

Protecting U.S. Citizens

As a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, airport security measures now include full body scans and pat-downs. Additionally, the number of people on the government's Terrorist Screening Center No Fly List has doubled to 21,000, with about 500 Americans included. Opponents argue the No Fly List violates civil liberties and due process. One appellate court noted: "Tens of thousands of travelers have been misidentified because of misspellings and transcription errors."

The increase in suspect names likely is attributable to the actions of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the underwear bomber. On Christmas day in 2009, the Nigerian man boarded a plane to Detroit and, in a failed attempt, tried to ignite a bomb hidden in his underwear. In 2012, he was sentenced to life in prison. At the sentencing hearing he showed no remorse and said he was "proud to kill in the name of God." This incident shows the importance of tracking individuals suspected of terrorism.

In contrast to the Abdulmutallab case is the story of Rahinah Ibrahim, who was detained, handcuffed, and questioned for 2 hours at San Francisco International Airport after being identified as being on the No Fly List.

The woman, a mother of four, was a doctoral student at Stanford University flying to Malaysia to present a research paper. The next day she was allowed on a plane, but she was refused entry back into the United States and her visa was revoked. Ibrahim eventually was paid \$225,000 in a settlement claiming wrongful detention by the local police department and a Transportation Security Administration contractor. This incident shows the importance of accuracy on the No Fly List and the consequences of being mistakenly placed on it.

Think About It

1. **Should we be willing to detain individuals with little or no probable cause?**
2. **Has the government overstepped its legal authority and trampled on constitutional rights?**
3. **Are we willing to surrender some due process to ensure our safety against terrorism? Why or why not?**
4. **How should the federal appeals court have handled the accusation that Ibrahim was wrongly identified and singled out as a terrorist?**