ATTEMPTED BOMBING

Flights 253 - December 25, 2009

Despite constantly increasing airport security, a man suspected of terrorism was able to board a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit with ~80 grams of explosive and a liquid detonator. However, the device did not detonate, likely saving the plane.

“Our system did not work in this instance.”
- Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano

Basic Cause-and-Effect

Had the explosive detonated, it may have caused the loss of the plane, resulting in the deaths of all on the plane. The suspect was allowed to board the plane with the explosive mixture due to a failure of safety procedures.

**Safety Goal Impacted**
- Potential for death of passengers
- Suspect boarded with explosive
- Failure of safety procedures

**Property Goal Impacted**
- Potential for loss of plane

In an admitted failure of safety procedures, the explosives were not detected by airport security. The information about the suspect was considered not specific enough for the suspect to be put on the "selectee list" which would have led to additional screening. The suspect was not passed through a body scan, which may have detected the explosives, because they are not used on passengers traveling to the U.S. because of the privacy issues. The ingredients were hidden in the suspect's undergarments and so were not detected by security.

**Additional Details**

- Official in the U.S. were unaware a visa had been issued by the U.S. embassy in London. Additionally, while the information from the suspect's father was entered into TIDE (a terrorist intelligence database), there was no follow-up on the information. It's unclear if there was no follow-up required, or if the follow-up was just not performed.

- Process Map
  - For security reasons, there is little detail on the process used to add potential terrorists to various watch lists. What we do know is that all terrorist intelligence is entered into TIDE. The information is reviewed nightly for inclusion into the TSDB, from which the no-fly and selectee lists are developed. The suspect was not put on either list.

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