

**Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman  
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
“Intelligence Reform: The Lessons and Implications of the Christmas Day Attack”  
Statement for Intelligence Reform Hearing  
January 20, 2010**

**Good morning. This past Christmas Day, as we all know, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab slipped through the multilayered defenses we’ve erected since 9-11 to stop attacks against our homeland and boarded Northwest Flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit, on which he attempted a suicide bombing.**

**A faulty detonator and courageous and quick action by the passengers and crew prevented the deaths of the 290 people on board that plane and many more on the ground below.**

**We were lucky.**

**Because it has now been five years since the enactment of the 9-11 Commission recommendations for intelligence reform, Sen. Collins and I decided last year to initiate a series of oversight hearings this year to examine how well these reforms have been implemented and whether further changes in the law, regulation or implementation are needed to protect our country.**

**That is, in fact, the inquiry we begin today, but now, of course, we must carry out our oversight through the unsettling prism of the Christmas Day breach of our homeland defenses by the terrorist, Abdulmutallab.**

**The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, commonly known as the 9-11 Commission Act, was the most sweeping intelligence reform since the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency more than 50 years earlier.**

**Among its many significant improvements, the 9-11 Commission Act established a Director of National Intelligence to integrate our 16 intelligence agencies.**

**It also created the National Counterterrorism Center to ensure that there was a single place in the government that would assess terrorism threats using the full resources and knowledge of the intelligence community.**

**Earlier in 2002, our government’s failures on 9/11/01 also moved Congress to act on recommendations to create a Department of Homeland Security to better cope with the threats our country would face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

**I believe these post 9-11 reforms have worked very well.**

**The record shows that after the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, and the establishment of the DNI and NCTC in 2004, there was not a terrorist attack by Islamist extremists on America's homeland for almost seven years.**

**No one would have predicted that on Sept. 12, 2001, so we have a lot to be grateful for.**

**Some of the most successful defenses of our homeland, in my opinion, have been truly amazing, although the details of these, of necessity, remain largely unknown.**

**Two of the most impressive of those successful defenses occurred in 2009, with the regard to Najibullah Zazi and David Headley.**

**One of the most impressive cases to me was the Zazi case, who was arrested last September with the plans and materials needed for bombing attacks in New York City.**

**This was the most dangerous terrorist plot on our soil since 9/11 and it only was foiled by brilliant, courageous and cooperative work of our intelligence, law enforcement and homeland security agencies.**

**Sen. Collins and I and other members of the Committee have been briefed on the details. But everything worked just as we hoped it would when we adopted the post 9-11 reform legislation. There was remarkable agility, brilliant judgment and total cooperation between intelligence, homeland security and law enforcement communities both here within the United States and throughout the world.**

**Notwithstanding these remarkable achievements over the seven years since the enactment of DHS, the record also shows that in 2009, three Islamist terrorists broke through our defenses: Carlos Bledsoe, who murdered a U.S. Army recruiter in Little Rock, Arkansas, in June; Nidal Hassan, who murdered 13 Americans at Fort Hood in November; and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who would have killed hundreds more if the explosive he had hidden in his clothing on Christmas Day had worked.**

**Clearly, some elements of our homeland defenses are not working as we need them to. We must find out what is going wrong and why and fix it.**

**I know it is probably not realistic to promise that we will stop every terrorist attack on our homeland, but that certainly must be our goal.**

**And that certainly is the standard that will guide our Committee in this inquiry, and the other we are conducting on the terrorist attack at Fort Hood.**

**Our purpose is to review the current state of our homeland security and in these cases to make recommendations for reform that will get our homeland as close as possible to 100 percent security from terrorist attack.**

**In the Christmas Day bombing case, there was so much intelligence and information available to our government that pointed to Abdulmutallab's violent intentions that it was beyond frustrating – it is infuriating that this terrorist was able to get on the plane to Detroit with explosives on his body.**

**He was able to do so, as President Obama correctly has said, because of systemic failures and human errors.**

**We must fix the systemic failures that occurred in these latest attacks and if we – or the Administration, through its ongoing review – find that there were federal personnel who did not perform up to the requirements of their jobs, they should be disciplined or removed.**

**As is clear from the Christmas Day attack – which almost killed hundreds, the Ft. Hood attack – which did kill 13 – and the thwarting of the Zazi plot that saved countless American lives, the decisions of the public servants who work to protect us from terrorists every day have life and death consequences.**

**If we do not hold accountable those who made these human errors, the probability is great that they will be made again.**

**I have not called this hearing to knock down the new walls of homeland security we have built since 9-11, but to repair and reinforce them so they better protect the American people from terrorist attack.**

**It is in that spirit that I look forward to our witness's testimony.**

**Welcome Admiral Blair, Director Leiter, Secretary Napolitano. I thank you – and the men and women you lead – for your service to our country and for being here today.**

**Sen. Collins.**