security officers claim to have belatedly discovered that “he has been in contact with jihadists from across the world since 2007.”

Indeed, The Sunday Times [disclosed](#) that the 23-year-old terrorism suspect was “‘reaching out’ to extremists whom MI5 had under surveillance.” The officials said that Abdulmutallab was “‘starting out on a journey’ in Britain” that culminated with last week’s attempt to destroy Flight 253.

It is claimed by unnamed “British officials” that “none of this information was passed” to their American counterparts; on the face of it, this appears to be a rank mendacity.

The Sunday Times further reported that security officials have “now passed a file” to American counterterrorism officers that show “his repeated contacts with MI5 targets who were subject to phone taps, email intercepts and other forms of surveillance.”

None of this should surprise anyone, however. In light of multiple prior warnings which preceded past terrorist atrocities, the selective leaking of information to the British media in its own way, buttresses the official story that the near-tragedy aboard Flight 253 was simply the result of ubiquitous “intelligence failures.”

But as we have seen with Mohamed Atta, Richard Reid and Mohammad Sidique Khan, Abdulmutallab's "journey" was one undertaken by many before, often with a wink-and-a-nod by British and American security officials when it served the geostrategic ambitions of their political masters.

As security researcher and analyst Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed wrote in the [New Internationalist](#) (October 2009): "Islamist terrorism cannot be understood without acknowledging the extent to which its networks are being used by Western military intelligence services, both to control strategic energy resources and to counter their geopolitical rivals. Even now, nearly a decade after 9/11, covert sponsorship of al-Qaeda networks continues."

Ahmed's findings track closely with those of Michel Chossudovsky, Peter Dale Scott and Richard Labévière, who have painstakingly documented that the complex of jihadi groups known as al-Qaeda have enjoyed the closest ties with Western intelligence agencies stretching back decades.

That intelligence officers, including those at the highest levels of the secret state's security apparatus, did nothing to hamper an alleged al-Qaeda operative from getting on that plane—in a chilling echo of the 9/11 attacks—calls into question the thin tissue of lies outlined in the official narrative.

An Intelligence "Failure," or a Wild "Success" for Security Corporations?

Charged December 26 with attempting to blow up a U.S. airliner, according to [The Washington Post](#) Abdulmutallab "was listed in a U.S. terrorism database."

The Post reported that the suspect's name "was added in November to the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment, or TIDE." It is further described as a "catch-all list" which "contains about 550,000 individuals" and is maintained by "the Office of the Director of National Intelligence at the National Counterterrorism Center."

However, The New York Times [revealed](#) December 31 that the "National Security Agency four months ago intercepted conversations among leaders of Al Qaeda in Yemen discussing a plot to use a Nigerian man for a coming terrorist attack."

Times' reporters Mark Mazzetti and Eric Lipton, citing unnamed "government officials," disclosed that "the electronic intercepts were translated and disseminated across classified computer networks" months before Abdulmutallab boarded Flight 253 in Amsterdam.

But when the NSA intercepts landed at the National Counterterrorism Center ([NCTC](#)), overseen by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence ([ODNI](#)), analysts there "did not synthesize the eavesdropping intelligence with information gathered in November" when Abdulmutallab's father provided the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria crucial information on his son's involvement with the Afghan-Arab database of disposable Western intelligence assets, also known as al-Qaeda.

Seeking comment from NCTC proved to be a daunting task. As the Times delicately put it, "officials at the counterterrorist center ... maintained a stoic silence on Wednesday, noting that the review ordered by President Obama was still under way."

Despite revelations in the British press, the White House maintains that U.S. intelligence

agencies “did not miss a ‘smoking gun’” that could have prevented the botched attack, the [Associated Press](#) reported January 3.

White House aide John Brennan, citing “lapses” and “errors” in sharing intelligence said, “There was no single piece of intelligence that said, ‘this guy is going to get on a plane.’”

As we will soon see, Mr. Brennan has every reason to hide behind such mendacities.

Investigative journalist Tim Shorrock, the author of the essential book [Spies For Hire, reported](#) in CorpWatch, that NCTC is an outsourced counterterrorist agency chock-a-block with security contractors in the heavily-leveraged homeland security market.

Indeed, The Analysis Corporation ([TAC](#)), a wholly-owned subsidiary of defense and intelligence contractor Global Strategies Group/North America, “specializes in providing counterterrorism analysis and watchlists to U.S. government agencies.”

“It is best known” according to Shorrock, “for its connection to John O. Brennan, its former CEO, a 35-year veteran of the CIA and currently President Obama’s chief counterterrorism adviser. Brennan, the first director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), retired from government in November 2005 and immediately joined TAC.”

