

Federal Government's TSA Electronic Strip Search And Aggressive Pat-downs of Traveling Americans

Fact Sheet – Updated March 2011

Overview

Think about affronts by government to privacy rights – the draft, “random police checks” (now unconstitutional), careless handling and release of personal health or tax information. Now consider TSA's electronic strip search and aggressive pat-downs of children (fondling?), senior citizens, American soldiers in uniform. It ranks as mindless and offensive affronts to American's privacy rights that an unaccountable bureaucracy can inflict. It is in fact, historic. This Fact Sheet can't possibly include all the editorial cartoons, cries of outrage by the media, politicians, and personal stories of offense. Instead this fact sheet simply presents two recent media reports and two political views – one from the conservative Heritage Foundation and one from the liberal American Civil Liberties Union – both arguing how wrong the government's action is. The remaining question is this: If members of Congress, the Left, the Right, the Media, oppose TSA electronic strip searches – why are they still in place?

- The Claim:

“AIT machines are **safe**, **efficient**, and **protect** passenger privacy...”

– Janet Napolitano, Secretary, Homeland Security

- Full Body Scanners are **Unsafe** – *The Radiation Health Risk*:

The Transportation Security Administration is retesting 247 full-body X-ray scanners, some of which have shown radiation levels 10 times higher than expected, at 38 airports... roughly half of the devices being used at airports nationwide.

– Reported by *The Week* and other media, 3.14.11

- Full Body Scanners **Don't Perform** The Proclaimed Security Mission:

“The X-ray body scanners increasingly in use at airport security checkpoints across the country cannot detect certain types of explosives and weapons, according to research by two respected academics.”

– Alan Levin, *USA TODAY*, 12.28.10

- Full Body Scanners Absolutely **Invade Privacy**:

The *Miami Herald*, 5.7.10, reported that a TSA officer has been charged with aggravated battery after he attacked a coworker. The assault was reportedly sparked by the fact that the man's colleagues were making fun of the size of the officer's genitalia seen as he walked through a full-body airport scanner.

From the Political Left – The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

“The jury is still out on the effectiveness of these machines or whether they justify the invasion of privacy involved. Experts have said explosives can be hidden by being molded against the human body, or in folds of skin. British newspapers have reported that government testing in the U.K. found that the technology comes up short in detecting plastic, chemicals and liquids. The more startling inaccuracy is the oft-repeated claim that these machines cannot store or transmit the revealing images of travelers that they create. According to published reports, this is simply untrue.” (Published by Sam Richie, 11.16.10)

Read Full Article <http://www.aclu.org/blog/technology-and-liberty/homeland-security-wants-see-you-naked>

From the Political Right – The Heritage Foundation

“It's time to acknowledge that the TSA emperor is as naked as the offensive body scans being inflicting on every grandmother who flies. Trash the scanners, fire the TSA and stop pretending everyone's an equal threat. It's a costly lie... We do ourselves no favors by acting as if, say, a small child from Missouri or a nun from Iowa is as likely to be a terrorist as someone from Yemen. Certain homegrown terrorists are possible, yes, but they would fall into the high-risk group. Besides, we're already profiling. Pilots, flight attendants, Cabinet secretaries, top congressional leaders and other senior officials are exempt from the new screening procedures. If all pose an equal threat, why the free pass for these individuals?” (Published by Edwin Feulner, Ph.D., 11.29.10)

Read Full Article <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2010/11/tsa-and-security-the-naked-truth>