



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 30, 2011

Latest TSA Outrages: Confiscating a Cupcake, Overlooking a Sword

ABC News reports that a Massachusetts woman was stopped at Las Vegas-McCarran International Airport on Christmas Eve because she was in possession of a frosted cupcake in her luggage. One TSA agent was unsure of how to handle the item and so called in a supervisor, who determined that the vanilla icing could potentially be “a security risk” because it could be considered a “gel-like substance.”



That agent’s determination confused the traveler, Rebecca Hains, because she had no trouble with two of the cupcakes on an earlier flight.

“The TSA at Logan Airport said the cupcakes looked delicious and told us to have a great trip,” she said. “But in Las Vegas, they were dangerous. They shouldn’t be delicious in one part of the country and a security threat in the other,” she added, calling the TSA “security theater.”

Hains indicated that the security agent did not seem particularly concerned that the red velvet cupcake, which was packaged in an 8-inch mason jar, could be an explosive of some sort, but rather that it fit into some ambiguous bureaucratic definition about what was prohibited by the TSA.

“I just thought it was terrible logic,” said Hains, who was not able to get her cupcake back from security. “Once he had identified it as a security threat, it was no longer mine and I couldn’t have it back.”

Hains, a communications professor at Salem State University, took the opportunity to criticize the TSA:

It's not really about the cupcake; I can get another cupcake. It's about an encroachment on civil liberties. We're just building up a resistance and tolerance to all these things they're doing in the name of security, when it's really theater. It is not keeping us safe.

Similarly, at Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Michigan, a TSA agent stopped a traveler who was standing in a security line because of an “oddly placed iPod and bag of candy.” That caused Lora Van Uffelen and seven other travelers to miss their flight to Chicago.

In response to the incidents, TSA issued a statement that read, “There was no impact to flight operations and no delays occurred.”

Some may argue that the TSA was simply being particularly cautious — that is, until they learn what took place at an airport in Corpus Christi. A male traveler somehow made it past security with a 14-inch sword hidden inside his carry-on luggage and disguised as a cane. The man was able to fly to Dallas/Ft. Worth International Airport before the item was discovered.

Kim Bridger, a spokeswoman for the Corpus Christi International Airport, stated, “We take safety and security very seriously out here. We're certainly interested in finding out what happened. We typically



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don't comment on TSA matters and this certainly falls into their arena."

The sword was turned over to law officers at DFW Airport, and there remains no word as to why the man was traveling with it.

Once again the TSA was forced to issue a statement. It attempted to downplay the mistake by explaining, "The biggest threat to aviation today [is] explosives and explosive components. While edge weapons such as swords remain a prohibited item it will not cause catastrophic damage."

But apparently cupcakes and candy will.

It is for these reasons that Texas Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul has called for abolishing the TSA, asserting that its security policies are in violation of the Constitution and treat all American citizens as potential criminals.

"The press reports are horrifying," declared the Texas Congressman in an [op-ed](#) published online by *The Hill*. "Children molested; disabled people abused; men and women subjected to unwarranted groping and touching of their most private areas; involuntary radiation exposure. If the perpetrators were a gang of criminals, their headquarters would be raided by SWAT teams and armed federal agents. Unfortunately, in this case the perpetrators are armed federal agents. This is the sorry situation ten years after the creation of the Transportation Security Administration."

Likewise, the U.S. Congress released a [report](#) in November entitled, "A Decade Later: A Call for TSA Reform," which called the TSA:

1. A bloated bureaucracy with 65,000 workers
2. An ineffective agency with 25,000 security breaches in the last decade.
3. A buyer of inadequate technology, including 500 advanced-imaging technology machines that are "easily thwarted."

"Unfortunately, TSA has lost its way," observed Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.), chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

News Journal Online reminded its readers of some of the more embarrassing incidents resulting from outrageous TSA behavior, such as the suggestive note placed into the luggage of a female traveler who had a sex toy in her luggage, and called into question the necessity of some of the TSA security measures: "Travelers get poked, prodded and patted down in sensitive areas by TSA agents. The effort to enhance travelers' security is laudable, but the effectiveness of those pat-downs is highly debatable."

What isn't debatable is that Americans are becoming increasingly irritated with the TSA's security measures. As *News Journal* observes, "Big Brother not only seems intrusive — at times he comes across as silly and ineffectual."

Additionally, there is increasing evidence that the X-ray machines which American travelers are asked to stand in for screening may cause [cancer](#).

What's worse is that the body scanners at airports may not even be effective. According to a study conducted by Leon Kaufman and Joseph Carlson, "Even if exposure were to be increased significantly, normal anatomy would make a dangerous amount of plastic explosives with tapered edges difficult, if not impossible to detect."

Epic.org [explains](#), "Kaufman and Carlson's study examined the imaging and device specifications of the backscatter machines to estimate the penetration and exposure to the body from the X-ray beam and



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the machines' sensitivity to contraband. The authors' study also echoes concerns about the [health risks](#) associated with the backscatter devices."

As a result, EPIC has filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security to suspend the body scanner program because it is "unlawful, invasive, and ineffective."

Ron Paul has offered a [solution](#) to the issues posed by the TSA: privatize security. Paul indicates that federal bureaucrats are much less qualified to provide intelligent security than are private owners.



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