



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on June 19, 2012

## Theft, Pedophilia, Murder Among TSA Employees' Crimes

Theft, child molestation, rape, prostitution, murder: These are just a few of the crimes with which Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employees have been charged in recent years.

The TSA's dismal record of properly recruiting and screening its employees is the subject of a new [report](#) from Congressman Marsha Blackburn. The Tennessee Republican's report, based on news accounts, details just 50 of the dozens of crimes for which TSA employees have been arrested since 2005.



Fifteen of the cases involved the theft of airplane passengers' possessions. While TSA officers are required to screen all passengers' possessions before letting passengers board planes, a number of these officers have helped themselves to cash, debit cards, laptop computers, iPads, and even painkillers. A screener at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport lifted [over \\$50,000 worth of electronics](#) from the people he was supposedly serving, often selling them on the Internet before his shift had even ended. Screeners at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport have [stolen tens of thousands of dollars in cash](#); two who swiped \$40,000 got a whopping [six months' jail time](#) for their crimes. As of a year ago 500 TSA officers had been "fired or suspended for stealing from passenger luggage since ... 2001," according to [Hot Air](#). And these are just the ones who got caught.

Theft is followed closely by sex crimes and child pornography charges, with 14 such incidents listed in Blackburn's report. Six TSA employees were charged with possession of child pornography; one of them got caught because he "uploaded explicit pictures of young girls to an Internet site on which he also posted a photograph of himself in his TSA uniform," the report notes. Eight others were charged variously with child molestation, rape (including child rape), and even running a prostitution ring. It's not hard to figure out why persons possessing such proclivities would seek jobs where they would be able to ogle and grope other people's private parts with impunity.

Speaking of ogling others' privates, one such viewing precipitated one of the five incidents of assault in the report. Rolando Negrin, a TSA screener at Miami International Airport, [beat one of his coworkers](#) for making fun of the size of his genitalia after spotting it during a body-scanner training exercise. Another assaulted an airport employee over a parking space. Still another threw a cup of hot coffee at an American Airlines pilot who asked her and other TSA workers to refrain from using profanity on duty — apparently an unreasonable request as far as she was concerned.

Three TSA employees were arrested for bribery. One accepted part of the proceeds of theft from passengers to keep quiet; another took money to help smuggle marijuana through Los Angeles International Airport; and the third scored \$200 to ensure that a fellow TSA employee passed his screening test.

Other TSA employees were charged with crimes involving drugs, illegal firearms (in some cases trying to sneak them past TSA checkpoints), airport screening failures, conspiracy, impersonating a federal



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officer, and driving under the influence of alcohol. One top TSA official in Mississippi was even charged with stabbing to death another TSA employee with whom he had allegedly been having an affair.

Blackburn writes that the TSA's response to practically every incident detailed in her report was "The unacceptable behavior of a few individuals in no way reflects the dedication of our nearly 50,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) who work tirelessly to keep our skies safe." Yet as she points out, "what TSA fails to recognize is that the collective actions of TSOs repeatedly appearing in our national headlines and being arrested for serious crimes does in fact reflect poorly on TSA's nearly 50,000 Transportation Security Officers."

Moreover, she observes, if the TSA were really serious about having the best workforce available, it would not recruit new employees by placing ads on pizza boxes and gas pumps (as it did in the D.C. area), and it would "consistently conduct criminal and credit background checks on new and existing employees" — something the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has been repeatedly told is not done, TSA assertions to the contrary notwithstanding.

In addition, says Blackburn, "one of the greatest threats to airline security is the ever present insider threat." The fact that TSA employees have assisted drug dealers in getting past TSA checkpoints should give anyone pause. What is to say they wouldn't do the same for terrorists, especially if those terrorists were to dupe them into thinking the terrorists were "just" drug smugglers?

"Despite the ever present threat of domestic terrorism," Blackburn declares, "many Transportation Security Officers have proven time and time again that they are unqualified to serve as one of our nation's last lines of defense."

Blackburn believes that the solution to the problem is to improve the TSA's employee screening and training processes, and that certainly wouldn't hurt. A better solution, however, might be to abolish the TSA — whose methods security expert Bruce Schneier has dubbed "security theater" — and let the private sector, which seems to secure numerous locations and events with minimal inconvenience to the public, try its hand at protecting plane passengers. Goodness knows we've felt the TSA's hand long enough.

*Photo: A Transportation Security Administration officer discovers unallowable liquids in a passenger's carry on luggage at the security checkpoint at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International*

*Airport on August 3, 2011 in Atlanta.*



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