

## TSA Now Stands for "Travelers Sexual Assault"

What you need to know to protect your privacy from the prying eyes of the government when you travel this holiday season.

November 23, 2010 - What would you do if a perfect stranger walked up to you, your spouse or your children on the street and started to grope them? That kind of behavior is a felony in every state in the country and could result in a long prison term and forced registration as a sexual offender for the culprit. That is, unless the culprit works for the TSA. In that case, the federal government seems to think that this kind of behavior is completely acceptable. There is only one problem with this opinion. The treatment that the federal government is now subjecting airline travelers too appears to be unconstitutional. And much to the TSA's chagrin, the public appears to be ready to stand up to the government.

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This month, the TSA started turning airline passengers into the federal government's sexual assault victims. You may think that this is an overstatement, but it is not. There have been reported cases of TSA agents sticking their hands down the pants of passengers being frisked and forcing passengers to remove their clothing. In one case, a breast cancer survivor was forced to remove a prosthetic breast. In another case, a bladder cancer survivor who required the use of a catheter and a bag to urinate was frisked so vigorously that a bag full of urine broke and soaked his clothing. Rather than offering to help him, the TSA agents involved simply sent him on his way. He had to complete his trip covered in his own urine.

But it is not just adults that have been going through these procedures. There have been numerous videos and pictures posted on the internet of small children being frisked in ways that would make a pedophile blush. Is this really making us any safer? How many grandparents or small children have actually committed terrorist attacks on US targets? More importantly, how much of your freedom are you willing to trade for security? Benjamin Franklin is rolling over in his grave.

The "enhanced" procedures now being used by the TSA are nothing more than "security theater"; giving the traveling public an illusion of greater security. If you don't believe that then just consider the fact that the TSA still doesn't screen all cargo that goes onto flights, and it has already announced that it will stop using these new procedures on flight crews. That means that there is already a security hole in their brand new system.

What you may not know is that you have certain rights that the TSA can't violate unless you let them.

TSA agents have no police authority. That may very well surprise you but they can't arrest you and they can't prevent you from saying "no" to going through their full body scanners. They also can't prevent you from refusing to go through a pat-down search. That being said, they can prevent you from getting on a plane if you refuse to go through their search

procedures and, according to the TSA, they may be able to fine you. Even so, you have the right to say "no" to them. There is good reason for this. The Fourth Amendment protects all Americans from unlawful government searches. The only way that the TSA's new system can be legal is if it is voluntary.

If you are traveling with children, one thing that the TSA has not been telling parents is that when you check in for your flight, you can ask the agent if any of your children have been selected for random screening. If the answer is "yes", then you should ask the agent to deselect them. At least this will help protect your children from a procedure that could actually traumatize them.

If you are selected for enhanced screening yourself, your options are really not too good. As stated earlier, you can go through the full body scanners or elect to be vigorously frisked. Your only other option is to elect not to fly - something which a growing number of passengers are deciding to do. If you do decide to fly - especially on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving - you should seriously consider joining the nationwide protest of the body scanners and elect the pat-down search instead. If only 10% of fliers do this, it will create major delays at airports and could force the TSA to reconsider its screening procedures.

Over the long term, the American public does need to insist that TSA adopt screening procedures that rely on intelligence and profiling. While this idea may take some getting used to in the United States, it should be pointed out that this is exactly how Israel screens passengers and they have not had a hijacking in years. Their system works, and it works very well. It simply doesn't make any sense to continue to invest money in systems and procedures that force us all to give up our privacy rights and which place 90 year olds with walkers and hip transplants in the same category as Osama Bin Laden.

by Jim Malmberg

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