



The TSA and Its Whole-body Scanning

If you heed the mainstream media, you'll conclude that terrorists are as plentiful and pestilential as politicians. Reinforcing that misperception is the \$52 billion of our taxes the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) annually spends. And the policies and procedures at one of the DHS's sub-bureaucracies, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), presume that bad guys swarm our airports, scheming to blow every flight sky-high.



Thus the checkpoints that delay, frustrate, and prey on passengers — but no terrorists. Indeed, though the TSA has pestered travelers for eight long years, it has yet to catch a single such bomber.

That may have something to do with terrorists' scarcity. Mighty few malcontents are willing to live in caves while training to commit suicide without even an occasional beer to ease the pain. Estimates of terrorists' numbers vary enormously, and none are accurate: learning to line one's clothing with explosives apparently doesn't leave much time for completing census forms. But the U.S. Department of State's annual report for 2008 lists around 45 "foreign terrorist organizations" and their "Strength." Fourteen groups' "strength" is "unknown"; there's a range of estimates ("200 to 500 members") for the others. Taking the higher figure in all cases, interpreting "several hundred" and "several thousand" members as 200 and 2,000 respectively, and doubling our result to account for the "unknowns" yields an extremely generous total of 150,000 terrorists worldwide — and virtually all of them either restrict their activities to their own regions, à la Peru's "Shining Path," or direct their fury at countries other than the United States, such as Hamas' focus on Israel.

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That renders terrorism among the most remote of hazards for Americans. In fact, it's so improbable that the National Safety Council (NSC) didn't even explicitly list it in 2004 when calculating our odds of dying from various causes. The only two terrorist attempts on American aviation since 9/11 bear this out: Neither killed anyone. Both also prove the futility of expecting the State to defend us, with civilians foiling each plot — despite the government's disarming them. In December 2001, passengers subdued shoe-bomber Richard Reid; eight years later, they successfully stymied Umar Farouk Abdullmutallab and his hot pants.

Anti-terror Terror

Could another 9/11 kill more of us? Sure. But so could a meteor that strikes the Earth tomorrow. On the whole, you are extremely unlikely ever to confront a terrorist.

Would that we could say the same of the bureaucrats supposedly fighting them. The DHS makes work for some 250,000 Warriors on Terror — let alone the myriad state and local troops. Enough of these



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parasites patrol our cities, trains, and airports that most Americans suffer at their hands, often literally, every few weeks. Case in point: The TSA's screeners who force you to shed your shoes and empty your pockets, and perhaps even grope you each time you fly.

To these injuries the government now adds strip-searches. You, your spouse, your children — the TSA insists passengers must expose themselves to federal agents. Ergo, it is installing whole-body scanners at airports. These obscene machines function like Superman's X-ray vision, peering through your clothing to the flesh beneath. You don't undress: The scanner does it for you, showing a nude you on its monitor.

The TSA plans to foist them on every concourse in the country. Some screeners will eventually ogle all passengers on every flight.

Decency isn't the only casualty. Whole-body scanners should help the TSA hire even more rapists and pedophiles than it currently does. One such employee recently hit headlines in Florida for molesting a 12-year-old girl. Charles Henry Bennett wasn't exactly shy about his perversions, either: not only was he "very forward in his statement" to "investigators" by admitting that "he actually asked [the child] to be his sex slave," according to [floridatoday.com](#), but his MySpace page advertised him as a "master of BDSM, which stands for bondage, dominance, sadism and masochism." Perhaps those skills ensured Bennett's longevity at the TSA: he skulked there eight years, from its inception until his arrest.

Another of the agency's public servants "lured" a 10-year-old boy into his "red Dodge Dakota pickup truck" in Ketchum, Idaho, and drove him to his apartment, "where he invited him in to watch a movie," MSNBC reported. The child refused, then "left and told his mother about the incident and she in turn called police."

A career with the TSA is already enticing enough to deviants: Where else can they legally feel up large swaths of the public? Now add the prospect of leering at naked people all day, and the TSA becomes even more of a pervert's paradise.

Nor should we trust — and tempt — "normal" but still sinful men to work these cameras. Readers of websites reporting on whole-body imagers often echo this honest comment from Britain's *Guardian*: "If i [*sic*] was operating one of those scanners, I will scan every pretty girl that passes by, 'for a laugh,' especially if she is accompanied by a male, to make the laughter louder."

