

made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 p.m. on December 24. The

Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Percy Sutton *December 27, 2009*

Percy Sutton was a true hero to African Americans in New York City and around the country. We will remember him for his service to the country as a Tuskegee airman, to New York State as a State assemblyman, to New York City as Manhattan borough president, and to the community of Harlem in leading

the effort to revitalize the world renowned Apollo Theater. His life-long dedication to the fight for civil rights and his career as an entrepreneur and public servant made the rise of countless young African Americans possible.

Michelle and I extend our deepest condolences to his family on this sad day.

Remarks in Kaneohe, Hawaii *December 28, 2009*

Attempted Terrorist Act on Northwest Airlines Flight 253

Hey, guys. Good morning, everybody. I want to take just a few minutes to update the American people on the attempted terrorist attack that occurred on Christmas Day and the steps we're taking to ensure the safety and security of the country.

The investigation's ongoing, and I spoke again this morning with Attorney General Eric Holder, the Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, and my Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Adviser, John Brennan. I asked them to keep—continue monitoring the situation, to keep the American people and Members of Congress informed.

Here's what we know so far. On Christmas Day, Northwest Airlines Flight 253 was en route from Amsterdam, Netherlands, to Detroit. As the plane made its final approach to Detroit Metropolitan Airport, a passenger allegedly tried to ignite an explosive device on his body, setting off a fire.

Thanks to the quick and heroic actions of passengers and crew, the suspect was immediately subdued, the fire was put out, and the plane landed safely. The suspect is now in custody and has been charged with attempting to destroy an aircraft. And a full investigation has been launched into this attempted act of ter-

rorism, and we will not rest until we find all who were involved and hold them accountable.

Now, this was a serious reminder of the dangers that we face and the nature of those who threaten our homeland. Had the suspect succeeded in bringing down that plane, it could have killed nearly 300 passengers and crew, innocent civilians preparing to celebrate the holidays with their families and friends.

The American people should be assured that we are doing everything in our power to keep you and your families safe and secure during this busy holiday season. Since I was first notified of this incident, I've ordered the following actions to be taken to protect the American people and to secure air travel.

First, I directed that we take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the traveling public. We made sure that all flights still in the air were secure and could land safely. We immediately enhanced screening and security procedures for all flights, domestic and international. We added Federal air marshals to flights entering and leaving the United States. And we're working closely in this country—Federal, State, and local law enforcement—with our international partners.

Second, I've ordered two important reviews, because it's absolutely critical that we learn from this incident and take the necessary

measures to prevent future acts of terrorism. The first review involves our watch list system, which our Government has had in place for many years to identify known and suspected terrorists so that we can prevent their entry into the United States.

Apparently, the suspect in the Christmas incident was in this system, but not on a watch list such as the so-called no-fly list. So I've ordered a thorough review not only of how information related to the subject was handled but of the overall watch list system and how it can be strengthened.

The second review will examine all screening policies, technologies, and procedures related to air travel. We need to determine just how the suspect was able to bring dangerous explosives aboard an aircraft and what additional steps we can take to thwart future attacks.

Third, I've directed my national security team to keep up the pressure on those who would attack our country. We do not yet have all the answers about this latest attempt, but those who would slaughter innocent men, women, and children must know that the United States will more—do more than simply strengthen our defenses; we will continue to use every element of our national power to disrupt, to dismantle, and defeat the violent extremists who threaten us, whether they are from Afghanistan or Pakistan, Yemen or Somalia, or anywhere where they are plotting attacks against the U.S. homeland.

Finally, the American people should remain vigilant, but also be confident. Those plotting against us seek not only to undermine our security but also the open society and the values that we cherish as Americans. This incident, like several that have preceded it, demonstrates that an alert and courageous citizenry are far more resilient than an isolated extremist. As a nation, we will do everything in our power to protect our country. As Americans, we will never give in to fear or division; we will be guided by our hopes, our unity, and our deeply held values. That's who we are as Americans. That's what our brave men and women in uniform are standing up for as they spend the holidays in harm's way. And we will continue to do every-

thing that we can to keep America safe in the new year and beyond.

