



TSA: Airports Are Only the Beginning

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA), notorious for groping and ogling naked passengers at checkpoints, has long claimed that its “mission” is “protect[ing] the Nation’s transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce.” You may ask how delaying travelers in enormously long lines “ensure[s] freedom of movement”; recall that these same jokers contend as well that their sexual assaults protect us. At least their double-speak and Orwellian “logic” are consistent.



As the TSA’s attacks on travelers escalated in the weeks prior to Thanksgiving, many commentators feared that if the agency prevailed in its molestation, it would extend its abuses everywhere. “If we allow them to implement these procedures in our airports,” an unattributed article at [endoftheamericandream.com](#) warned, “pretty soon they will start popping up in subway stations, courthouses, sports stadiums and even at our workplaces.”

Unfortunately, the TSA didn’t wait to see whether we “allowed” it to “implement these procedures” or any others: they’ve been “popping up in subway stations, courthouses, sports stadiums and even at our workplaces” for years now. The agency is remarkably lax about finding terrorists, so lax, in fact, that no one in its employ anywhere at any time has ever ferreted out a single one. But it busily fulfills its “mission” of controlling every mode of transportation — and much, much more. Indeed, cynics who maintain that the agency has nothing to do with security and everything to do with dictatorship would argue it far exceeds that “mission,” the better to teach us serfs who’s in charge.

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Since government at one level or another outright owns or heavily subsidizes and regulates virtually all transportation in this country, the TSA encounters little resistance to its malignant growth (aside from turf wars, that is: the local cops it tries to enlist in its efforts disdain the TSA’s unarmed, unprofessional buffoons).

It has long “partnered” with Amtrak, for instance, bragging on September 23, 2008: “Amtrak Office of Security Strategy and Special Operations (OSSSO), Amtrak Police, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) personnel and officers from approximately 100 commuter rail, state, and local police agencies mobilized today for the largest joint, simultaneous Northeast rail security operation of its kind, involving 150 railway stations between Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Essex Junction, Vermont.”



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The “750,000 rail passengers [who] ride along the Northeast Corridor and other rail systems integrated with [it]” would have witnessed this “highly visible police and security presence.” They may even have suffered one of its “random passenger bag inspections.” Can the sexual abuse and pornographic scanning the TSA inflicts at airports be far behind?

Undoubtedly, many “domestic terrorists” lurked among those 750,000, given the Department of Homeland Security’s generous definition of the term: Its report last year on “Rightwing Extremism” smeared militias, veterans, protestors of abortion and of the UN — basically anyone who balks at Our Rulers’ evisceration of the Constitution. “Terrorists” riding the Northeast Corridor have now tasted the Feds’ power: Wanna bet they’ll think twice before challenging it?

So cocksure is the TSA, and so complicit are the corporate media, that the agency can afford to be honest when announcing these “mobilizations.” It makes no bones about centralizing authority, quoting “Amtrak Police Chief John O’Connor” in its press release: “We are one team, with one mission.... Without question, this operation provided the longest wall of security ever mobilized along the East Coast.” Another press release a year later for a similar “mobilization” crowed, “Today’s operation illustrates the growing cooperation among police departments in States, cities, and towns throughout the northeast with their partners in Amtrak, commuter rail and mass transit systems, and TSA.”

Then there’s this from “John Sammon, TSA assistant administrator, Transportation Sector Network Management”: “It is critical that we continue to expand and exercise our collective ability.” Really? Critical to what? “Today’s event offers the opportunity to demonstrate in dramatic fashion the force potential and security enhancement value of regional collaboration as TSA joins its professional colleagues throughout the Northeast to ... provide a highly visible security presence during rush hour.” Translated from the Jargon, that means, “Hey, slaves, go ahead and resist: make our day!”

Tooting Over Troubling Trains

Just as it owns Amtrak, government owns all the trains underground, too. TSA interprets that as an open invitation to invade these systems as well. When the “new head of the Transportation Security Administration,” John Pistole, assumed office last summer, he blustered to *USA Today*, “Given the list of threats on subways and rails over the last six years going on seven years, we know that some terrorist groups see rail and subways as being more vulnerable because there’s not the type of screening that you find in aviation.... From my perspective, that is an equally important threat area.” And no doubt worthy of the same atrocities the TSA commits at airports.

New York City’s iconic subway, one of the largest and oldest in the world, whisks more than five million riders about the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Manhattan each weekday. In 2005, the NYPD decreed that it would henceforth “randomly” search passengers’ belongings. Why? Because it can, according to NYC top cop Ray Kelly.

