



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 11, 2011

Sunshine State TSA Screener Seen Stealing From Suitcases

Although the TSA, like most bureaucracies, is not known for its speed, police say Santiago proved to be a very fast worker indeed where his personal profit was concerned, taking photos of the stolen items with his cellphone and posting them online, where they would often sell even before his shift had ended.



Santiago's victims were actually being robbed for the second time when he took their things. The first robbery occurred when they were forced to pay him to rummage through people's luggage in violation of the Fourth Amendment. The Fort Lauderdale [Sun Sentinel](#) reports that Santiago's salary from the TSA was probably \$29,000 to \$33,000, according to a TSA spokeswoman, who also stated that he is no longer employed by the agency. He was hired by the TSA in January 2009.

Santiago has been charged thus far with two counts of grand theft and released on bond.

Theft by TSA screeners is, unfortunately, so common that it hardly makes headlines anymore. Just this year, for instance, screeners at New York's [John F. Kennedy Airport](#) and Los Angeles International Airport were arrested for stealing from passengers. Nor is this a new problem: In 2004 [ABC News](#) reported that "more than 60 TSA screeners have been arrested for theft at 30 different airports" — a function, at least in part, of the agency's breakneck hiring pace in its early years, during which 28,000 TSA agents were [hired without criminal background checks](#).

Of course, an agency that specializes in ogling airplane passengers' naked bodies and groping their private parts can hardly be expected to attract employees of the highest moral caliber. In addition, the TSA surely does not set a good example for its employees by turning over items confiscated from passengers, including such dangerous weapons as [snow globes and fingernail clippers](#), to state and local governments, who in turn [make a mint](#) reselling those stolen goods. If it's good enough for the boss, they may reasonably ask, why isn't it good enough for the employees?

TSA screeners' looting of luggage also demonstrates how feckless the agency is when it comes to providing real security. These employees are repeatedly able to steal items and get them safely out of airports under the very noses of other agents responsible for ensuring that dangerous weapons and individuals do not board airplanes. Santiago's thefts went completely unnoticed (or, worse, were overlooked) by other TSA agents for half a year, and they were stopped only because a sharp-eyed Continental Airlines employee, not another TSA agent, happened to catch him in the act.



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Constitutionalists have, for a long time, been calling for the abolition of the TSA. Santiago's arrest and apparent confession provide just one more example of why this ineffective, unconstitutional agency needs to go.

Photo: AP Images

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