Meanwhile, the TSA degrades passengers in vain: It's doubtful this smutty technology would have caught Abdullmutallab, according to Ben Wallace, a British MP and "ex-Army officer" who once worked for a manufacturer of whole-body imagers. Not only would the scanners "probably not have detected the failed Detroit plane plot of Christmas Day," they also would have missed "the 2006 airliner liquid bomb plot and ... the 2005 bombings of three Tube trains and a bus in London." Wallace "told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: '... there is a big but, and the but was in all the testing that we undertook, it was unlikely that [this technology] would have picked up the current explosive devices being used by al-Qaeda.... This is not necessarily the big silver bullet that is somehow being portrayed.'"

The United States' Government Accountability Office (GAO) agrees. It recently scolded the TSA because the agency still doesn't know whether the scanners perform as the manufacturers promise: It "has not assessed vulnerabilities — that is, weaknesses in the system that terrorists could exploit ... — related to passenger screening technologies, such as [whole-body scanning]," the GAO lamented. "Without [such] an assessment..., it is unclear whether [whole-body scanners] or other technologies would have been able to detect the weapon Mr. Abdulmutallab used in his attempted attack." Alas, the GAO's reprimand



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hasn't stopped the TSA's stampede toward a nationwide strip-tease.

Government Liberties With Liberty

But by far the scanners' most lethal blow is the one they deal to liberty. No regime in history, not even the most totalitarian, has routinely subjected its own law-abiding citizens to inspection of their naked bodies.

Outlaws, slaves, and prisoners of war are another matter. These powerless people have often suffered the humiliation of compulsory stripping. Ancient Rome denuded victims for floggings and crucifixions. The Nazis stripped inmates of concentration camps. And prisons worldwide demean convicts this way.

But no nation has ever forced taxpayers as a whole to strip on any pretext whatsoever, let alone simply because they're traveling. The TSA gets away with this jaw-dropping obscenity because it is a bureaucracy, funded by our taxes. As such, it's proudly independent of the profit motive — which is another way of saying it's unaccountable to passengers. Nor are there alternatives. We can't choose terminals without scanners because the TSA will impose its peep-show nationwide, on all commercial airports. It doesn't care how many of us object so vehemently that we no longer buy airline tickets, either. Thanks to congressional appropriations, screeners will continue molesting us long after the airlines have gone bankrupt. They just won't do so at airports.

Neither legislation nor current practice limits the TSA to aviation. The agency's notorious "Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response [VIPR]" teams invade bus and train stations nationwide; screeners also searched attendees of political rallies during the last presidential campaign. It's possible that mobile whole-body scanners will appear anywhere the TSA does. Within a few years, even pedestrians may find themselves "randomly selected" to strip.

What's the solution? Abolish the TSA. Otherwise, bureaucrats and politicians who know nothing about aviation will persist in dictating to pilots and other professionals who've spent their lives in it.

Such dictatorship not only pre-dates 9/11, it enabled the tragedy. A rash of skyjackings in the late 1960s furnished the feds with an excuse to monopolize aviation's security. And so the FAA, which already regulated most aspects of aviation, began controlling security, too. The "private" screeners it mandated were actually public puppets: Private companies may have issued their paychecks, but the FAA decreed every detail of their work. No wonder 3,000 people died on 9/11 with these bureaucrats dominating airports.

That didn't stop our rulers from shamelessly exploiting the tragedy. They blamed "private" screeners, using them as an excuse to saddle us with the TSA. Though they presented the agency as a revolutionary approach to protecting aviation — and it is: What other institution would dare undress two million people per day? — it in fact merely brought the government's management out into the open. "Security" is as huge a hoax under the TSA as it was under the FAA.

We must abolish both. Indeed, given the government's murderous record, we should prohibit it from so much as mentioning the words "aviation security," let alone bungling it nationwide. Airlines should be as free as any other industry to protect their inventory and customers. Professionals would design security as effective and unobtrusive as that at the mall, your favorite restaurant, or the jeweler's. Rather than the TSA's predictable and easily foiled uniformity that tolerates no innovation, security would vary depending on routes, customers, and the airline's particular risks.

Even as it broadcasts its ambition to strip us despite the dearth of terrorists, the TSA's website



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proclaims, "We are your neighbors, friends and relatives."

Add incest to its other crimes.

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