



Written by [Becky Akers](#) on June 15, 2011

Hunting Mexicans at the TSA

“They earned the nickname ‘Mexican Hunters,’ a special unit of screeners at Newark’s Liberty-International Airport, who singled out Mexicans, Dominicans and other Hispanic passengers for extra scrutiny.” Of course, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) would never discriminate: only entrepreneurs and the free market are that wicked. And so the TSA lied yet again, insisting that it “does not profile passengers on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion” though its thugs did exactly that for almost two years:

“According to the federal investigation, the racial profiling was widespread at Newark’s Terminal B from early 2008 to late 2009.” Curiously, the agency “retrained” the very employees it swore did nothing wrong.

The “special unit” in question was the TSA’s vaunted “behavior detection officers” or BDO’s. These knuckleheads read minds — or so the TSA would have us believe. BDO’s supposedly catch terrorists based on the [“involuntary physical and physiological reactions](#) that people exhibit in response to a fear of being discovered.”

Wow! Can the awesome and omnipotent TSA hear a terrorist’s thudding, telltale heart? Can it spot a nervous swallow or shallow, excited breathing from across a concourse? Can it leap tall buildings in a single bound?

No.

Like all political entities, the TSA defines “enemy” as anyone who disagrees with or angers it. So it’s no surprise to learn that people who despise the agency, who fear its arbitrary power or chafe when its nonsense keeps them from their flight, “exhibit” a lot of those suspect “reactions”: “Be wary of seeming too cocky or verbally express displeasure with long lines. Don’t look fearful or impatient,” [advises AOL Travel](#). The TSA condemns such emotions as terroristic and “refers” passengers showing them to its goons or the cops for further, grossly unconstitutional interrogation and groping.

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If that doesn’t teach you to smile as screeners sexually assault you, what will? Meanwhile, [the agency assures us](#). “referrals are based on specific observed behaviors [*sic* for ‘dissent’] only,” never, never, never “on one’s appearance, race, ethnicity or religion.” Right.





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[Americans in the 1960s knew behavior-detection as “body-language.”](#) The TSA has gussied up this pop psychology with jargon and a pseudo-scientific veneer, but it’s still just a recycled parlor-game. And more problems plague it than hippies did the ‘60s.

Chief among those problems is that it doesn’t work. The [TSA claims that the purpose of behavior-detection](#) is “to identify potentially high-risk passengers. BDOs are designed [*sic* for ‘taught’?] to detect individuals exhibiting behaviors that indicate they may be a threat to aviation and/or transportation security.” But what behavior-detection actually does is torment hundreds of thousands of innocent travelers. “[Fewer than 1% of airline passengers](#) singled out at airports for suspicious behavior are arrested, [the TSA’s own] figures show...” Those arrests are usually for drugs or fake ID; not a single one has been for terrorism.

On the contrary: terrorists waltz right past BDO’s. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) found last year that “[at least 16 individuals later accused](#) of involvement in terrorist plots flew 23 different times through U.S. airports since 2004. Yet none were stopped by TSA behavior detection officers working at those airports.” No wonder CBS News headlined its report on the GAO’s investigation, “[TSA’s Program to Spot Terrorists a \\$200M Sham?](#)”

“Behavior detection” is merely another excuse for screeners to abuse us. If Our Rulers don’t like the way we look – and our “appearance, race, ethnicity or religion” is perforce a big part of our looks –, *wham*, they pull us aside for as much additional insult as they care to dish out. Their judgments are entirely subjective, and we are just as entirely at their mercy. Does anything more clearly spell tyranny?

Very few of us inhabit a color-blind world. Almost everybody cherishes some sort of prejudice against one group or another. You may be white and disdain blacks, or vice versa. You may be poor and resent those who aren’t. You may hate all women, or just women with the same hairstyle as your ex-wife or abusive mother. Empowering sinful, fallen man over an airport full of passengers guarantees exactly what happened at Newark, even though you or I might prey on Asians or elderly folks instead of Mexicans.

Preventing officials from acting on their antipathies is one reason the Founders severely restricted government. Were the Constitution still in force, the TSA would not exist, let alone persecute Mexicans.

But something else was at work besides bigotry: . “[...managers’ emphasis on referrals](#) [of passengers to cops] created a perception among BDOs that there was a quota system in place, and that promotions depended on their producing high numbers. The report said one of the managers, George Schultz, instructed officers to manipulate a point system used to assess whether a passenger’s behavior merits referral to law enforcement officers, or LEOs. ... ‘Schultz was basically telling all of us to go look for illegal aliens and make up behaviors to equal six points, which would result in a LEO call,’ BDO William Tappen stated for the report. ...”

Par for government’s course: what’s beneficial in the market backfires every time the State tries to translate it. Incentives are the market’s life-blood, enticing entrepreneurs and the employees they pay to leave their warm beds on cold mornings and labor tirelessly to supply our needs. But incentives in the State’s hands turn as monstrous as everything else it touches.

And though statist pretend that bigotry pervades the free market, it actually penalizes entrepreneurs who indulge such evil. A shopkeeper discriminating against Mexicans *a la* the TSA must sacrifice the profits their business brings. Indeed, entrepreneurs’ reluctance to lose money explains Jim Crow legislation: the governments passing and enforcing those laws knew that, left to themselves, most



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restaurants and hotels would accommodate patrons of all hues.

Contrast that with the TSA's abuse of taxpayers: "[Antonio Perez is a young man](#) who [said] he has been subjected to searches 'because they think I'm Mexican. Do I look Mexican,?' he asked. He said he was born in Newark and his family is from Guatamala. 'It's frustrating getting pulled over all the time when all I want to do is get on the plane,' he complained."

Whether it's irradiating or sexually assaulting us, wasting [\\$8.2 billion of our taxes this fiscal year](#), or "Mexican hunting," the TSA is an atrocity. Abolish it.



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