



A Tale of Two Women and the TSA

Recently two women tried to pass through airport security in the United States. One was unarmed; the other was hiding a gun in her underwear. Which one did the Transportation Security Administration prevent from boarding an airplane?

If you have even the slightest familiarity with the TSA, or with government “security” in general, then you have already figured out that the unarmed woman was denied her right to travel while the armed woman breezed right past the TSA’s finest.

First, the one that got away: KXAS, the NBC affiliate in Dallas/Fort Worth, [reports](#) that “a high-ranking, inside source” at the TSA said that “an undercover TSA agent was able to get through security at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport with a handgun during testing of the enhanced-imaging body scanners.” The woman was carrying a pistol in her undergarments and “successfully made it through the airport’s body scanners every time she tried, the source said.”



The report notes that the TSA “did not deny” these allegations, responding only with the following statement:

Our security officers are one of the most heavily tested federal workforces in the nation. We regularly test our officers in a variety of ways to ensure the effectiveness of our technology, security measures and the overall layered system. For security reasons, we do not publicize or comment on the results of covert tests, however advanced imaging technology is an effective tool to detect both metallic and nonmetallic items hidden on passengers.

TSA officers may indeed be “heavily tested,” but if failure does not lead to discipline or termination, what good are the tests? The TSA source told KXAS “that none of the TSA agents who failed to spot the gun on the scanned image were disciplined. The source said the agents continue to work the body scanners today.” Just as government schools pass students from one grade to the next despite failing grades, so government employees get to go right on working despite failing a test of precisely the skills they are supposed to employ to protect the public.

Although TSA agents equipped with scanners that let them see every detail of a person’s body seem incapable of spotting a gun, they are capable of sighting other danger signs. For example, screeners at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport noticed mastectomy scars on the person of Alaska State Rep. Sharon Cissna (D) and were immediately cognizant of the risk she posed to other passengers. They insisted that she be patted down by an agent. Cissna, having experienced this “horror” (her word) three



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months ago, knew what that meant: “I would require invasive, probing hands of a stranger over my body,” she wrote in a [statement](#) concerning the incident.

Remembering the “violation” she felt three months earlier during “the previous intensive physical search,” Cissna decided to follow through on the plan upon which she and her husband had agreed. “I repeatedly said that I would not allow the feeling-up and I would not use the transportation mode that required it,” she stated. Instead, she chose to take the long way to Juneau: by car, small airplane, and ferry, a journey she described as “a trip of pride.”

Cissna quite rightly likens the TSA’s manual searches to “assault,” saying:

The very last thing an assault victim or molested person can deal with is yet more trauma and the groping of strangers, the hands of government ‘safety’ policy.

For these people, as well as myself, I refused to submit.

Bravo for Rep. Cissna! It is unfortunate that she was forced to make a much longer, more arduous journey to avoid TSA molestation. But her courage in refusing to submit to such procedures, all the while attracting the attention of increasing numbers of TSA agents, airline and airport personnel, and police officers, is commendable. Perhaps her example will encourage more Americans to eschew convenience for dignity.

Perhaps it will also cause Americans — and, in turn, their elected officials — to reconsider the insane, unconstitutional TSA screening process. An agency that demands the right to strip search and grope airline passengers in violation of both the Bill of Rights and basic human decency ought at least to have something to show for its egregious behavior. Yet a plain-as-day pistol goes completely and repeatedly undetected by the TSA while a harmless (except possibly to Alaskan taxpayers) female legislator with surgical scars either is subjected to a feel-up or must take other, more dangerous modes of transportation to avoid such molestation.

Most strict defenders of the Constitution believe that the TSA, which should never have been created in the first place, needs to be abolished. In the words of Rep. Cissna, “The freedom to travel should never come at the price of basic human dignity and pride.”

Photo Rep. Sharon Cissna, (D-Anchorage): AP Images



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