



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on December 11, 2009

TSA Places Five Employees on Leave Over Breach

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has placed five employees on administrative leave pending the results of the agency's investigation of how a confidential passenger-screening manual was posted online without proper redaction of classified information.



The placement of employees on leave came to light as senators queried officials about this latest security breach that came so quickly after a married couple with reality-TV aspirations somehow gained entrance to a White House state dinner without an invitation. Assistant Homeland Security Secretary David Heyman told senators that a thorough investigation was under way, and that some TSA employees were taken off duty until the investigation concludes.

ABC [reported](#) on December 9 that a TSA official who wished to remain anonymous put the actual number of employees on leave at five, whereas Heyman hadn't been specific. Heyman did inform the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that his department had stopped posting online any documents with information about security until the internal review yields some answers. He said he did not know who authorized posting the manual on the Internet.

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano spoke to a different hearing held by the Senate Judiciary Committee on December 9. She assured the committee that her department is going to make sure this never happens again, and she pointed out that Department of Homeland Security Inspector General Richard Skinner is holding his own investigation of the incident. Napolitano insisted, however, that "the traveling public was not at risk."

"Even what appeared to be an innocent posting to help federal contractors can have serious consequences for our security," Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) said on December 9. Although the screening manual is outdated, it was not properly redacted to hide the most sensitive information.

Some of this sensitive data included samples of ID documents used by certain government officials, intelligence operatives, and law enforcement agents. Information was given about who is exempt from certain screening procedures and when some methods of authenticating ID documents aren't followed as strictly.

Also mentioned was that any individual with a passport from Afghanistan, Algeria, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, or Yemen is subject to extra screening. The manual noted that airline flight crew in uniform with valid IDs are not subject to restrictions on aerosols, footwear, gels, or liquids.

Former TSA Administrator Kip Hawley admitted that this is not the kind of thing that should happen,



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but he downplayed the significance of what the screening manual reveals: "Hyperventilating that this is a breach of security that's going to endanger the public is flat wrong."

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) and Transportation Security Subcommittee Chairwoman Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-Texas) are taking this a bit more seriously. They both signed a letter to the Department of Homeland Security on December 8 recommending that an independent review by another federal agency should take place. In the letter, Thompson wrote, "Undoubtedly, this raises potential security concerns across our transportation system."

Concerns have indeed been raised. Any review of the Department of Homeland Security should be conducted very thoroughly by an independent party. Better yet, this unconstitutional agency should be abolished for the sake of both the liberty and the safety of all Americans.

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