TSA Now Scanning Faces at US Airports - What You Need to Know

December 8, 2022 - The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has been running a facial recognition pilot program in 16 major airports around the country. They now want to roll that program out nationwide. But the federal government has had an abysmal record with data protection over the years, so the idea of them developing a biometric database of American travelers which will certainly be a target for hackers is troubling at best. And since most government identification programs eventually result in expanded use, the potential for Orwellian mission-creep is really unacceptable.

Tweet

```javascript
(function() {
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];


s.type = 'text/javascript';
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);
})();
```

```javascript
  (function() {
   var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;
   po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';
   var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);
  })();
```

The TSA's program is currently being run at major US airports. If you fly through Los Angeles or New York, you may have already been asked to have your picture taken. Fortunately, for the time being, you have a right to refuse that request.

According to the TSA, the program is being used to compare photos on identification documents used for travel to the picture they take of you at the airport. They claim that it is faster and more accurate than having a human being make that comparison. But there have been numerous studies showing that facial recognition software is error prone; especially with people of color. And it is quite likely that if their facial recognition software erroneously flags you as someone traveling with false documents that your time getting through their line will be increased exponentially. From a traveler's perspective, the risk-benefit analysis is dubious at best.

One also has to ask what other things the government will eventually use their facial recognition database for. It's a resource that other government organizations will see obvious value in, and for which there are virtually no laws that would prohibit its use. What could possibly go wrong?

If you care about living in a surveillance state, then our advice is to refuse participation when you travel. You have absolutely no idea how your information will be used in the future. Until you do, it is best to keep your biometric data to yourself.
by Jim Malmberg
Note: When posting a comment, please sign-in first if you want a response. If you are not registered, click here. Registration is easy and free.

Follow ACCESS