

AAA Corporate Travel Newsletter

January 8, 2009

U.S. lowers threshold for inclusion on no-fly lists

The U.S. government has lowered the threshold for information deemed important enough to put suspicious individuals on a watch list or no-fly list, or have their visa revoked, senior State Department officials tell CNN.

The government overhauled criteria it uses for putting possible terrorists on such lists as a result of the failed Christmas Day attack, officials said. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the material

Umar Farouk AbdulMutallab, the 23-year-old Nigerian who allegedly launched the failed attack, was not put on a no-fly list. That's because the information his father provided a U.S. embassy about his son becoming radicalized and possibly going to Yemen did not meet then-applicable standards to put him on such a list or to cancel his visa.

"Based on the criteria, he fell below the line and went into our database, but not a watch list or no-fly list, and his visa wasn't revoked based on the analysis of the threat," one senior official said. "We have a new standard now, which will allow us to capture more people."

Under the new standard, officials said, AbdulMutallab would have been put on a no-fly list and his visa likely would have been revoked. Another official said that if all relevant agencies had the entire intelligence picture, including National Security Agency (NSA) intercepts about a "Nigerian" possibly planning an attack against the U.S., AbdulMutallab "would have absolutely been no-fly listed and his visa would have been revoked."

Since the attempted attack, the intelligence community has scrubbed the entire Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE) database of more than 500,000 suspects with the new criteria, adding additional individuals to the U.S. watch lists and no-fly lists as a result. Several visas have also been revoked.

"Rest assured that in light of what happened on December 25, we've gone back over these databases and there have been additional actions taken," Assistant Secretary Philip J. Crowley told reporters. He declined to provide statistics, saying the numbers were constantly changing. When discussing the new threshold, officials suggested it is more an art than science.

"The threshold might be how much information do you have? What kind of confidence do you have in the information that is available," the first senior official said. "It will involve an assessment of risk, the perception of risk and our tolerance of risk."

But the officials suggested the new standard is much lower than before December 25. For example, decisions could be taken to put someone on a no-fly list or a watch list based on one credible source, instead of the previous standard of using multiple sources.

"We had a new threat, and we are going to, for a period of time, tilt back to a more conservative approach," the official said.

Officials recognize the costs for grounding more people and providing extra screening for passengers from specific countries, pointing to blowback from several countries who are protesting their inclusion on the list. Cuba called in the head of the U.S. Interest Section, and Nigeria called in the U.S. ambassador to formally protest the move.

The merger of Delta SkyBonus and Northwest Biz Perks & what to expect

As part of the Delta and Northwest merger, the SkyBonus and Biz Perks programs are currently being aligned. SkyBonus and Biz Perks are the corporate loyalty programs for Delta and Northwest, respectively. Aspects of both programs have been evaluated and a new website with enhanced program features will soon be released in 1st quarter of 2010. Delta and Northwest are working hard to ensure that the merger is smooth, seamless and delivers even more benefits to members. The ultimate goal is to bring the best features of both programs together while creating a best-in-class corporate loyalty program.

Here's a glimpse of just a few of the enhanced features coming soon to all members of the new SkyBonus Program:

- Points will be earned on every dollar spent instead of every \$1,000 spent
- Credit will be earned on all classes of service providing additional earning potential
- Expanded reward offerings will include enhanced flight awards to more destinations
- Online account statements will include additional details of air activity including traveler information
- Details of travel associated with flight award redemptions will be included under redemption activity on the account statement
- Tickets will be processed daily providing credit for qualifying flights within a few days after travel (Note: codeshare flights will take longer to process)
- Expanded communication functionality allowing the program administrator to share promotional offers with their travelers
- Dedicated support center located in North America
- Ability to request retroactive credit for travel flown after enrollment
- Companies enrolled in both SkyBonus and Biz Perks will be able to merge their accounts online immediately after integration

Reminder for Biz Perks Members

Until SkyBonus and Biz Perks are fully integrated, the current terms and conditions of the Biz Perks program apply. **Per the program rules, Biz Perks points expire on December 31st, three years after the year earned. Therefore, members are encouraged to log into their Biz Perks account and redeem any expiring points for awards before December 31, 2009.** Once redeemed, Biz Perks flight awards certificates are valid for one year from the date of issue and will be valid on all Delta flights after integration. Please note that expired points will not be reinstated.

