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Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab Indicted for Attempted Bombing of Flight 253 on Christmas Day *Defendant Faces Life in Prison if Convicted*

WASHINGTON—The Justice Department announced that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a 23-year-old Nigerian national, was charged today in a six-count criminal indictment returned in the Eastern District of Michigan for his alleged role in the attempted Christmas day bombing of Northwest Airlines flight 253 from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to Detroit.

Count one of the indictment charges Abdulmutallab with attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction, which carries a penalty of up to life in prison. Count two of the indictment charges him with attempted murder within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States, which carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison. Count three of the indictment charges him with willful attempt to destroy or wreck an aircraft within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States, which carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison. Count four of the indictment charges Abdulmutallab with willfully placing a destructive device on an aircraft within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States, which was likely to endanger the safety of such aircraft. This violation carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison. Count five of the indictment charges him with use of a firearm/destructive device during and in relation to a crime of violence, which carries a consecutive mandatory 30 years in prison. Count six of the indictment charges the defendant with possession of a firearm/destructive device in furtherance of a crime of violence, which carries a consecutive mandatory 30 years in prison.

“The charges that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab faces could imprison him for life,” said Attorney General Eric Holder. “This investigation is fast-paced, global and ongoing, and it has already yielded valuable intelligence that we will follow wherever it leads. Anyone we find responsible for this alleged attack will be brought to justice using every tool—military or judicial—available to our government.”

“The attempted murder of 289 innocent people merits the most serious charges available, and that’s what we have charged in this indictment,” said U.S. Attorney Barbara L. McQuade, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

According to the indictment, Northwest Airlines flight 253 carried 279 passengers and 11 crewmembers. Abdulmutallab allegedly boarded Northwest Airlines flight 253 in Amsterdam on Dec. 25, 2009 carrying a concealed bomb. The bomb components included Pentaerythritol (also known as PETN, a high explosive), as well as Triacetone Triperoxide (also known as TATP, a high explosive), and other ingredients.

The bomb was concealed in the defendant’s clothing and was designed to allow him to detonate it at a time of his choosing, thereby causing an explosion aboard flight 253, according to the indictment. Shortly prior to landing at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, Abdulmutallab detonated the bomb, causing a fire on board flight 253.

According to an affidavit filed in support of a criminal complaint, Abdulmutallab was subdued and restrained by the passengers and flight crew after detonating the bomb. The airplane landed shortly thereafter, and he was taken into custody by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers. Abdulmutallab required medical treatment, and was transported to the University of Michigan Medical Center after the plane landed.

This prosecution is being handled by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Michigan,

with assistance from the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division.

The investigation is being conducted by the Detroit Joint Terrorism Task Force, which is led by the FBI and includes U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Air Marshal Service, and other law enforcement agencies. Additional assistance has been provided by the Transportation Security Administration, the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the Wayne County Airport police, as well as international law enforcement partners.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains mere allegations and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

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