



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 23, 2011

TSA Pat-Downs Continue to Enrage

After fierce public outcry erupted over video footage of a baby undergoing the invasive Transportation Security Administration pat downs, the TSA finally announced that it would be making changes to the screenings to which children will be subjected. The announcement was made by TSA chief John Pistole during yesterday's Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee hearing.



[Consumerist reports:](#)

Speaking to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, TSA chief John Pistole said screeners have been told to make repeated attempts to screen young children instead of resorting to a pat-down.

In the past, security administrators resorted to pat-downs almost immediately, but under the new guidelines security officers will be obliged to make a number of efforts before ultimately resorting to the intrusive procedure.

TSA spokesman Nicholas Kimball now says, "As part of our ongoing effort to get smarter about security, Administrator Pistole has made a policy decision to give security officers more options for resolving screening anomalies with young children."

During the announcement, Pistole attempted to justify the necessity for the procedures overall. AOL Travel writes:

Pistole cited foreign terrorism as one reason the agency is working on a new method, saying that terrorists outside the U.S. have used children as young as 10 as suicide bombers in the past.

Despite TSA's assertions, however, most believe that children should be exempt from the searches, since the chances that children pose a threat to national security are slim.

Those opposed to the pat-downs found even stronger reasons to protest the procedures in April when video of a 6-year old girl getting a pat-down in New Orleans' airport went viral, and then again when another video surfaced of an 8-year old boy who was subject to similar treatment in Portland.

The Blaze explains, "In the case of the 6-year-old, the parents requested the girl be re-scanned, but that request was denied. Under the new guidelines, however, the girl could now be scanned again.

"The last straw for opponents to the TSA procedures seemed to come when the picture of a baby undergoing the pat-down went viral. During the hearing wherein Pistole made the announcement, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul bemoaned what he called "invasive" pat-downs and regulations, and articulated his disappointment in the system. He asserted that the TSA went "overboard."



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Not everyone is pleased with the policy changes. Billie Vincent, former Federal Aviation Administration security director, has criticized the changes, but admitted that he too is disturbed by the use of pat-downs on children.

“The TSA is walking a tightrope, trying to quiet the public damage,” said Vincent, who is now a security consultant in Chantilly, Virginia. [According to USA Today:](#)

Vincent says intrusive pat-downs would rarely be needed if Congress would stop considering profiling “a dirty word” and allow the TSA to profile everyone — including young children's parents — before a flight. Pat-downs would be needed only for young children whose parents raise a red flag during the profiling process, he says.

The TSA says it expects to test an identity-based screening option for some passengers later this year. Under the program, travelers would voluntarily provide background information about themselves and possibly qualify for expedited screening.

Regardless of the TSA’s efforts to minimize the invasiveness of the procedures, opposition to the airport screenings continues to gain momentum. Last November, [an ABC News and Washington Post poll](#) found that 64 percent of Americans supported the use of body-scanning machines, while just 32 percent were opposed. That same poll revealed that 50 percent of Americans were opposed to the enhanced pat-downs, while 48 percent believed that they were justified to prevent terrorism.

As there has been growing [indications of abuse](#) at the hands of TSA screeners, however, opposition to the screening procedures has seemingly grown.

On Monday, for example, Texas Governor Rick Perry revived a bill that would criminalize the pat-downs by airport screeners. The bill criminalizes the touching of the “anus, sexual organ, buttocks, or breast of another person” during a screening. That bill has passed in the Texas House, but remains stalled in the Senate after John Murphy, US attorney for the Western district of Texas, warned that the bill would interfere with the government’s ability to ensure safe travel.

Republican presidential contender Ron Paul, a Texas Congressman, has been adamantly opposed to the TSA procedures virtually from the start, having introduced the “American Traveler Dignity Act” in order to “protect Americans from physical and emotional abuse.”

Paul, along with constitutionalists across the country, contends that the procedures are a violation of Fourth Amendment rights.

More Americans are articulating their opposition to the procedures. Though the TSA has attempted to address the various issues that have risen as a result of the intrusive procedures, it has become increasingly clear that the American people will not be satisfied until the Transportation Security Administration is stripped of its ability to violate constitutional liberties.



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