Suggestion for SkyBonus Members

As part of the SkyBonus and Biz Perks integration, Delta is creating a new SkyBonus website with a fresh look and feel. The new website will provide members with the best of both programs and new functionality will be added to assist SkyBonus members with managing their accounts.

Please continue to call a AAA Corporate Travel agent to issue your SkyBonus tickets.

Air security concerns prompt longer wait times, carry-on restrictions

Major airlines and transportation security agencies throughout the world are warning travelers bound for the United States of longer passages through security checkpoints and revised carry-on policies, as the upper reaches of the U.S. government continue to assess the long-term airport security implications of the failed Christmas attack on a Northwest Airlines flight.

In what it called "temporary emergency measures at security checkpoints," the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority yesterday said it would not permit any passenger to bring carry-on bags on flights from Canada to the United States, though it is making exceptions for certain "personal items," including laptop computers and small purses. "These rules will be strictly enforced during this period. There will be no flexibility," according to CATSA, which said that passengers traveling within Canada still would be allowed two carry-ons.

Effective through Friday, passengers headed to the United States from Belgium are limited to one carry-on bag. United Airlines is telling customers that flights from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol—the point of departure for the alleged would-be Dec. 25 bomber bound for Detroit—are limiting passengers to one carry-on bag, while British Airways similarly noted one carry-on bag limits for passengers flying from London Heathrow, Gatwick or London City to the United States.



Airlines and security agencies also are telling passengers to expect longer wait times to pass through security. Among other carriers, American Airlines is asking passengers "to arrive at the airport at least three hours in advance of their flight departure," especially for flights from Canada, while KLM is telling passengers to expect a similar timeframe for U.S.-bound flights from the Netherlands.

Effective yesterday, the U.S. Transportation Security Administration required airport security personnel here and abroad to heighten screening methods for passengers traveling through or from Afghanistan, Algeria, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

"TSA is mandating that every individual flying into the U.S. from anywhere in the world traveling from or through nations that are state sponsors of terrorism or other countries of interest will be required to go through enhanced screening," TSA said, saying that it also would increase the use of "enhanced screening technologies and mandates threat-based and random screening for passengers on U.S.-bound international flights."

According a transcript of an informal press briefing aboard Air Force One yesterday, White House deputy press secretary Bill Burton told reporters that President Barack Obama today would hold a review of security measures with the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies.

In addition to heightened security procedures TSA is mandating for travelers from select countries, Burton said the government already has undergone "a rescrubbing of all the different lists" used by law enforcement and TSA, including the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment list, the selectee list and the no-fly list.

"Safety and security measures are moving forward even as the review goes on," Burton said. "I would say that if you look at the process that we undertook, people moving from the TIDE list to the selectee list or the no-fly list, probably thousands upon thousands upon thousands of names were scrubbed, and probably dozens were moved to different lists."

BTNOnline.com, January 5, 2010

Delta changes bag fees for domestic, Canada flights

Delta is making several modifications to its domestic baggage fee policy, which includes travel to and from Canada, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The fee for the first checked bag will be \$23 in U.S. and Canadian currency online and \$25 in U.S. and Canadian currency at the airport. The fee for the second checked bag will be \$32 in U.S. and Canadian currency online and \$35 in U.S. and Canadian currency at the airport.

The changes will apply to tickets issued on or after Tuesday for travel on or after next Tuesday. Passengers exempt from the fees include elite-level frequent flyers; customers flying on first class, BusinessElite and full-fare coach tickets and active-duty military personnel, and nonrevenue and company business travelers.

Delta.com, January 5, 2010

