



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 4, 2012

## TSA Agent Caught Stealing \$5,000 from Passenger at JFK Airport

According to Al Della Fave, spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and the New Jersey police force, “surveillance video showed Schmid taking the money from a jacket pocket, wrapping the cash in a plastic glove and taking it to a bathroom,” the AP writes. The money has not yet been recovered; Schmid is suspected of having passed it on to someone else in the bathroom.



Brooklyn resident Schmid was arrested on a charge of grand larceny. She has been suspended from her job with the TSA, which she had held down for four-and-a-half years, while an investigation takes place.

With any luck, Schmid, if found guilty, will get the same favorable treatment meted out to two other JFK screeners who were caught red-handed. Those men, Coumar Persad and Davon Webb, pleaded guilty to stealing \$40,000 from a passenger’s checked luggage and on January 10 were [sentenced to six months in jail and five years’ probation](#) — “a sentence that falls on the border with a misdemeanor,” George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley observed in astonishment.

Following Schmid’s arrest, TSA spokeswoman Lisa Farbstein hastened to [assure](#) concerned travelers: “The actions of a few individuals in no way reflect on the outstanding job our 50,000 security officers do every day.”

Farbstein’s assertion would be much more convincing if Schmid, Persad, and Webb were the only TSA agents caught padding their paychecks with passengers’ possessions. However, notes the AP, the same day that Schmid was arrested, “a federal judge sentenced former TSA screener Ricky German to eight months in prison for trying to steal a laptop from a passenger at the Memphis airport in December 2010.” Besides the sentencing of Persad and Webb, January also saw agents at the Dallas-Fort Worth, Los Angeles, and Miami airports arrested for, or pleading guilty to, stealing iPads, a \$15,000 watch, and other expensive items. In December a LaGuardia Airport TSA screener was charged with lifting a laptop computer that a passenger had left behind. Agents at the Newark and [Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood](#) airports were also charged last year with pilfering tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of property. All told, says [Hot Air](#), “some 500 TSA officers ... have been fired or suspended for stealing from passenger luggage since the agency’s creation in November of 2001.”

Yet the TSA would have us believe the thefts are rare occurrences and the work of the proverbial handful of rotten Red Romes. The agency also expects the public to accept the notion that the occasional incidents of airport robbery are vastly outweighed by the good things TSA agents do, including, Farbstein told the *Los Angeles Times*, protecting passengers from inert grenades and knives in checked luggage — weapons that could never have done them any harm in the first place.



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Of course, as bad as the thefts are, they pale in comparison to the crimes TSA agents commit at the government's direction on a daily basis: searching passengers' persons and possessions without probable cause; forcing them to undergo [potentially dangerous X-ray scanning](#) and then ogling the resulting images of their naked bodies; groping their private parts; and [strip-searching and humiliating](#) the most vulnerable among them. Even if no TSA agent ever stole from a passenger again — an unlikely outcome given the type of people most likely to take pleasure in the aforementioned activities — these violations would continue apace. Punishing those agents who swipe travelers' stuff is commendable and necessary; but as long as the TSA exists, passengers will continue to be robbed of their God-given, constitutionally guaranteed rights every time they take to the skies.

*Photo: AP Images*



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