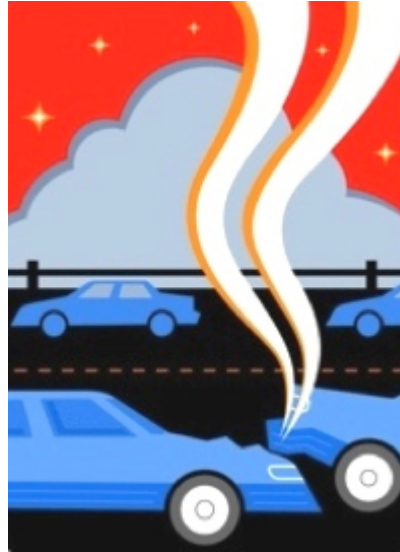




Written by [James Heiser](#) on November 23, 2010

TSA “Freedom Grope” May Lead to Highway Fatalities

Amidst the understandable furor over the TSA’s current systematic violation of the Fourth Amendment rights of American citizens, an aspect of the crisis at the nation’s airports that has not received as much attention is federal culpability in what may be a sharp increase in traffic fatalities. As Americans turn away from the nation’s clogged airports and invasive, unwarranted searches of their persons and property that are coming to characterize air travel, those same citizens will now face a heightened risk of bodily harm or death on the road.



[An article by Jordy Yager for TheHill.com](#) explains that statistics point to the risks of increased travel by automobile, especially during the hectic holiday season:

As the nation readies for one of the busiest traveling holidays, Steven Horwitz, a professor of economics at St. Lawrence University, told The Hill that the probable spike in road travel, caused by adverse feelings towards the Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) new screening procedures, could also lead to more car-related deaths.

“Driving is much more dangerous than flying, as you are far more likely to be killed in an automobile accident mile-for-mile than you are in an airplane,” said Horwitz. “The result will be that the new TSA procedures will kill more Americans on the highway.”

According to [statistics](#) available at census.gov, the number of fatalities from traffic accidents has been on the decline in recent years: There were 43,100 motor vehicle deaths in 2007, and the U.S. Department of Transportation placed the number for [2009](#) at an estimated 33,963.

Air travel is generally an extremely safe form of transportation; the [Insurance Information Institute](#) records 52 casualties in 2009 in the category of “U.S. Large Airline Accidents.” But it is not safety that is causing Americans to choose slower, more dangerous, ground transportation this holiday season. It all comes down to fear, dread, and anger over the actions of a federal bureaucracy at the nation’s airports — an agency that has captured nearly as many unicorns and dragons as it has intercepted terrorists.

How many Americans will die from feeling forced onto the freeways by the TSA? Probably more than died from terrorism last year. Approximately 16 Americans died from acts of terrorism committed within the United States during 2009. (Nidal Hasan has been charged with 13 deaths in connection with his alleged attack on servicemen at Fort Hood; a guard was killed during the [Holocaust Museum shooting](#); one person died in the attack on a military recruiting office in [Little Rock, Arkansas](#); and abortionist [George Tiller](#) was shot while attending church.)

By way of contrast, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [estimates](#) that 150 deaths annually may be attributed to food allergies. And, according to the [National Weather Service](#), 29 people have been killed by lightning in 2010 as of the writing of this article. (And the observation that peanuts



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and lightning pose a greater risk that domestic terrorism is nothing new; [another writer](#) made the same observation in January 2007.)

TSA pat-downs and pornoscanners are the embodiment of the *argumentum ad ignorantiam* that is the current state of the domestic “war on terror”: There is a real loss of freedom in exchange for a dubious increase in safety. While the nation is no safer now than it was before the “freedom grope,” the loss in lives on the road is a real threat, and so is the possibility of further financial troubles for the airlines. As Yager wrote for TheHill.com:

Earlier this week in protest of the screening measure, a group began organizing a “National Opt-Out Day” for ... Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving and one of the heaviest sky trafficked days of the year.

The airline industry has gradually bounced back since the Sept. 11, 2001, plane attacks, when it saw its profits drastically dip for many months as passengers opted for other travel means or not to travel altogether. But the recent controversy over the screening methods could cause that uptick in profits to be short-lived, said Horwitz and Winston.

“It probably won’t be as big as the original effect of post 9/11, but it will be a chunk of airline travel,” said Winston. “And it will make it that much harder to move back to a more user-friendly environment.”

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