

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20511

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*The following message by Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair was sent to employees of the United States Intelligence Community:*

Colleagues:

The President has completed his preliminary review and briefed the nation regarding the Abdulmutallab attempted terrorist attack on December 25. He has directed me to lead the Intelligence Community's work in improving our procedures and systems to detect and prevent a similar attempt from succeeding.

That Mr. Abdulmutallab boarded Northwest Flight 153 for Detroit was a failure of the counterterrorism system. We had strategic intelligence that al Qa'ida in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) had the intention of taking action against the United States. We did not direct more resources against AQAP, nor insist that the watchlisting criteria be adjusted. The Intelligence Community analysts who were working hard on immediate threats to Americans in Yemen did not understand the fragments of intelligence on what turned out later to be Mr. Abdulmutallab, so they did not push him onto the "no fly" list.

We will take a fresh and penetrating look at strengthening both human and technical performance and do what we have to do in all areas. I have specifically been tasked to oversee and manage work in four areas:

- Assigning clear lines of responsibility for investigating all leads on high-priority threats, so they are pursued more aggressively;
- Distributing intelligence reports more quickly and widely, especially those suggesting specific threats against the U.S.;
- Applying more rigorous standards to analytical tradecraft to improve intelligence integration and action; and
- Enhancing the criteria for adding individuals to the terrorist watchlist and "no fly" watchlist.

While the December 25 attempt exposed improvement needs and flaws in coordination, it did not expose weakness in the concepts of intelligence reform or suggest that its progress should be redirected. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) and the progress of the past five years will continue to guide our future improvements.

As the White House review stated, "the work by America's counterterrorism (CT) community has had many successes since 9/11 that should be applauded... On a great number of occasions since 9/11, many of which the American people will never know about, the tremendous, hardworking corps of analysts across the CT community did just that, working day and night to track terrorist threats and run down possible leads in order to keep their fellow American safe." I strongly agree. The review also recognizes the barriers to information sharing that existed just five years ago, which we have worked so hard to dismantle, have indeed been broken down.

The job of collecting, analyzing, and integrating information on a global scale is difficult, and this community performs that work at high levels every day. We will sustain our dedication and professionalism to the tasks we now face. We will leverage this challenge to emerge even stronger and more able to provide the support to national security that President Obama hailed as critical to our future.

We will meet this challenge. I am confident that together we will deliver to the President the improvements he has called for.

Dennis C. Blair