



Why Don't BDO's Stop Screeners from Robbing Us?

On a single day last month, a screener at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport helped herself to \$100 in cash from a 16-year-old passenger's bag while another swiped a senior citizen's cell phone. And that's only the froth on JFK's crime wave: earlier this year, cops arrested two screeners there for stealing \$160,000 from checked luggage.

These are only reported thefts - in two senses of the word: reported to the cops and by the media — at one airport over a span of just 8 months. (Nor do the cops, the media, and the Transportation Security Administration [TSA] recognize the millions of petty larcenies the agency commits daily when it forces passengers to “voluntarily surrender” their shampoo and pocket knives or forego expensive flights.) It seems a week can't pass without yet another heist at the nation's airports, courtesy of the TSA. Thank God the agency has a “zero-tolerance policy for theft,” as its flacks remind us after every such proof to the contrary: imagine if it encouraged plundering passengers the way it does groping them.

So you might think we should welcome the TSA's renewed emphasis on its controversial “Behavior Detection Officers (BDO).” These wizards supposedly read minds to ferret out bad guys, of which the TSA clearly has an abundance.

Unfortunately, BDOs will concentrate on *passengers*, not screeners, though no traveller anywhere has ever once robbed the TSA's perverts. In fact, BDOs *are* screeners.

Yep, the same [clowns who fail every test of their abilities](#) to discover weapons on undercover investigators — even when the [TSA's supervisors cheat](#) and describe both the investigator and the location of said weapon — will nonetheless discover your innermost thoughts. And they'll work this miracle after [only four days of training](#), amazingly enough.

Let's listen to the TSA explain how gate-rapists perform this magic: “[The vast](#) majority of passengers at the pilot checkpoints [in Boston's Logan International] will experience a ‘casual greeting’ conversation with a Behavior Detection Officer (BDO) as they go through identity verification.” Translation: in addition to ogling and pawing us, the TSA will now interrogate all fliers at Logan's “pilot checkpoints” before expanding this absurdly unconstitutional catechism to other airports this fall. You'd better look directly at the nice officer and smile while he pries into your affairs: the TSA considers “[lack of eye](#)





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[contact](#)” a sure sign of “malintent” rather than a cultural difference or simple shyness and threatens those guilty of it with “additional screening” [*sic* for “further interrogation and sexual assault”].

BDOs have infested American airports since 2003. Previously, they wandered the concourse and selected victims to quiz. But now they will now pester everyone passing through the checkpoint with “[two or three questions](#), such as ‘Where are you traveling today?’ or ‘How long have you been in town?’”

You probably won’t be surprised to learn that BDOs’ record over the last 8 years doesn’t inspire confidence. In [Newark](#), these jokers apparently decided it was easier to read a man’s skin than his mind: BDOs so consistently picked on Hispanic folks that they earned the title “[Mexican Hunters](#).”

And why not? Illegal immigrants are far more common than terrorists. Indeed, though neither the BDOs specifically nor the TSA in general has ever caught a single one of the latter, the “Mexican Hunters” snagged enough of the former to justify their budget. I’m not sure how illegals endanger aviation or anything other than silly quotas, but I’m just a taxpayer, not a [Shadow-y BDO who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men](#).

“Behavior Detection” is just another excuse for the TSA’s thugs to hassle passengers. It is entirely subjective, and it doesn’t work, as even the TSA’s *über*-bureaucracy, the Department of Homeland Security, admits. In 2007, researchers there told *USAToday* that BD was “[unproven](#) and potentially ineffectual.”

How ineffectual? The [Government Accountability Office recently reported that between May 2004 and August 2008](#), at least 16 alleged terrorists wandered airports where BDOs were stationed 23 times. Not once did the BDOs even notice, let alone pounce on them. Apparently, they were too busy hunting Mexicans.

Even more outrageous than the BDOs’ utter failure is the fact that absolutely nothing happened. Despite “terrorists” milling about our airports, no planes crashed into skyscrapers; not a single passenger died or was even hurt. It seems “terrorism” isn’t nearly the peril the TSA with its \$8.2 billion budget and cushy, lucrative sinecures wants us to think it is.

“But — but *Israel!*” passengers desperate for relief from the TSA’s groping cry. “This is what Israel does, interrogate passengers, and terrorists don’t attack their planes!”

Actually, this isn’t what Israel does; it’s similar, but the differences are crucial. For starters, Israeli aviation operates on a much smaller scale, with roughly [one-ninth as many passengers queuing up each year in its busiest airport, Ben Gurion](#), as do at [Atlanta’s Hartfield-Jackson](#). It can and does torment passengers for hours. Such extensive badgering would paralyze American aviation.

Second, Israel’s grilling of victims is brutal — and you needn’t be Arabic to object: even [a supervisor at Ben Gurion admitted](#), “It is quite intrusive, the questions we ask ... And, sometimes, people are not happy to answer them.” Then there’s this from [Dion Nissenbaum](#), “who covered the Middle East as Jerusalem bureau chief for McClatchy Newspapers from 2005 to 2009”: “These days [July 2007], Israel’s airport security screening system can leave you with the impression that it is either inept or deliberately set up to harass travelers.”

Finally, [Israel is an openly socialist nation](#) embracing explicitly socialist principles. It considers Leviathan the engine of progress and human happiness, not mankind’s direst enemy. So it naturally and enthusiastically approves of government’s goons cross-examining serfs; the idea that airlines should pay



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for and administer their own effective, unobtrusive security is as foreign to Israel as freedom's philosophy. A safe rule of thumb is that if Israel does something, America — or any people who love liberty — ought not.

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This time was no exception. Asked about BDO's, Rafi opined, "The question is obviously, what is the quality of the verbal interaction that is going to be implemented?"

I think not. The question is obviously, where does the Constitution grant the Feds the authority to "protect" aviation, much less interrogate us?



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