



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on December 10, 2009

Contractor Posted TSA Secrets Online

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano stated on December 9 that her department is investigating how a version of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) passenger-screening manual was posted online.

Napolitano insisted that public safety is not endangered, yet the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual was not only freely available for download, the most sensitive portions were redacted in a way that computer experts could easily bypass. The 93-page document shows sample Congressional, CIA, and law enforcement credentials which makes the task of falsifying these documents that much easier.



The parts that were redacted in an unsecure manner revealed that only 20 percent of checked bags are hand searched for explosives and described the limitations of x-ray screening machines in detail. Ironically, if the manual had been redacted with a simple black marker, it would have been more secure. The SOP manual is a version from 2008 that is outdated; it has been revised six times since then.

Other information in the poorly redacted sections spells out the screening exemptions for law enforcement personnel and the requirements for these personnel to be eligible for special screening. TSA screeners are instructed to carry out extra screening for any passenger with a passport from Afghanistan, Algeria, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, or Yemen.

During times of heavy travel, screeners who are authenticating passenger IDs can use black lights as little as 25 percent of the time when they would normally check 100 percent of documents. Yet officials say the most critical revelation in the manual is what size electrical wire can pass through screening machines without being detected. Bomb makers would find this to be invaluable information.

"This is an appalling and astounding breach of security that terrorists could easily exploit," said Clark Kent Ervin, the former Department of Homeland Security inspector general. "The TSA should immediately convene an internal investigation and discipline those responsible."

"This shocking breach undercuts the public's confidence in the security procedures at our airports," said Senator Susan Collins (R-Me.), ranking GOP member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. "On the day before the Senate Homeland Security Committee's hearing on terrorist travel, it is alarming to learn that the TSA inadvertently posted its own security manual on the Internet."

"This manual provides a road map to those who would do us harm," Collins declared. "The detailed information could help terrorists evade airport security measures." Collins said she intended to ask the Department of Homeland Security both how the breach occurred and how the department "will remedy



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the damage that has already been done."

There was an exchange between Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Napolitano during an oversight hearing. Leahy asked who should be held accountable for posting such sensitive information online. Napolitano initially responded by saying that even though the document was out of date, "The posting of it did not meet our own standards of what should be available on the net."

Napolitano then added, "We have already initiated personnel actions against the individuals involved." She said the Department of Homeland Security is already engaged in an agency-wide internal review, and she mentioned that she had requested current Department of Homeland Security Inspector General Richard Skinner to conduct an independent review of how the breach took place.

Leahy eventually asked if the individual who posted the SOP manual was a contractor and Napolitano said yes, but further explained, "Some of the supervisors ultimately were at TSA."

Such a security breach, no matter who is responsible, is unthinkable. It is not enough that the TSA subjects innocent Americans to extensive groping and virtual strip searches. Now they casually toss out security secrets for America's enemies to exploit. U.S. citizens would be much more secure in their liberty, and probably their safety, if the unconstitutional TSA were abolished.

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