



## Yet More Reasons (As If We Needed Any) to Abolish the TSA

What would enrage you enough to “kick a wall, throw a suitcase or make a pithy comment to a screener” at an airport? How about the screener’s electronically denuding and then leering at your wife? What if the gizmo whereby he stripped her also exposed both her and the month-old child she didn’t yet realize she was carrying to carcinogenic rays? Fast-forward a few years: now, as your toddler struggles with a congenital deformity, you learn your wife’s virtual strip-search at the airport may have been responsible. How many walls, suitcases and screeners will escape your wrath then?

Beware: the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), keeper of blacklists to which it secretly adds folks it has never charged with any crime, let alone tried in a court of law, and from which [its victims have little recourse](#), maintains yet another list, this time of “[people who make](#) its screeners feel threatened... A TSA report says the database can include names, birth dates, Social Security numbers, home addresses and phone numbers of people involved in airport incidents, including aggressors, victims and witnesses.”

As always, the TSA downplays its malfeasance against liberty and us as well as its paranoia. The list is merely “part of an effort to prevent workplace violence” against [courteous](#), [honest](#) and [compassionate](#) screeners. Besides, it doesn’t contain that many passengers’ names yet, only “[records from about](#) 240 incidents. Most are screeners in conflict with other screeners. About 30 incidents involve people such as passengers or airport workers attacking or threatening screeners...” Ah, but thanks to the TSA and its accomplices at the airlines, flying has become such frustrating torture that the list should grow as quickly as Barack “Pinocchio” Obama’s nose.

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Meanwhile, the TSA does all it can to stoke our anger. It is ordering passengers at increasing numbers of airports into the aforementioned X-ray machines that peer through clothing and photograph bare bodies. To con prudes who balk at exposing themselves to government agents, the TSA lies. Repeatedly, shamelessly. It claims its contraptions can neither retain nor share the naughty pictures they capture — indeed, its website even now insists, “The image cannot be stored, transmitted or printed, and is





Written by [Becky Akers](#) on May 26, 2010

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deleted immediately once viewed.” But an FOIA-request pried loose the TSA’s purchasing specs for the technology earlier this year, which state [“that the machines](#) must have image storage and sending abilities.” And the [manufacturer’s website brags about just those features](#).

The agency also alleges that its mechanical Peeping Toms can’t capture our physical details, that their “image[s] ... [resemble] a fuzzy photo negative” or a “chalk etching.” But the TSA’s own “acting administrator,” Gale Rossides, brags about Tom’s keen eye: “Our officers are finding things like small packages of powder-based drugs hidden on the body. When I say small, I mean that one packet was smaller than a thumb print.” While training to use these smutty scanners, another of the TSA’s employees spied enough particulars on a co-worker’s “chalk etching” to confirm what we’ve all suspected: despite their bullying of old ladies, [screeners lack cojones](#). Teased about this unassailable truth, the screener tried to kill the messenger.

We haven’t finished with the TSA’s whoppers. The agency also claims that its X-rays won’t harm us: “Advanced imaging technology is safe and meets national health and safety standards. ... the radiation doses for the individuals being screened, operators, and bystanders were well below the dose limits specified by the American National Standards Institute. ... A single scan ... produces exposure equivalent to two minutes of flying on an airplane.”

Not according to scientists from the University of California in San Francisco. “Ionizing radiation such as the X-rays used in these scanners have the potential to induce chromosome damage, and that can lead to cancer,” [warns David Agard, a biochemist and biophysicist](#). He and three colleagues — among them a molecular biologist and a specialist who studies cancer — have protested the TSA’s assault on the public’s health to John Holdren, Pinocchio’s caddie on science. They cautioned him about the risk of such horrors as “melanoma, a dangerous skin cancer; immune-system problems; breast cancer; mutations in sperm cells; and effects on a developing fetus.”

Also worried is David Brenner, head of Columbia University’s Center for Radiological Research. He [“served on a small group](#) of experts convened in 2002 by the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements to write guidelines for the security scanners. He now says he wouldn’t have signed the report if he had known the X-ray scanners were going to be used on virtually every air traveler. ... Recent research, Brenner says, indicates that about 5 percent of the population — one person in 20 — is especially sensitive to radiation. These people have gene mutations that make them less able to repair X-ray damage to their DNA. ... ‘I don’t know if I’m one of those 5 percent. I don’t know if you’re one of those 5 percent,’ Brenner says, ‘And we don’t really have a quick and easy test to find those individuals.’”

As if that weren’t enough, children are especially vulnerable “because they have more dividing cells at any time. A radiation-induced mutation in their cells can lead to cancer decades later.”

You might think the possibility of such catastrophic consequences would give our rulers pause. But no. They steam ahead, irradiating passengers and keeping lists of those they anger.

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