



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 3, 2012

No-fly List Doubled in One Year

One of the many egregious constitutional violations spawned by the 9/11 attacks, the no-fly list originally contained the names of only those individuals deemed likely to employ aircraft for terrorism. Since the “Underwear Bomber’s” BVDs failed to bring down a plane in December 2009, however, the list has exploded because “the government lowered the standard for putting people on the list then scoured its files for anyone who qualified,” the AP writes. Now one need merely be “considered a broader threat to domestic or international security” or alleged to have “attended a terror training camp” to be prohibited from flying to, from, or within the United States, the report states.



Washington apparently believes there are some 21,000 individuals around the world bent on harming Americans via the skies. On top of that, there are about 510,000 people in the government’s Terrorist Screening Database, of which the no-fly list is a subset, [according to CNN](#).

How can this be when in the past year Osama bin Laden and other supposedly high-ranking al-Qaeda leaders, as well as the allegedly terrorist-inspiring Anwar al-Awlaki, were killed? Shouldn’t Americans be safer now, especially when, as the AP notes, “the government says it’s close to defeating al-Qaida”?

Absolutely not, officials told the news service:

“Both U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communities and foreign services continue to identify people who want to cause us harm, particularly in the U.S. and particularly as it relates to aviation,” Transportation Security Administrator John Pistole said in an interview.

Affiliated terror groups in Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Algeria and elsewhere, as well as individuals who ascribe to al-Qaida’s beliefs — “All are in the mix,” said Michael Leiter, former director of the National Counterterrorism Center. “And no one is claiming that they are shrinking.”

In short, don’t expect the government to relinquish any of its post-9/11 power grabs just because al-Qaeda is gone. Uncle Sam can always find — or, if necessary, invent — new enemies to justify his trampling of the Constitution.

Martin Reardon, former head of the Terrorist Screening Operations center, confirmed this when he told the AP: “I would argue that even if [al-Qaeda] as we know it ceased to exist as of tomorrow, other terrorist organizations or lone wolves with both the intent and capability of carrying out attacks against the U.S. would fill the void. The consolidated terrorist watch list exists for that very reason.”

Innocent Americans concerned that they might end up being grounded — as happened, for instance, to the late (though perhaps not so innocent) Sen. Ted Kennedy in 2004 — needn’t worry, according to current and former government officials. “While the list is secret, it is subject to continuous review to



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ensure that the right people are on it and that the ones who shouldn't be on it are removed," Reardon told the AP. Moreover, because the government, rather than the airlines, is now checking passengers' names against the list, and because the government is demanding more information from passengers when they purchase their tickets, "instances of travelers being mistaken for terrorists are down significantly," Pistole stated. After all, everyone knows the government is far more efficient and far less likely to finger the innocent than private companies.

There are at least 15 American citizens and lawful permanent residents, among them four veterans of the armed forces, who would dispute those men's assertions. They were placed on the no-fly list without their knowledge and without any opportunity for them to challenge their placement on the list. Some had been permitted to fly out of the United States but were not permitted to return because they had been added to the list in the intervening period. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is [suing](#) the government on behalf of these individuals.

"To deprive people of their right to travel without any notice or opportunity to object is unfair and unconstitutional," the ACLU said in response to the AP report. "The news that the list is getting bigger only magnifies the problem."

Unfortunately, the list is not likely to get any smaller, much less to go away completely. Panicked Americans willingly traded their liberty for the promise of security after 9/11; and the government, unlike Wal-Mart, doesn't do returns.

Photo of two American peace activists on the no-fly list: AP Images



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