His excuse was the bombings in London’s famous “tube” that summer. But New York’s elite had itched to search the citizens who pay their salaries for years. Indeed, Kelly told the *New York Times*, “You need an event such as London for people to realize this is a procedure put in place for their safety.... The issue is what the public will accept. You still need an event to get public support.” Even the *Times* noted Kelly’s haste in exploiting the tragedy: “It took less than two hours after the bombing attempts in London’s transit system ... for ... Kelly, to decide to begin random checks of passengers’ bags in [New York].”

It didn’t take much longer for these unconstitutional, warrantless searches to fell their first victim: They



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“netted one arrest almost immediately,” the Associated Press reported. “Authorities stopped [a man outside a train station on Long Island] after noticing something suspicious about his van. They reportedly found a machete, imitation handguns, an electronic stun gun and a martial arts weapon in the vehicle.”

Taxpayers exercising their rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment are not the only prey. “Those caught carrying drugs or other contraband could be arrested,” too. This mirrors airports, where the TSA constantly seizes passengers with pets it doesn’t approve (exotic snakes or even, in one case, dead birds preserved in brine), pornography, or immigration papers of the wrong color — but nary a terrorist.

In April 2009, TSA moved in on the NYPD’s action. Again, there was an excuse: New York’s perpetual shortfall in funds meant the NYPD couldn’t spare the cops necessary to rifle backpacks and purses. And so “Transportation Security Administration bag screeners from Kennedy, LaGuardia and Newark Liberty airports will be replacing most NYPD cops in the subway that screen bags for explosives,” Fox News explained. “About 30 TSA screeners a day will be pulled from the three area airports Monday through Friday to inspect bags at various subway locations throughout the city.”

TSA instituted similar dictatorship in Los Angeles in the summer of 2008. And it would certainly violate the Fourth Amendment in every city with underground track if it had the money and personnel. Instead, it hits them with its melodramatic “VIPR teams.”

According to the TSA, “Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams” consist “of federal air marshals, surface transportation security inspectors, transportation security officers, behavior detection officers, and explosives detection canine teams.” These ninjas “work with local security and law enforcement officials to supplement existing security resources, provide deterrent presence and detection capabilities, and introduce an element of unpredictability to disrupt potential terrorist planning activities,” which is TSA-speak for, “They delay, inconvenience and are supposed to intimidate passengers so there’s no mistaking who’s boss.”

Fortunately, that directive doesn’t seem to have penetrated the boots on the ground. They practice instead the sloth and incompetence that paralyze bureaucracies while mercifully shielding us from their grand designs. When “dozens (if not more) of TSA screeners, FAMs [Federal Air Marshals], and ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] descended on the Tri-Rail commuter train [in South Florida],” one eyewitness at flyertalk.com reported that “most ... were standing around and talking, not giving a single eye to other passengers or their surroundings. It was a morning long coffee break.”

Bombarding Buses ?and Ferries

Meanwhile, TSA threatens “to expand the VIPR concept beyond the rail sector to other forms of mass transit.” No telling how many potheads and pythons they’ll snag.

Taking the bus instead of trains won’t protect you from the TSA’s nonsense, as “Bryce Williams and 689 other passengers” in Orlando discovered on October 22, 2009. They “went through tougher-than-normal security procedures ... as part of a random check coordinated by the U.S. Transportation Security Administration,” according to the *Orlando Sentinel*. “[Fifty] officials from agencies including TSA, Orlando police, the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection patted down passengers.” VIPR has also pummeled Greyhound’s terminal in Memphis, as well as the city’s light rail on November 30, 2009; ditto for Charlotte, North Carolina, on May 28, 2008, Tampa, Florida, on February 16, 2010 — the list continues *ad nauseam*.



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Frighteningly, the TSA often describes these raids as “augment[ing] normal transportation security operations.” But what’s “normal” about frisking people waiting to board a bus unless a country languishes in totalitarian misery?

When TSA isn’t hassling people on busses and trains, it’s pestering commuters on ferries. In 2007, yet another press release from its indefatigable, tax-funded scribes proclaimed, “In the past three years, TSA has conducted pilot tests on several high-volume commuter ferry systems, including the Cape May-Lewes Ferry in New Jersey, the Golden Gate Ferry in California and the Jamestown Scotland Ferry in Virginia.” Without a single warrant, its agents searched both “ferry riders” and “passenger vehicles lining up to board the boats.”

