



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 2, 2010

## Foiled Bomb Plot Highlights Security Issues

Jewish groups in Chicago are on high alert after last week's failed attempt to mail two bombs to synagogues there. Two packages containing explosives were intercepted on planes coming out of Dubai and East Midlands airports. The plot is believed to have been formulated by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.



According to the *New York Times*, "In the middle of last week, a woman who claimed her name was Hanan al-Samawi, a 22-year-old engineering student, walked into the U.P.S. office in the upscale Hadda neighborhood of Sana, Yemen's sprawling capital city. She displayed a photocopied identification card, and dropped off a bomb hidden inside a printer cartridge with a Chicago address listed as the package's destination. A few blocks away, another package concealing a homemade bomb was dropped off at a FedEx office, also seemingly headed to Chicago."

Officials later discovered that al-Samawi's identity had been stolen and that the real Hanan al-Samawi did not in fact deliver the packages. She has been released on bail and no other suspects have been arrested.

The deadly packages made their way through four countries before they were discovered by officials in Britain and Dubai after a tip from Saudi Arabia's intelligence service.

The *Times* article observed, "The foiling of the package plot was a significant success in an era of well-publicized intelligence breakdowns and miscommunications."

Not missing the opportunity to target the Transportation Security Administration, the *Times* added:

It was also a sobering reminder to officials around the world that quick response to timely intelligence rules the day. Despite the millions of dollars governments have spent on elaborate airport technology to guard against terrorism threats, the packages would probably have been loaded into planes bound for the United States, but for the Saudi tip.

Likewise, the plot reveals the underlying problems with cargo-screening procedures, which have already been roundly criticized, since one of the packages was carried on two Qatar Airways passenger planes, despite the implementation of a cargo-screening system. While the package was discovered in Britain, the *Times* points out that British officials were embarrassed by the length of time it took authorities to identify the bomb within the package.

Massachusetts Democratic Representative Ed Markey contended:



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It is time for the shipping industry and the business community to accept the reality that more needs to be done to secure cargo planes so that they cannot be turned into a delivery system for bombs targeting our country.

Markey proposed legislation in 2007 which mandated that all air cargo be fully inspected before loading, setting an August 2010 deadline for the requirement to be implemented. Currently, only 65 percent of the cargo headed to the United States is in fact inspected, however. To boot, the inspected cargo may still conceal undetectable explosive material carefully hidden inside routine electronic devices.

Meanwhile, U.S. Deputy National Security Adviser John Brennan cautions that there may be more attempts of the same variety in days to come, placing American Jewish groups on high alert.

According to Brennan, authorities are researching the likelihood of the bombs being “detonated [either] en route to those synagogues, aboard the aircraft ... [or] at the destinations.”

Regardless, he asserts, “It would be imprudent...to presume that there are no others [package-bombs] out there.”

As a result, the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago said it alerted synagogues in Chicago not to open suspicious packages with “Yemen” in the address.

Likewise, the Anti-Defamation League called on Jewish institutions to “increase mailroom security and to contact law enforcement immediately if they see anything suspicious.... There is a reported threat to Jewish institutions in the form of packages mailed from overseas, particularly Great Britain, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.”

Similarly, Britain’s Community Security Trust (CST), which protects Jewish communities in the U.K., stated, “We must be mindful of all possibilities. This emphasizes yet again the enduring terrorist threat against Jewish communities and the need to maintain a high state of alert.”

It added, “CST recommends that those responsible for accepting the delivery of post and parcels at Jewish locations must be alert for suspicious items, especially unexpected post and deliveries.”

One of the targeted Chicago synagogues is a Reform congregation, which serves the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community.

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