

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

**Memorandum on the Attempted Terrorist Attack on December 25, 2009:  
Intelligence, Screening, and Watchlisting System Corrective Actions**  
*January 7, 2010*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary Energy, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Director of the National Security Agency, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center*

**Subject:** Attempted Terrorist Attack on December 25, 2009: Intelligence, Screening, and Watchlisting System Corrective Actions

After receiving the conclusions of the White House-led review of the U.S. watchlisting system and the performance of the intelligence, homeland security, and law enforcement communities as related to the attempt to bring down a Detroit-bound flight on December 25 by detonating an explosive device, and a Department of Homeland Security-led review on Aviation Screening, Technology and Procedures; I have concluded that immediate actions must be taken to enhance the security of the American people. These actions are necessary given inherent systemic weakness and human errors revealed by the review of events leading up to December 25th. They also are required to ensure that standards, practices, and business processes that have been in place since the aftermath of 9/11 are appropriately robust to address the evolving terrorist threat facing our Nation in the coming years.

*Department of State*

- Review visa issuance and revocation criteria and processes, with special emphasis on counterterrorism concerns; determine how technology enhancements can facilitate and strengthen visa-related business processes.

*Department of Homeland Security*

- Aggressively pursue enhanced screening technology, protocols, and procedures, especially in regard to aviation and other transportation sectors, consistent with privacy rights and civil liberties; strengthen international partnerships and coordination on aviation security issues.
- Develop recommendations on long-term law enforcement requirements for aviation security in coordination with the Department of Justice.

*Director of National Intelligence*

- Immediately reaffirm and clarify roles and responsibilities of the counterterrorism analytic components of the Intelligence Community in synchronizing, correlating, and analyzing all sources of intelligence related to terrorism.
- Accelerate the information technology enhancements, to include knowledge discovery, database integration, cross-database searches, and the ability to correlate biographic information with terrorism-related intelligence.

- Take further steps to enhance the rigor and raise the standard of tradecraft of intelligence analysis, especially analysis designed to uncover and prevent terrorist plots.
- Ensure resources are properly aligned with issues highlighted in strategic warning analysis.

#### *The Central Intelligence Agency*

- Issue guidance aimed at ensuring the timely distribution of intelligence reports.
- Strengthen procedures related to how watchlisting information is entered, reviewed, searched, analyzed, and acted upon.

#### *Federal Bureau of Investigation/Terrorist Screening Center*

- Conduct a thorough review of Terrorist Screening Database holdings and ascertain current visa status of all "known and suspected terrorists," beginning with the No Fly list.
- Develop recommendations on whether adjustments are needed to the watchlisting Nominations Guidance, including biographic and derogatory criteria for inclusion in the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment and Terrorist Screening Database, as well as the subset Selectee No Fly lists.

#### *National Counterterrorism Center*

- Establish and resource appropriately a process to prioritize and to pursue thoroughly and exhaustively terrorism threat threads, to include the identification of appropriate follow-up action by the intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities.
- Establish a dedicated capability responsible for enhancing record information on possible terrorists in the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment for watchlisting purposes.

#### *National Security Agency*

- Develop and begin implementation of a training course to enhance analysts' awareness of watchlisting processes and procedures in partnership with National Counterterrorism Terrorist Center and the Terrorist Screening Center.

#### *National Security Staff*

- Initiate an interagency policy process to review the systemic failures leading to the attempted terror attack on December 25, 2009, in order to make needed policy adjustments and to clarify roles and responsibilities within the counterterrorism community.
- Initiate an interagency review of the watchlisting process, including business processes, procedures, and criteria for watchlisting, and the interoperability and sufficiency of supporting information technology systems.

I have designated my Assistant for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan to be the responsible and accountable White House official to ensure rapid progress is made in all areas. A monthly status report on actions underway should be submitted to be through Mr. Brennan. In addition, I am directing Mr. Brennan to work with departments and

agencies and the Office of Management and Budget on resource requirements that are necessary to address the shortcomings uncovered by our review. Finally, I will ask my Intelligence Advisory Board to look at broader analytic and intelligence issues associated with this incident, including how to meet the challenge associated with exploiting the ever-increasing volume of information available to the Intelligence Community. As we go forward, it is imperative that we work together to correct problems highlighted by this incident, focusing on concrete solutions. We are all responsible for the safety and security of the American people and must redouble our efforts to be effective in carrying out this solemn responsibility.

BARACK OBAMA

*Categories:* Communications to Federal Agencies : Intelligence, screening, and watchlisting system, memorandum on corrective actions following the December 25, 2009, attempted terrorist attack.

*Names:* Brennan, John O.

*Subjects:* Aviation : Advanced airport security systems and technologies, development and funding; Aviation : Air travel security measures, expansion; Aviation : Airport security detection capabilities, review; Central Intelligence Agency; Defense and national security : Intelligence; Homeland Security, Department of : Aviation screening and security systems, international cooperation efforts; Intelligence Advisory Board, President's; Intelligence, Office of the Director of National : Director of National Intelligence; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal; Security Agency, National; State, Department of : Enhanced visa screening for people with connections to terrorists and terrorist groups; Terrorism : Christmas Day 2009 airline bombing attempt; Terrorism : Counterterrorism Center, National; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks; Terrorism : Terrorist watch lists, procedural review; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

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