



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 29, 2009

Did Abdulmutallab Board Flight 253 Without a Passport?

As is typical in the aftermath of this sort of occurrence, there is a maelstrom of stories swirling around Umar Abdulmutallab's attempt to bomb Northwest Airlines Flight 253 bound from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day. Curiously, though, two of these stories are being roundly ignored by most media outlets despite the intriguing facts they contribute to the still poorly defined though compelling narrative of the foiled terrorist attack and the young well-educated Nigerian accused of attempting it.



Kurt and Lori Haskell were on their way back to Michigan from a Ugandan safari when they boarded Northwest Flight 253 in Amsterdam. In an interview with a local Michigan outlet, Mr. and Mrs. Haskell report that as they sat near the gate waiting to board their flight, they witnessed a well-dressed man accompanying a poorly dressed younger companion trying to convince boarding agents to allow a man they now recognize as Umar Abdulmutallab to board the plane, despite not having a passport. Mr. Haskell recalls having his attention drawn to the shabby dress of the man without a passport and then listening with curiosity to the unusual conversation between the suited man and the ticket agent.

The ticket agent informed the well-dressed man that she would need to inform her manager of the situation and the man in the suit responded by informing her that, "He's from Sudan. We do this all the time." Abdulmutallab is Nigerian so Haskell suspects that the other man was trying to garner sympathy for Abdulmutallab by portraying him as a Sudanese refugee. At this point in the story, Mr. and Mrs. Haskell report that the two men were escorted by the airline representative to another location and so they are unsure as to whether Abdulmutallab ultimately was permitted to board the plane without a passport.

Finally, the Haskells, attorneys specializing in bankruptcy and family law, were interviewed by the FBI along with all their fellow passengers. Mr. Haskell said that upon concluding his interview, he witnessed government agents taking two men into custody. A spokeswoman for the FBI field office in Detroit disputes Mr. Haskell's story and claims that Abdulmutallab was the only person arrested after the incident.



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Despite the American media's and law enforcement's disinterest in the Haskell's testimony, Dutch authorities have initiated an investigation into the possible complicity of the unidentified man who appeared to be helping Abdulmutallab.

Patricia Keepman of Wisconsin was traveling home with her husband and daughter after having adopted two children from Ethiopia when they boarded Flight 253 in Amsterdam. The Keepman family was seated some 20 rows behind Abdulmutallab when the Keepman's daughter pointed out a man who was standing and calmly videotaping the cabin. "He sat up and videotaped the entire flight," Keepman reports. "I figured it was his first flight or something," she explained.

As in the case with the Haskells, Mrs. Keepman reports that while awaiting debriefing by federal law enforcement, she learned that the FBI was interested in interrogating the man she saw recording the flight. Officially, however, the FBI denies such interest and claims that the only person being investigated is the alleged attempted bomber, Umar Abdulmutallab.

Photo of Umar Abdulmutallab: AP Images



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