New York City’s Department of Transportation shuttles 21 million folks annually between Staten Island and Manhattan on its ferries. For three weeks in 2009, the TSA irradiated those passengers with millimeter waves: “Prior to boarding,” these criminals confessed on the bureaucracy’s website, “passengers will move through the terminal’s? turnstiles at their normal pace. The screening equipment will be angled to passively screen passengers.” (Translating once more from the TSA Jargon yields, “With any luck, the poor slobs won’t even know we’re shooting carcinogenic rays at them!”)

“Passengers will not be asked to stand in place, nor will they even need to break stride. Video images of the scanned passengers will be monitored by TSA’s Transportation Security Officers from a station set up to the side of the waiting area. The TSOs in the monitoring station will be in communication with roving TSOs and will notify them of any passengers who display an anomaly. An abbreviated pat down area will be available for resolution of those anomalies” — *sans* a warrant, of course — “and TSA-certified explosive detection canine teams will be available to screen passengers’ baggage.”

Naturally, the media coos its admiration for this despotism. When cops frisked Greyhound’s passengers in Florida, the *Orlando Sentinel* chirped, “The idea is to keep off guard terrorists and others who mean harm, thereby improving safety for passengers and workers.” Actually, the idea is to keep shredding the Constitution until there’s nowhere to hide from the State. Don’t want goons ogling and groping you at airports? Too bad: They’re ogling and groping you on trains, buses, and ferries too.

Government Gumption Grows

These spreading horrors are consistent with government’s encroaching essence in general (remember Jefferson’s observation that “The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground”). They also dovetail specifically with the TSA’s vague and expansive “mission” of “protect[ing] the Nation’s transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement.”

More confirmation came last November, at the height of passengers’ fury over the TSA’s sexual assaults, when the agency’s *über-fuhrer* confessed that she lusts to irradiate and molest *all* travelers, not just those who take to the skies. Janet Napolitano is Secretary of the gargantuan Department of Homeland Security (circa 220,000 employees, \$50 billion annual budget), among whose bureaucracies lurks the TSA. Bloviating on *Charlie Rose*, this two-bit tyrant announced, “I think the tighter we get on aviation, we have to also be thinking now about going on to mass transit or to trains or maritime.... So what do we need to be doing to strengthen our protections [*sic* for “power”] there?”

A “Homeland Security official” tried to prevent an uproar by denying to Fox News that “the use of ... full-body scanners is ... under consideration,” at least for mass transit, “saying they ‘would not be feasible in a system with hundreds or thousands of access points.’” But of course he lied. Airlines have “hundreds or thousands of access points,” dauntingly scattered nationwide rather than concentrated in



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a single city, and that didn't thwart the TSA's compulsory strip-tease.

Chillingly, TSA increasingly strikes places that have nothing to do with transportation. "Dozens of TSA officers" infested Super Bowl XLIII in 2009, according to the agency's PR, while dozens more patrolled other sites around Tampa.

Perhaps scariest of all are the TSA's forays into political spaces. The agency set up shop in the streets of Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 2008 and searched people attending John McCain's "Town Hall Meeting." Nor was this a fluke. On February 18, 2008, the TSA screened folks hoping to hear presidential contender Barack Obama when he spoke at Beloit College in Wisconsin; the same scenario repeated itself that October at the Arch in St. Louis. Granted, siccing the TSA on fans of McCain and Obama may seem fitting punishment, but the constitutional ramifications appall.

So far, the TSA leaves its computerized strip-searches at airports when it ventures elsewhere. But if it gets away with them there, it will surely foist them on trains, buses, ferries, stadiums, political events — and more.

And easily, too: A portable porno-scanner already exists that takes the TSA's X-rated X-rays on the road. It ostensibly "inspects" cargo and vehicles — as if the Feds have any constitutional authority to do either. Concealed inside a van, the gizmo covertly denudes pedestrians, motorists, even citizens inside buildings; none has the slightest suspicion that a government agent is leering at their nakedness. The scanner's manufacturer boasts, "This product is now the largest selling cargo and vehicle inspection system ever." New York City's police department bought some, as have an "undisclosed number of government agencies" worldwide.

Unless we abolish this vile agency, the TSA will carry its war on Americans from airports, bus stations, and political events to highways, shopping malls, even sidewalks. The Supreme Court long ago invented an "interest" for government in "safe aviation." It has further decreed that such "interest" outweighs our petty concerns for personal privacy so that buying a ticket means we implicitly consent to any and every abuse the Feds dish out.

What court will hesitate to extend that "interest" to the streets, that forfeiture of privacy to the mere act of subsisting under D.C.'s dictatorship?

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