



TSA Catches More Flak

The new DVD *Please Remove Your Shoes*, to be released on July 1, was reviewed by Scott Mayerowitz at ABC News, who asked rhetorically, “Do You Really Believe You Are Safe at the Airport?” and then answered “No.”

Fred Gevalt paid for this documentary out of his own pocket because “our real security at the airport ... appears to be worse than ever. Clearly something has to be fixed. We have given TSA sufficient time since their creation to establish their merit and they haven’t. It’s time to call for a rethink of the whole security system, and now is as good a time as any. We certainly shouldn’t allow this farce to continue.” Former federal air marshal Jeffrey Black agrees: “What we’ve got now is nothing but security theater, meaning all these bells and whistles that you see are only meant to make you feel safe. I honestly think we were safer before 9/11 than we are now.” Former head of security for El Al, the Israeli airline, also concurs: “All of [the US’s] aviation security is a joke, an illusion.”



Two Congressmen who voted to create TSA as an agency under the Department of Homeland Security state in the DVD that they have created a monster. Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.) said, “I helped create TSA and I’ve referred to it sometimes as either my bastard child or a monster that we’ve created, a bureaucratic monster. It didn’t turn out ... the way I intended.”

Gevalt allows six current and former federal security officials to tell their stories of TSA and outline some of the problems they have with the agency. The charges made include “laziness, waste, disregard for employees, citizens and above all, nepotism.” Two “covert testers” were interviewed, giving chilling personal evidence of the inability of TSA employees to discover bombs, guns, and other explosive devices that were deliberately planted and run through the screening process. When these results were presented to TSA authorities, management had little or no interest in improving the system. FAA tester Bogdan Dzakovic said, “Usually the worse the results were that we had on any given project, the less we were tasked to test to see if they had improved. [TSA] management simply did not tolerate any kind of dissenting opinion or even discussion about [how] maybe we should do things better.”

[Manhattan Movie](#) magazine’s review of the documentary summarized it with frightening clarity:

The TSA is supposed to bring together intelligence and aviation security know-how in order to



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 24, 2010

thwart future terrorist incidents. It is the government body responsible for all the scanners and gel/liquid bans and other brouhaha that travelers now have to deal with. However, the film's interviewees repeatedly emphasize how the TSA exhibits the worst sorts of inefficiency: people with no experience are promoted for being "yes men," intelligence isn't shared because the agency wants to one-up the FBI and CIA, and huge amounts of taxpayer dollars are spent on technologies, such as bomb-sniffing scanners, that can't even perform the functions they were designed for. Most disturbingly, the ex-Marshals tell us, when they perform routine tests in airports in which they plant bombs and other suspicious materials in their luggage or on their persons, they are almost never caught.

Experienced travelers have horror stories of their own to tell about TSA, including the Florida woman who watched as her \$24,000 Rolex watch "[disappeared](#)" during the screening process. The Ryan Thomas case was reviewed [here](#), while Peeping Tom x-ray machines were examined in detail [here](#), and TSA employee's thuggery even towards their own was covered [here](#), resulting [in at least one poll](#) ranking the TSA "at the bottom of an index of consumer satisfaction ... supplanting the IRS as the prime subject of grumbling."

When looked at [in light of the Fourth Amendment](#) in the Bill of Rights, the TSA is seen as way more than an inconvenience to travelers. In 1949, Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson wrote about the right of the people "to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures," by declaring "These rights, I protest, are not mere second-class rights but belong in the catalog of indispensable freedoms. Among deprivations of rights, none is so effective in cowering a population, crushing the spirit of the individual and putting terror in every heart. Uncontrolled search and seizure is one of the first and most effective weapons in the arsenal of every arbitrary government."

And that's where Gevalt's documentary goes astray. At the [DVD website](#) one can put in a request to be notified when the DVD will be available for purchase after July 1. One can also click on "Fix TSA" to determine Gevalt's solutions to these "unreasonable searches and seizures" only to find more statist support for this unconstitutional rogue agency. His "fixes" include such inanities as "establish and enforce tough proficiency standards, recruit the right people, motivate TSA management to "set and achieve meaningful goals," etc. As Robert Higgs put it, "Once a bureau is created, its staff becomes a tenacious political interest group, well placed to defend its budget and to make a case for expanding its activities."

The place to start is to defund the agency and let security measures be implemented by the people and organizations most interested in providing safe travel for its customers: the airlines themselves. As unrealistic as that appears now, wandering around in the dark labyrinth of trying to fix something that is irretrievably broken will surely lead to more of the same. As Thomas Jefferson put it, "That government is best which governs least."

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