



## TSA's Real Agenda: Not Security, but Control

For nearly a decade and a half, the TSA has ostensibly been responsible for protecting the airports of the United States. During that time agency officials have fondled, strip-searched, naked-scanned, stolen from, and otherwise harassed, frustrated, embarrassed, and angered Americans. And for nearly a decade and a half, the TSA has provided content for news sites, blogs, YouTube videos, memes, and Facebook timelines with one ridiculous failure after another, often resembling a slapstick comedy routine. It would be humorous if it weren't so serious.



And after almost a decade and a half, nothing has improved. In June it was revealed that in a series of tests conducted by Red Team agents within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the TSA failed to prevent explosives and weapons from passing through airport security a stunning 95 percent of the time.

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Red Teams are groups of special undercover DHS agents who pose as passengers and conduct tests on airport security personnel by attempting to get banned items past TSA officers. This most recent failure was the result of 70 such tests. In 67 of those trials, TSA officers failed to find the explosives, guns, and knives that were hidden in luggage or on agents' bodies. They were unable to find the items even when metal detectors alerted them and they followed up with pat-downs.

In the fallout, the TSA director was reassigned. Not fired — just reassigned. In a responsible private-sector business, such a failure would result in an immediate housecleaning. But government bureaucracies don't answer to the people they allegedly serve — because they don't have to.

This is not the first time TSA officers have failed such tests. The results of similar tests in 2013 were bad as well. Just not *this* bad. And that is the point. If airport security is the single priority of the TSA, why is the agency getting worse at its job? Many claim it is just plain old-fashioned [incompetence](#). Though that is an easy answer, it misses the mark. The real reason the TSA is failing is because the agency is not designed to succeed. It can't. Not the way it is approaching the job.

Before 9/11, each airport and airline was responsible for its own security, and security personnel were private employees. Because 19 hijackers made it past security with box-cutters, it was decided that airport security needed to be federalized. The TSA was created in November 2001. It was initially under the Department of Transportation, but was moved to DHS in March 2003. Since its creation the TSA has had failures far more egregious than the 19 box-cutters making it through security in three airports.

If anyone takes a *logical* look at the entire process of airport security, it quickly becomes apparent that it is *not* logical; It is *emotional*. The process is designed to make travelers *feel* as if they are being protected, while they are *actually* being conditioned to give up essential liberty for the sake of supposed



security.

It's "security theater."

For instance, once a traveler clears airport security in a large airport such as DFW in the Dallas area or MSP in Minneapolis (both international airports where security should be the best), he finds himself in what is essentially a mall, complete with shopping and dining. Many of those restaurants set their tables with steak knives. Remember, the traveler has already cleared security. He will not likely be searched, scanned, or groped again before he boards his flight. It would be a simple matter to lay his hands on a knife at any one of those restaurants and put it in his carry-on (or jacket pocket). For that matter, he could simply fly first class on a long flight, and at dinner time, the nice flight attendant will hand him a steak knife. He is now an armed passenger.

The next time you see an entire flight crew going through airport security and passing through metal detectors while their carry-on luggage is being x-rayed, ask yourself, "Is there any real point to this?" After all, the purpose of all the security is supposedly to keep someone from hijacking a plane. But as soon as the pilot clears security, the airline is going to hand him the keys to a plane. He will be in a locked cabin and have complete control over the aircraft. If he is going to hijack the plane, all the TSA security in the world is utterly useless.

The TSA is not incompetent. It's far worse than that. Yes, the TSA routinely fails to do what the American people have been led to believe it is supposed to do. But the agency has succeeded at the more important task for which it actually was designed: stripping American citizens of their dignity and their birthright of liberty and conditioning them to accept it as part of "preventing another 9/11."

Considering the ease with which Red Teams managed to get explosives, guns, and knives past security and the ease with which anyone can arm themselves after getting through security, it is obvious that the American people are not being protected; they are simply being *conditioned*.

And it is working.

The trade-off has been inequitable. Benjamin Franklin knew quite a bit about the nature and value of liberty. He famously said that those who would sacrifice essential liberty for a little temporary security deserve neither liberty nor security. The American people have been sacrificing essential liberty for the hollow promise of security.

It is time to dismantle the TSA and put security back where it belongs: in the hands of the operators of the airports and airlines. They have to answer to the travelers who use their airports and fly on their planes. They are better able to deal with issues as they arise. And they have a far, far better track record of actually providing real security.



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