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Behavioural identification could have halted Nigerian terrorist

Submitted by [Hardeep Sidhu](#) on Thu, 01/07/2010 - 12:00. [Featured](#) [United States](#)

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Washington, Jan 7 : The effective use of multiple layers of intelligence gathering, including existing behavioural

identification programmes, could have helped pin down Nigerian terrorist Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab long before he boarded a US airliner on Christmas Day, according to an expert.

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Mark G. Frank, behavioural scientist at [University of Buffalo](#) explains that although Mutallab got

through some [security](#) levels, "behavioural science techniques could have detected him once he got to the airport".

Mutallab reportedly tried to light up explosives while Northwest Flight 253 was landing in Detroit Dec 25. He had an explosive device and successfully initiated the device, causing smoke to billow in the cabin, before passengers overpowered him.

Frank says: "There have been many scientific advances in technology coupled with understanding such people and their behaviour, and programmes exist that put that into action to help identify them. Unfortunately, they are not being used widely enough."

Frank, who has advised on behavioural identification programmes with the US Department of Homeland Security, agrees with security experts who maintain that security is best achieved in a layered approach to the examination of would-be [airline](#) passengers.

"No single security technique, on its own, is a panacea, although that would be great," Frank says. "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 travelling at all," he says, according to a Buffalo release.

If a terror suspect gets through the first layer of security and travels anyway, Frank says, then the goal is to force him or her into a group marked for intense secondary screening.

"At this point," Frank says, "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," he says. (IANS)

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