

Search WhiteHouse.gov

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 28, 2009

Statement by the President on the Attempted Attack on Christmas Day and Recent Violence in Iran

Kaneohe Bay Marine Base, Kaneohe, Hawaii

10:01 A.M. HAST

THE PRESIDENT: Hey, guys. Good morning, everybody. I just want to take 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 is 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 Advisor 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 had been charged with attempting to destroy an aircraft. And a full investigation has been launched into this attempted act of terrorism and we will not rest until we find all who were involved and hold them accountable.

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.

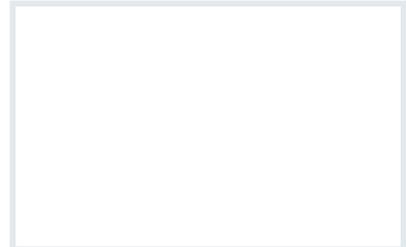
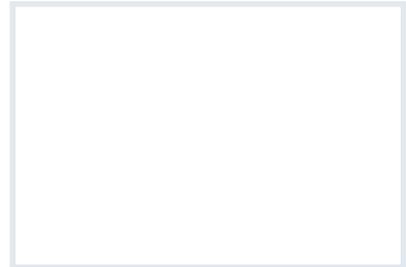
Second, I've ordered two important reviews because it's absolutely critical that we learn from this incident and take the necessary measures to prevent future acts of terrorism. The first review involves our watch list system, which our government has had in place for many years to identify known and suspected terrorists so that we can prevent their entry into the United States.

Apparently the suspect in the Christmas incident was in the 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

Facebook	YouTube
Twitter	Vimeo
Flickr	iTunes
MySpace	LinkedIn



children must know that the United States will 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. And 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 everything that we can to keep America safe in the New Year and beyond.

Before I leave let 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 a 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.

END
10:07 A.M.HAST

Home

The White House Blog

Photos & Videos

Photo Galleries

Video

Live Streams

Podcasts

Issues

Civil Rights

Defense

Disabilities

Economy

Education

Energy & Environment

Ethics

Family

Fiscal Responsibility

Foreign Policy

Health Care

Homeland Security

Immigration

Poverty

Rural

Seniors & Social Security

Service

Taxes

Technology

Urban Policy

Veterans

Women

Additional Issues

Our Government

The Executive Branch

The Legislative Branch

The Judicial Branch

The Constitution

Federal Agencies & Commissions

Elections & Voting

State & Local Government

Resources

Briefing Room

Your Weekly Address

Speeches & Remarks

Press Briefings

Statements & Releases

Presidential Actions

Featured Legislation

Nominations & Appointments

Disclosures

The Administration

President Barack Obama

Vice President Joe Biden

First Lady Michelle Obama

Dr. Jill Biden

The Cabinet

White House Staff

Executive Office of the President

About the White House

History

Presidents

First Ladies

The Oval Office

The Vice President's Residence & Office

Eisenhower Executive Office Building

Camp David

Air Force One

White House Fellows

White House Internships

White House 101

Tours & Events

WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV

En español | Accessibility | Copyright Information | Privacy Policy | Contact
USA.gov | Subscribe to RSS Feeds | Apply for a Job