Situation in Iran

Before I leave, let me also briefly address the events that have taken place over the last few days in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The United States joins with the international community in strongly condemning the violent and unjust suppression of innocent Iranian citizens, which has apparently resulted in detentions, injuries, and even death.

For months, the Iranian people have sought nothing more than to exercise their universal rights. Each time they have done so, they have been met with the iron fist of brutality, even on solemn occasions and holy days. And each time that has happened the world has watched with deep admiration for the courage and the conviction of the Iranian people, who are part of Iran's great and enduring civilization.

What's taking place within Iran is not about the United States or any other country; it's about the Iranian people and their aspirations for justice and a better life for themselves. And the decision of Iran's leaders to govern through fear and tyranny will not succeed in making those aspirations go away. As I said in Oslo, it's telling when governments fear the aspirations of their own people more than the power of any other nation.

Along with all free nations, the United States stands with those who seek their universal rights. We call upon the Iranian Government to abide by the international obligations that it has to respect the rights of its own people. We call for the immediate release of all who have been unjustly detained within Iran. We will continue to bear witness to the extraordinary events that are taking place there. And I'm confident that history will be on the side of those who seek justice.

Thank you very much, everybody, and happy New Year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:01 a.m. at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. In his remarks, he referred to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, suspect in the December 25

explosive device incident on Northwest Airlines Flight 253. The Office of the Press Secre-

tary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Observance of Kwanzaa *December 28, 2009*

Michelle and I send warm wishes to all those celebrating Kwanzaa this holiday season. This is a joyous time of year when African Americans and all Americans come together to celebrate our blessings and the richness of our cultural traditions. This is also a time of reflection and renewal as we come to the end of one year and the beginning of another. The Kwanzaa message tells us that we should recall the lessons of the past even as we seize the promise of tomorrow.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose,

creativity, and faith—express the values that have inspired us as individuals and families, communities and country. These same principles have sustained us as a nation during our darkest hours and provided hope for better days to come. Michelle and I know the challenges facing many African American families and families in all communities at this time, but we also know the spirit of perseverance and hope that is ever present in the community. It is in this spirit that our family extends our prayers and best wishes during this season and for the new year to come.

Remarks in Kaneohe *December 29, 2009*

Good morning. Yesterday I updated the American people on the immediate steps we took, the increased screening and security of air travel, to keep our country safe in the wake of the attempted terrorist attack on Christmas Day. And I announced two reviews, a review of our terrorist watch list system and a review of our air travel screening, so we can find out what went wrong, fix it, and prevent future attacks.

Those reviews began on Sunday and are now underway. Earlier today I issued the former [formal]^{*} guidelines for those reviews and directed that preliminary findings be provided to the White House by this Thursday. It's essential that we diagnose the problems quickly and deal with them immediately.

Now, the more comprehensive, formal reviews and recommendations for improvement will be completed in the coming weeks, and I'm committed to working with Congress and our intelligence, law enforcement, and home-

land security communities to take all necessary steps to protect the country.

I wanted to speak to the American people again today because some of this preliminary information that has surfaced in the last 24 hours raises some serious concerns. It's been widely reported that the father of the suspect in the Christmas incident warned U.S. officials in Africa about his son's extremist views. It now appears that weeks ago, this information was passed to a component of our intelligence community, but was not effectively distributed so as to get the suspect's name on a no-fly list.

There appears to be other deficiencies as well. Even without this one report, there were bits of information available within the intelligence community that could have and should have been pieced together. We've achieved much since 9/11 in terms of collecting information that relates to terrorists and potential terrorist attacks, but it's becoming clear that the system that has been in place for years now is not sufficiently up to date to take full

^{*} White House correction.