



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on August 25, 2010

TSA Test Markets More Aggressive Frisking

Front-of-hand frisking by police was once reserved for criminals caught in the act. But now the ACLU is questioning a new technique being tested at Boston Logan Airport. In an unbelievable move, the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) new policy is fueling the debate of privacy over safety with its aggressive palms first, slide-down body search technique, according to the BostonHerald.com Business on August 21. Donna Goodison wrote that the new procedure replacing the TSA's back-of-the-hand patdown and being implemented in Boston and Las Vegas McCarran, is a test before a planned national rollout.



"We're all for good effective security measures," Massachusetts ACLU Massachusetts spokesman Christopher Ott said. "But, in general, we're concerned about this seemingly constant erosion of privacy, and we wonder whether or not it's really going to be effective."

He continued, "Accepting these kinds of searches may keep people safer in some situations, but not in every situation, and we're encouraging people to stop and think about what is the right balance between privacy and security,"

Last week, Ann Davis, TSA spokeswoman for the Northeast Region, confirmed the switch to what the agency calls an "enhanced patdown."

"TSA is in the process of implementing an enhanced patdown at security checkpoints as one of our many layers of security. Patdowns are designed to address potentially dangerous items, like improvised explosive devices and their components, concealed on the body."

Previously, TSA screeners used patdown motions of their hands to search passengers over their clothes, switching to the backs of their hands over sensitive body areas, such as the torso.

Now the searches will be done using all front-of-the-hand sliding motions over greater areas of passengers' bodies, [including](#) sensitive areas.

"The pat down just (because I) was wearing jewelry seems like overkill," one woman wrote on Logan's Twitter account last week.

Same-gender TSA officers perform the body searches, and passengers can request private screenings at any time.

The TSA implemented the new body-search procedures at Boston and Las Vegas airports because they're using the greatest number of walk-through full-body scanners. Those scanners use low-dose X-rays to produce two-sided, head-to-toe images of passengers' bodies — including discernible but not distinct images of their private parts — but blur facial features.

Passengers who opt out of the full-body scanners — which have also been assailed by privacy advocates



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- must instead walk through a metal detector and submit to body searches. If the full-body scanners detect an image on a person's body that screeners can't decipher, that passenger is also subjected to a body search.

If there is no full-body scanner at a security checkpoint, passengers go through a metal detector and are subjected to body searches if the alarm sounds. The TSA also subjects random passengers to body searches.

The argument for privacy violation via the full-body scanners has revealed the TSA has been caught lying about the storage capability of the scanners. Images CAN be stored and exported. ([See TNA.](#))

"Enhanced patdown" isn't much more than a euphemism for sanctioned groping, and at best is causing passengers to feel very nervous. Would that unauthorized border-crossers were checked as thoroughly.

But Justine Griffin, a senior vice president at Rasky Baerlein Communications and frequent flier, said last week, "The most important thing is to have an effective patdown. If using the back of the hand is less effective, then security trumps niceties."

One hears that argument sometimes, but this writer doesn't buy it. The right to privacy is inherent and protected by the Fourth Amendment. People claim, as did Griffin, that the violation of rights is justified when somebody — in this case the government says it is "for our safety." But this thinking is a basic misunderstanding of this Constitutional tenet: Each of the first ten amendments, including the Fourth, was outlined for the purpose of protecting that right when it was threatened, not when it wasn't.

A popular quotation usually attributed to Benjamin Franklin (but valid no matter who originated it) maintains: "Those who would give up Essential Liberty to purchase a little Temporary Safety deserve neither Liberty nor Safety."

Protected rights aren't granted by government, and can't be repealed by government. The protection of rights isn't for when times are safe and calm, but when times are not. The protections are especially needed when threatened. That's what they're for. Like now. When full-on body searches are forced on us.

Why this basic observation goes unobserved is beyond me. If people are sufficiently outraged over this, one wonders if they will be more likely to accept the full-body scan, which in comparison, could seem less intrusive after all.



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