Shorrock reports that “much of TAC’s business is with the NCTC itself. In fact, the NCTC is one of the company’s largest customers, and TAC provides counterterrorism (CT) support to ‘most of the agencies within the intelligence community,’ according to a company press release. One of its biggest customers is the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which manages the NCTC.”

“During the 1990s” Shorrock relates, “TAC developed the U.S. government’s first terrorist database, ‘Tipoff,’ on behalf of the State Department.”

Shorrock chronicles how “the database was initially conceived as a tool to help U.S. consular officials and customs inspectors determine if foreigners trying to enter the United States were known or suspected terrorists.”

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks and subsequent reorganization of the U.S. security bureaucracy, the investigative journalist tells us that “in 2003, management of the database—which received information collected by a large number of agencies including the CIA, NSA, and FBI—was transferred to the CIA’s Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) and, later, to the National Counterterrorism Center.”

“In 2005” Shorrock discloses, “Tipoff was expanded and renamed the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment, or TIDE, and fingerprint and facial recognition software was added to help identify suspects as they crossed U.S. borders.”

Despite the utter worthlessness of a bloated database containing more than 1.3 million names according to the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), and not the grossly undercounted figure of 550,000 cited by corporate media, TIDE has been a boon for TAC.

“In the five years after 9/11” Shorrock reveals, “its income quintupled, from less than \$5 million in 2001 to \$24 million in 2006. In 2006, TAC increased its visibility in the intelligence community by creating a ‘senior advisory board’

that included three heavy hitters from the CIA: former Director George J. Tenet, former Chief Information Officer Alan Wade, and former senior analyst John P. Young.”

And what have the American people gained from inflating the corporatist bottom line? In light of the Christmas Day bombing attempt, not much.

As investigative journalists Susan and Joseph Trento revealed in their overlooked but highly-disturbing 2006 book, [Unsafe At Any Altitude](#), most of the 9/11 hijackers, including Mohamed Atta, Hani Hanjour, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Majed Moqed “were flagged by CAPPS (Computer-Assisted Passenger Prescreening System).”

But because of CIA and FBI monkey-business that rendered watch-list information useless to stop suspected terrorists from boarding an airliner, “the only thing that was done as a result was that the baggage of several members of the Al Qaeda team was held on the ground until the cabin crew confirmed they had boarded as passengers.”

And when you consider that Abdulmutallab didn’t even have any baggage to check, alleged security “lapses” are even more glaring.

According to the Trentos, “the FBI, CIA, NSA, and Department of Homeland Security refuse to give the airlines an accurate no fly list, thereby allowing the most threatening terrorists to continue to fly.” Is there a pattern here? You bet there is!

An unnamed “counterterrorist official” told [The Wall Street Journal](#) December 31: “‘If you look back to these audit reports, there are significant issues raised with the accuracy and omissions to the watchlisting process that haven’t been fixed, clearly,’ as of Dec. 25. ‘Essentially you’re screening blindly, and that’s not effective.’”

However, we can be sure there will be very little in the way of a hard-hitting investigation into this alleged security breach. The New York Times [reported](#) that TAC’s former CEO John O. Brennan, has been “granted a special ethics waiver ... to conduct a review of the intelligence and screening breakdown that preceded the failed Christmas Day bombing attempt on an American passenger plane over Detroit.”

Enter the CIA, Stage (Far) Right

What “other government agency” may have suppressed intelligence on the would-be bomber?

The CBS Evening News [revealed](#) December 29 that “as early as August of 2009,” tracking closely with the time-frame of NSA intercepts, “the Central Intelligence Agency was picking up information on a person of interest dubbed ‘The Nigerian,’ suspected of meeting with ‘terrorist elements’ in Yemen.”

Unnamed “intelligence sources” told CBS, “‘The Nigerian’ has now turned out to be Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab.” But that connection “was not made when Abdulmutallab’s father went to the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria three months later, on November 19, 2009. It was then he expressed deep concerns to a CIA officer about his son’s ties to extremists in Yemen, a hotbed of al Qaeda activity.” CBS claims “this information was not connected until after the attempted Christmas Day bombing.”

Earlier reports have alleged that Umar's father, a wealthy Nigerian banker and former high state official, Alhaji Umaru Mutallab, had only provided Embassy officials with a vague concern that his son's estrangement "may have" something to do with his growing "religious fervor." This too, turns out to be a lie.

The Times reported that a "family cousin quoted the father as warning officials from the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency in Nigeria: 'Look at the texts he's sending. He's a security threat'."

