

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.

advantage of the information we collect and the knowledge we have.

Had this critical information been shared, it could have been compiled with other intelligence and a fuller, clearer picture of the suspect would have emerged. The warning signs would have triggered red flags and the suspect would have never been allowed to board that plane for America.

Now, the professionalism of the men and women in our intelligence, counterterrorism, and law enforcement and homeland security communities is extraordinary. They are some of the most hard-working, most dedicated Americans that I've ever met. In pursuit of our security here at home, they risk their lives, day in, day out, in this country and around the world.

Few Americans see their work, but all Americans are safer because of their successes. They have targeted and taken out violent extremists; they have disrupted plots and saved countless American lives; they are making real and daily progress in our mission to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and other extremist networks around the world. And for this, every American owes them a profound and lasting debt of gratitude.

Moreover, as Secretary Napolitano has said, once the suspect attempted to take down Flight 253—after his attempt, it's clear that passengers and crew, our homeland security systems, and our aviation security took all appropriate actions. But what's also clear is this: When our Government has information on a known extremist and that information is not shared and acted upon as it should have been, so that this extremist boards a plane with dangerous explosives that could have cost nearly 300 lives, a systemic failure has occurred. And I consider that totally unacceptable.

The reviews I've ordered will surely tell us more. But what already is apparent is that there was a mix of human and systemic failures that contributed to this potential catastrophic breach of security. We need to learn from this episode and act quickly to fix the flaws in our system, because our security is at stake and lives are at stake.

I fully understand that even when every person charged with ensuring our security does what they are trained to do, even when every system works exactly as intended, there is still no 100 percent guarantee of success. Yet this should only compel us to work even harder, to be even more innovative and relentless in our efforts.

As President, I will do everything in my power to support the men and women in intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security to make sure they've got the tools and resources they need to keep America safe. But it's also my job to ensure that our intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security systems and the people in them are working effectively and held accountable. I intend to fulfill that responsibility and insist on accountability at every level.

That's the spirit guiding our reviews into the attempted attack on Christmas Day. That's the spirit that will guide all our efforts in the days and years ahead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 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, and his father Alhaji Umaru Mutallab. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Memorandum on Aviation Screening Technology and Procedures Review December 29, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Energy, and the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Aviation Screening Technology and Procedures Review

On December 27, 2009, I directed that an immediate review of aviation screening technology be initiated. This review should be led by the Department of Homeland Security, working with other departments and agencies including the Department of Energy and the National Laboratories. All aspects of aviation screening technology and procedures regarding domestic and international air travel should be considered as part of this review.

This review shall be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with the ongoing criminal investigation and prosecution of any individuals involved in the attempt to detonate an explosive device onboard Northwest flight 253 on December 25, 2009.

A preliminary report, including recommendations for strengthening aviation screening technology and procedures and outlining how the Department of Homeland Security plans to proceed, shall be provided to the White House Staff Secretary by December 31, 2009. Follow-up direction will be provided, as appropriate, based on the contents of the December 31, 2009, report.

BARACK OBAMA

Memorandum on Inventory of Watchlisting Files and Procedures Review December 29, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, 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 Counterterrorism Center, and the Director of the National Security Agency

Subject: Inventory of Watchlisting Files and Procedures Review

On December 27, 2009, I directed that the White House lead an interagency review of the watchlisting system in the aftermath of the December 25, 2009, attempt to detonate an explosive device onboard Northwest flight 253. This review should include the following input from departments and agencies:

- An inventory of all intelligence or other information in U.S. Government files that existed prior to and up through De-

cember 25, 2009, relevant or potentially relevant to the alleged attempt to detonate an explosive device onboard Northwest flight 253, the individual allegedly responsible, Umar Farouk Abdulmutalab, and the date on which the intelligence or other information was available. In addition, a written account of how any such intelligence or other information was handled, shared, and acted upon within individual departments and agencies and what intelligence or other information was shared with others.

- A written account of the standards and processes for nominating, reviewing, and approving or denying individuals for placement on the Terrorist Watchlist, including a summary of how those standards and processes have developed, or have been revised, since 2001.

All aspects of this review shall be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with the ongoing criminal investigation and prosecution