



Written by on November 24, 2010

Pre-Thanksgiving TSA Protest

So far, the great Thanksgiving protest against the TSA has been a turkey. As of midday Wednesday, only a few scattered protesters have been reported at airports nationwide, with very few travelers (at least according to the TSA) opting out of the full body scans, which amount to virtual strip searches of men, women, and children. Though some passengers are grumbling at the new security, few have been willing to stand up for themselves as John Tyner, a software engineer from San Diego, and others have done over the last several weeks.



In point of fact, this is not too surprising, since to disrupt airport security, those who would “opt out” of the full body scans will simply be submitting to being sexually molested (there is no politer term for it) by leering TSA goons instead. This author has no intention of submitting to either procedure, which means — as many others have doubtless concluded — that not flying at all is the only acceptable form of protest.

A few protesters have turned up at airports, some of them, like Patricia Stone and John Richards, a couple outside the Phoenix airport, attracting sympathetic comments from passengers and thanks for turning out. “Just because you buy a plane ticket doesn’t mean you have to subject yourself to awful security measures. It’s not a waiver of your rights,” Stone told the Associated Press. “The TSA is security theater. They’re not protecting us.”

Meanwhile, a smug John Pistole, the head of the TSA, reported “so far, so good.” On ABC’s *Good Morning America*, Pistole oozed sympathy for those who would be victimized by malevolent protesters who somehow fail to grasp that the TSA only has our best interests at heart. “I just feel bad for the traveling public that’s just trying to get home for the holidays,” Pistole said, adding that the good folks at the TSA “just want to get you through.”

For those of us old enough to remember America as it was even 20 years ago, these are appalling times to behold. During the Cold War, when memories of Nazi, Fascist, and Stalinist atrocities were fresh, such activities were recognized for what they were: police state tactics. But not even the harshest 20th century totalitarians had the wherewithal to subject their captive citizenries to full body scans and invasive pat downs as a matter of policy. Those regimes were notorious for keeping suspect citizens under constant surveillance and for carrying out arbitrary arrests and imprisonment without trial (oh, wait, we’re doing that, too!).

The world we are now ushering in resembles the dystopian nightmare of Philip Dick’s famous cautionary tale, *Minority Report*, in which an America not dissimilar to the country we now live in is blanketed with surveillance cameras and retina scanners. We have not — so far — adopted pre-emptive justice (“pre-crime”) as a matter of default policy, but such measures will soon be in place if Americans do not draw a line in the sand.



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The TSA, for their part, have made it clear they want to install the body imagers not only in every airport in the land but in train and bus terminals and possibly other public places as well.

Those of us who still prefer liberty over security will be watching in the weeks and months ahead to see whether anyone in Congress besides Ron Paul is willing to take more than a token stand against the TSA, the Department of Homeland Security, the mainstream news media (which have heaped scorn and calumnies on those opposed to the new security measures), and the entire executive branch.

If America goes back to sleep on this one, she may well wake up in the gulag.

Photo (this page and rotator image): Activist Lori Lamb distributes stickers to travelers to protest the TSA's new security procedures at Los Angeles International Airport, Nov. 24, 2010: AP Images

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