



Written by [Becky Akers](#) on June 22, 2011

## TSA's Checkpoint Charade

We have seen the checkpoint of the future, and we are not impressed. But Our Rulers certainly are.

That's because it will calm some of the furor over the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) sexual assaults at airports by reducing the "[stripping ... unpacking, and ... groping](#)." That's not to say it eliminates those atrocities — or their sponsor, the TSA. Rather, it places passengers ever more firmly under that perverted agency's thumb.

The new checkpoint consists of three lanes, "['known traveler,' 'normal' and 'enhanced' security](#). Travelers, after presenting a passport or other document with a 'biometric identifier,' would be assigned to a lane based on 'a risk assessment conducted by the government before the passenger arrives at the airport,' " according to a press release from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), godfather of this scheme.



IATA is a "[global trade organization](#)" whose "[mission](#) is to **represent, lead and serve the airline industry**. Its members comprise some 230 airlines — the world's leading passenger and cargo airlines among them — representing 93 percent of scheduled international air traffic." [Original emphasis.]

These lobbyists with their mammoth clout gathered earlier this month for their annual meeting, during which they hyped the "checkpoint of the future." Why am I reminded of Adam Smith's observation that "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public...?"

In IATA's case, that conspiracy consists of persuading passengers to accept the State's stranglehold on aviation while IATA pleads with its governmental "partners" to assume as much of the industry's operating expenses as possible. That's why you will never, ever hear the IATA call for disbanding the TSA regardless of how badly the agency abuses aviation's customers. So long as taxpayers foot the bill for "security," the TSA will molest us with the IATA's blessing.

Indeed, the IATA has been completely open about its goal of sticking taxpayers with its costs: "[... too many governments single-out aviation](#) to pay for its own security," insists the IATA's "director general," Giovanni Bisignani. "...Governments cannot justify protecting citizens in parks, stadiums and train stations but passing the buck to industry when citizens enter airports to board planes. ... This is a wake-up call to governments to pay their bill. ... Governments must now combine their best efforts to ... properly fund measures to ensure that we are prepared for the threats of today — and those of



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tomorrow.”

The IATA’s domestic equivalent, the Air Transport Association of America (ATA), agrees. ATA is “[the nation’s oldest and largest](#) airline trade association...” And it’s just as candid that its “fundamental purpose is to foster a business and *regulatory environment* that ensures safe and secure air transportation. ... ATA leads industry efforts to fashion crucial *aviation policy and supports measures* [*sic* for ‘subsidies’].” [Emphasis added.]

Both groups and such similar “associations” as the [UN’s International Civil Aviation Organization](#) have a perverse incentive to encourage the TSA in its gate-rap. Indeed, the ATA brags that its members “[collaborate with the government to protect passengers](#), crew, cargo and aircraft.” They “work with the Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration and Customs and Border Protection on programs to implement security requirements effectively and efficiently to maximize the security benefits and minimize passenger/shipper inconvenience.” We used to call this “fascism,” and it scared the dickens out of our grandparents. Now lobbyists openly tout such “collaboration.”

Then again, we can hardly blame the industry for cooperating. Leviathan has become so powerful it can instantly pulverize any airline refusing to kowtow.

Likewise, we can’t fault aviators for their reluctance to waste money on “security.” Prior to the TSA, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) minutely regulated every aspect of aviation’s protection. Yes, “private” screeners manned the checkpoints the FAA mandated, but every procedure they followed and every question they asked came directly from the FAA’s script.

Neither the procedures nor the questions made sense: they were mere “security theater” just as the TSA is. And the airlines resented paying for such absurdity as much as we do — or would, if the “[security fee](#)” on our tickets covered the full, [annual cost of \\$8.2 billion](#) rather than only 25% of it. (All taxpayers, not just passengers, pick up the other 75% whether or not they ever set foot in an airport.)

Look at it this way: if your town’s council decreed that homeowners must use raccoon-proof garbage cans, would you buy the most expensive model after hours of diligently comparing manufacturers’ claims of inviolability against pests? Or would you grab the cheapest available and curse the council?

Why would businessmen react any differently? A government’s requiring something, however necessary or worthwhile, is the surest way to strip it of value. And it turned aviation’s “security” into such a caricature that 19 terrorists easily circumvented it one morning in 2001.

Tragically, IATA’s “solution” to this danger is not the TSA’s abolition but a surrender of more money and power to government. “[To access the fastest lane](#), ‘known traveler,’ you would have to register and submit to a government background check. You would probably also pay a fee to participate, Kenneth Dunlap, IATA’s global director of security and travel facilitation, said...”

Expect the fee to be stiff; when the TSA “[tested and abandoned](#)” a similar idea “[a few years back](#), ... travelers were typically charged around \$100 to undergo a background check and get access to shorter checkpoint lines...”

That’s bad enough. But what about the additional information on us — and power — government will accrue?

We already travel only with Our Rulers’ permission. Indeed, we’ve needed that permission for international journeys since the early twentieth century, when the Feds began requiring passports before we could return home. Yet the Constitution never authorizes government to control comings or



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goings across the national border, and it certainly doesn't allow internal policing of travel, either. No matter: the Feds busily compile blacklists of "terrorists" who may not fly. They also compel airlines to collect our full name, date of birth, and sex when we reserve a seat; bureaucrats then compare these "passenger manifests" against their blacklists. The TSA calls this totalitarian outrage "[Secure Flight, the ... behind-the-scenes watch list matching program...](#)" "Behind-the-scenes" is right: Secure Flight is so obscure most Americans deny their serfdom nor realize they fly only at the sufferance of their masters.

The IATA's scam will excuse government's wresting far more information than names and dates of birth from us — Social Security numbers and biometrics to start, perhaps eventually credit or medical histories, library records, and whatever else a bureaucrat itches to know. What will the Feds do with this data? Given their [expanding definition of "terrorist,"](#) will they "detain" passengers delinquent with their income-taxes or re-payment of their student-loans at the checkpoint? The [TSA already harasses its critics](#); how much more so under the extensive databases the IATA proposes? Try denouncing the TSA's latest power-grab in a letter to the editor and see how quickly you switch lanes from "known traveler" to "enhanced security."

"Passengers should be able to get from curb to boarding gate with dignity," IATA's [Giovanni Bisignani says](#). Yep. But that means abolishing, not further empowering, the TSA.



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