



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION DETROIT

Department of Justice Press Release

For Immediate Release
December 26, 2009

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Public Affairs
(202) 514-2007/TDD (202) 514-1888

Nigerian National Charged with Attempting to Destroy Northwest Airlines Aircraft

WASHINGTON—A 23-year-old Nigerian man was charged in a federal criminal complaint today with attempting to destroy a Northwest Airlines aircraft on its final approach to Detroit Metropolitan Airport on Christmas Day and with placing a destructive device on the aircraft.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, 23, a Nigerian national, boarded Northwest Flight 253 in Amsterdam, Netherlands on December 24, 2009 and had a device attached to his body. As the flight was approaching Detroit Metropolitan Airport, Abdulmutallab set off the device, which resulted in a fire and what appears to have been an explosion. Abdulmutallab was then subdued and restrained by the passengers and flight crew. The airplane landed shortly thereafter, and he was taken into custody by Customs and Border Patrol officers.

A preliminary FBI analysis found that the device contained PETN, also known as pentaerythritol, a high explosive. Further analysis is ongoing. In addition, FBI agents recovered what appear to be the remnants of the syringe from the vicinity of Abdulmutallab's seat, believed to have been part of the device.

"This alleged attack on a U.S. airplane on Christmas Day shows that we must remain vigilant in the fight against terrorism at all times," Attorney General Eric Holder said. "Had this alleged plot to destroy an airplane been successful, scores of innocent people would have been killed or injured. We will continue to investigate this matter vigorously, and we will use all measures available to our government to ensure that anyone responsible for this attempted attack is brought to justice

Abdulmutallab required medical treatment and was transported to the University of Michigan Medical Center after the plane landed. He will make his initial court appearance later today.

Interviews of all of the passengers and crew of Flight 253 revealed that prior to the incident, Abdulmutallab went to the bathroom for approximately 20 minutes, according to the affidavit. Upon returning to his seat, Abdulmutallab stated that his stomach was upset, and he pulled a blanket over himself. Passengers then heard popping noises similar to firecrackers, smelled an odor, and some observed Abdulmutallab's pants leg and the wall of the airplane on fire. Passengers and crew then subdued Abdulmutallab and used blankets and fire extinguishers to put out the flames. Passengers reported that Abdulmutallab was calm and lucid throughout. One flight attendant asked him what he had had in his pocket, and he replied "explosive device."

These prosecutions are 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 Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Joint Terrorism Task Force. The public is reminded that criminal complaints contain mere allegations, and a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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