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Behavioural techniques can help counter terrorism

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Washington, Jan 7 (ANI): Mark Frank from the [University](#) at Buffalo says behavioural science techniques could have averted Farouk Abdul Mutallab from getting on board Northwest Flight 253 on Christmas.

Frank, a behavioural [scientist](#) and security believes that the use of “Behavioral science techniques could have detected him once he got to the airport.”

He said: “There have been many scientific advances in [technology](#) coupled with understanding such people and their behavior — and programs exist that put that into action — to help identify them. Unfortunately, they are not being used widely enough.”

He continued: “No single security technique, on its own, is a panacea, although that would be great.... But no technique need be 100 percent accurate to be deployed effectively. Each imperfect layer

complements the next because the goals of security screening are actually more modest than people assume.”

“The goals are, first, to employ intelligence and investigatory processes to dissuade or disrupt a would-be terrorist from traveling at all,” he says.

According to Frank even if a terrorist makes it through first security layer, he/she should be group marked for intense secondary screening.

He explained: “At this point.... there exist excellent scientific techniques to spot such suspects, and they don’t employ ethnic screening or the random screening of passengers, processes that are not effective and to which Americans object.

“We ignore these scientific techniques at our peril.”

Frank said each layer of security has strengths and weaknesses, and any layer under certain conditions can identify a terrorist, “So it is necessary to put resources into each layer.”

One such layer makes use of efficient behavioral techniques, and includes the [Department of Homeland Security](#)’s SPOT and FAST programs.

Frank, an original member of the FBI’s Terrorism Research and Analysis Project (TRAP), also serves as a consultant to the Department of Homeland Security for the SPOT and FAST programs.

He said: “SPOT (Screening of Passengers by Observation Technique)...is a behavioral observation technique employed by Transportation [Security Administration](#). It is based upon a successful Israeli program derived from that country’s direct experiences with [terrorists](#) and current behavioral science.

“FAST — an acronym for Future Attribute Screening Technology — is a sensor-based program currently in development that reads body reactions indicative of hostile intention and uses these to develop stronger algorithmic predictions as to whom should be sent on to additional screening.”

He added: “Both programs should be applauded for seeking the strong, direct involvement of [scientists](#) and both have benefited accordingly. Appropriately utilized, I believe they would have permitted us to spot the Northwest Airlines terrorist.

“The immutable fact is that any effective international terrorist [security system](#) must address myriad psychological, social and political issues.

“The cause of terrorism and its cures are very complex and require a multi-layered and multi-pronged approach,” he says, “but I want to emphasize that we already have many of the technologies and techniques — with more to come — vetted by scientific research, to better identify and stop these people all along the way.” (ANI)

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