Nothing vague in this disclosure, but rather more concrete evidence in the form of "texts" which we now know were shortstopped by British security and included "phone taps, email intercepts and other forms of surveillance" by MI5 that led an anguished father to express well-placed fears about his son to U.S officials.

But as the Times were told by their source, *"They promised to look into it. They didn't take him seriously."*

And here's where things take a decidedly malevolent turn. According to the Times, *"C.I.A. officials in Nigeria also prepared a separate report compiling biographical information about Mr. Abdulmutallab, including his educational background and the fact that he was considering pursuing academic studies in Islamic law in Yemen."*

"That cable was sent to C.I.A. headquarters in Langley, Va.," Mark Mazzetti and Eric Lipton disclosed, "but not disseminated to other intelligence agencies, government officials said on Wednesday."

Then again, perhaps they knew all-too-well of Abdulmutallab's glide path and chose instead to turn a blind eye. Coming on the heels of disclosures in the British media, the evidence suggests that CIA intelligence provided by NSA intercepts, their own on-the-ground operatives in Yemen and MI5 surveillance reports were scrupulously ignored by factions within the secret state who sat on critical information that withheld, would disarm and paralyze normal security procedures in the face of an attack they knew was imminent.

We were told by corporate media, infamously serving as an echo chamber for grifting politicians, Bushist officials and the 9/11 Commission's 2004 whitewash, that the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks resulted from "a failure of imagination" by counterterrorism officials to "connect the dots."

Seems there were plenty of "dots" in Abdulmutallab's case and yet, inexplicably, if you buy the official story, and sinisterly, if you don't, not a single one was "connected" prior to the time he took his seat on Flight 253.

Despite the fact that Abdulmutallab was denied re-entry into Britain, paid \$2,800 in cash for his "ticket to Paradise," and had no luggage that normally would accompany a person holding a 2-year entry visa into the U.S., the erstwhile lap bomber scored a goal each time and eluded every intrusive "profile" presumably in place to keep us "safe." Talk about a hat trick!

Available evidence suggests that Abdulmutallab should have landed on TSA's hush-hush "Selectee list" for additional screening, or the agency's "No-fly list." And given NSA intercepts and a CIA biographical report on the suspect, this alone should have barred him from entering the country if "normal" security procedures were followed. They weren't.

As [The Independent on Sunday](#) reported last week, “the revelation of Abdulmutallab’s background has confounded terror experts.” One such “expert,” Dr Magnus Ranstorp of the Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies at the Swedish National Defence College, told IoS that “the attempted bombing ‘didn’t square’.”

“On the one hand” Ranstorp said, “it seems he’s been on the terror watch list but not on the no-fly list.”

“That doesn’t square” Ranstorp elaborated, “because the American Department for Homeland Security has pretty stringent data-mining capability. I don’t understand how he had a valid visa if he was known on the terror watch list.”

Good question, Dr. Ranstorp. Perhaps because someone wanted him on that plane. The question is, who?

One would have thought, given the “special treatment” afforded [antiwar activists](#) by TSA at airports, that a warning about Abdul Mutallab’s possible involvement with terrorists, by his own father no less, a former top official in a government friendly to Washington, numerous NSA intercepts, a CIA dossier and MI5 reports would have raised at least one red flag!

In the suspect’s case, there were so many red flags flying you’d have thought the Red Army was parading through Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport!

Then again, perhaps Abdul Mutallab was on that plane because, as journalist Daniel Hopsicker was [told](#) by a former aviation executive during his investigation of the 9/11 attacks: “Sometimes when things don’t make business sense ... its because they do make sense...just in some other way.”

As the [World Socialist Web Site](#) points out:

The general outlines of the Northwest bombing attempt and the 9/11 attacks are startlingly similar. One might even say that what is involved is a modus operandi. In both cases, those alleged to have carried out the actions had been the subject of US intelligence investigations and surveillance and had been allowed to enter the country and board flights under conditions that would normally have set off multiple security alarms.

Both then and now, the government and the media expect the public to accept that all that was involved was mistakes. But why should anyone assume that the failure to act on the extensive intelligence leading to Abdulmutallab involved merely “innocent” mistakes—and not something far more sinister? (Bill Van Auken, “The Northwest Flight 253 intelligence failure: Negligence or conspiracy?,” World Socialist Web Site, December 31, 2009)

And so dear readers, we are left to ponder the question, cui bono?

Who would benefit politically from a major terrorist incident on American soil, ready, willing and able to step into the breach and exploit the catastrophic loss of human life that would follow in its wake?

Who indeed.

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