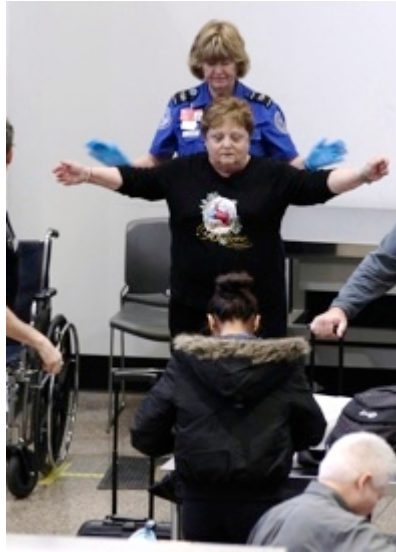




Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 4, 2011

Privatizing Airport Security Won't Rid Us of TSA

The stories of indecencies and humiliations suffered by air travelers at the hands of prurient and unfettered agents of the federal Transportation Security Administration (TSA) have become legendary:



- A new mother traveling with her baby whose [experience with a groping TSA agent](#) left her feeling “completely violated, abused and assaulted.”
- A [61-year-old bladder cancer survivor](#) whose TSA pat-down left him weeping, humiliated, and soaked in urine.
- A three-year-old boy who was [strip-searched by TSA molesters](#) at Salt Lake City International Airport.
- A 56-year-old former [rape victim who was arrested in brutal fashion](#) after refusing to have her breasts groped by a TSA agent.

As reported by the [Washington Post](#), some of the nation's largest airports are responding to the outrage expressed by air travelers by replacing TSA goons with friendly, well-trained private security contractors. “Sixteen airports, including San Francisco and Kansas City International Airport, have made the switch since 2002,” reported the *Post*.

The change has nothing to do with saving money or putting the 60,000-plus tax-paid TSA agents out of a job. Instead, reported the *Post*, “At issue, airport managers and security experts say, is the unwieldy size and bureaucracy of the federal aviation security system. Private firms may be able to do the job more efficiently and with a personal touch, they argue.”

Of course, the catch is that any changes must be approved by the TSA, and private contractors must continue to use TSA's approved procedures — including intrusive pat-downs, electronic body scans that give ogling agents crystal-clear images of private body parts, and summary arrests for innocent passengers who refuse to be treated like convicted terrorists.

Airports that want to go private must submit an open-ended request to the TSA. “There are no specific criteria for approval,” noted the *Post*, “but federal officials can decide whether to grant the request ‘based on the airport's record of compliance on security regulations and requirements.’” Meaning only those who can sufficiently model the TSA's own “personal touch” will be allowed to contract with private police to continue to inflict the outrageous (and sometimes outright criminal) behavior on boarding passengers.

U.S. Representative John Mica (R-Fla.), who co-authored the bill authorizing the TSA (and who is taking over as head of the House committee that oversees it), is all for the idea of privatization while keeping the TSA squarely in the driver's seat. In fact, he has written to some 200 airport administrators encouraging them to make the switch. “If you look at [the TSA's] performance,” Mica said, “have they



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ever stopped a terrorist? Anyone can get through. We've been very lucky, very fortunate. TSA should focus on its mission: setting up the protocol, adapting to the changing threats and gathering intelligence."

A TSA spokesman said that the training private security agents receive would be overseen by the TSA, which would maintain the high standards and the latest intelligence protocols that "give us the best chance to detect and disrupt any potential threat." Those "high standards" were on display recently when a commercial pilot from California posted videos on the Internet showing how compromised security is at airports overseen by the TSA and by the private agents it has trained.

The series of videos filmed at the San Francisco International Airport, where one of the private firms approved by the TSA has taken over security, demonstrated that while passengers were being screened and groped in one corner, a single door separating employees from the airport remained largely unguarded. "I was trying to bring up the obvious, ludicrous TSA-type of security," the pilot, who remained anonymous, told [CNN](#). For his trouble the pilot was quickly dropped from a federal security program that had allowed him to carry a handgun in the cockpit. In addition, to emphasize its power, the TSA sent air marshals to the pilot's home to relieve him of his California concealed weapons permit, which he had received independent of his work with the TSA.

One of the points of privatizing of airport security is that it would, in effect, turn the TSA into a de facto regulatory agency, while freeing its bureaucrats to focus their attention on other "security issues" within America's transportation infrastructure. That expansion was on display last September when the [TSA announced a massive joint operation](#) that included Amtrak's Office of Security Strategy and Special Operations, along with "personnel and officers from approximately 100 commuter rail, state, and local police agencies," for what the TSA called the "largest joint, simultaneous Northeast rail security operation of its kind, involving 150 railway stations between Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Essex Junction, Vermont."

The TSA assured everyone that its "morning rush-hour multi-force security deployment was NOT in response to any particular threat or incident, but rather a demonstration of an ongoing collaborative effort to expand counter-terrorism and incident response capabilities up and down the Northeast Corridor railway system." In other words, the TSA was putting together a dress-rehearsal with all its deputized law enforcement agencies to see how they would respond in a real or contrived crisis. No reason for the show of force was needed other than that the TSA wanted to — and could — call its war game into being.

The simple truth is that from trains to subways, to busses and beyond, the TSA considers the nation's transportation infrastructure to be its own massive police beat to patrol — and control. [Writing on this site about the TSA's unfettered expansion](#) into whatever venue it invents a potential for terrorist activity, columnist Becky Akers warns, "Unless we abolish this vile agency, the TSA will carry its war on Americans from airports, bus stations, and political events to highways, shopping malls, even sidewalks."

As for the airport security privatization scam that the *Post*, [MSNBC](#), Mica, et al, are touting as a legitimate TSA alternative, Akers notes that the only workable solution is to put airport security into the hands of bona fide aviation professionals "who've spent their lives around jets and runways" and who have a vested interest in protecting "their multi-billion dollar inventory and highly trained personnel." The result of such a common-sense (and constitutional) plan would be that air passengers wouldn't be treated like criminals before boarding planes and like prisoners during the flights they've paid for —



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and everyone concerned would enjoy “unobtrusive but highly effective security” of the same sort that “protects our homes, cars, or email accounts.”

Photo: A passenger stands up from her wheelchair to receive a pat-down security screening at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport at a TSA checkpoint, Dec. 27, 2010, in Seattle: AP Images



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