



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on January 29, 2010

Eight-year-old Suspected Terrorist

Eight-year-old Mikey Hicks is a New Jersey school boy, a Cub Scout, and a suspected terrorist. His mother, Najlah Hicks, told the CBS Early Show the first time the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) singled out Mikey at an airport he was only four months old, and the family was headed to Florida for his baptism. They couldn't get him a seat on the plane because an airline official said his name "was on the list."



Today, she still can't get a straight answer as to what list includes her son's name. She said it is not on the "do not fly" list since he is able to get an airline ticket, but more likely among the 16,000 "[selectee](#)" names that demand strict security screening. Every time they go to an airport, both Mikey and his father, Michael Hicks, are searched and frisked. Their boarding passes are marked with four large red letters "S," which means security must pat them down. Mikey was two years old the first time security frisked him, and Mrs. Hicks told [the New York Times](#) he cried.

The TSA insists there is [no eight-year-old boy on their watch lists](#). "Airlines can and should automatically de-select any 8-year-olds out there that appear to be on a watch list," reads the TSA website's [Myth Busters](#) section. "The most common occurrence is name confusion and individuals are told they are on the no fly list when in fact, they are not." But the burden of responsibility for pre-screening passengers against comprehensive terror watch lists rests, not with the TSA, but with individual airlines. A TSA [press release](#) says the agency is in the process of assuming that responsibility by the end of 2010.

The Department of Homeland Security provides a [Traveler Redress Inquiry Program](#) for those who run into mismatch issues. The *New York Times* reported that since 2007 more than 80,000 travelers have filed complaints with DHS, and some have even changed their names or the spelling of them to avoid trouble.

But Mrs. Hicks said nothing has helped in their eight-year saga of security delays. She told the *Early Show* that a TSA representative met them at the airport on their most recent trip to ensure there would be no problems, but her son was still searched like a criminal. "Up your arms, down your arms, up your crotch," said Mrs. Hicks, describing the treatment. "[A terrorist can blow his underwear up](#), and they don't catch him. But my 8-year-old can't walk through security without being frisked."

Mikey's father is a U.S. Navy veteran, and his mother is a photojournalist who has flown with former Vice President Al Gore aboard Air Force II. Mrs. Hicks told the *Early Show*, "We understand there needs to be security. We know all about 9/11. We live 11 miles from the city. But if you just get all these people off the list that don't belong on the list, then maybe you'd find the right people."

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