



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on February 19, 2011

## TSA Agents Charged With Grand Larceny

Davon Webb, 30, and Couman Perad, who turned 36 today, were arrested after admitting they had regularly stolen from checked bags, sources said.

In one instance, Perad, who joined the Transportation Security Administration in 2002, and Webb, who has been an agent since 2004, stole \$39,000 on Jan. 30 from a bag at Terminal 8, sources said.

The passenger whose money was stolen was on his way to Argentina, sources said.

The \$39,000 was later found in their homes after TSA notified Port Authority police, sources said.

Perad and Webb would screen bags looking for loot, and then swipe the cash once the luggage was opened in a private screening room, sources said.



The two TSA agents will be charged with grand larceny, possession of stolen property and official misconduct; however, their crimes are not without substantial precedent, as there have been several other high-profile thefts of passengers' property committed by TSA agents. On Monday, February 14, TSA agent Michael Arato was arraigned in U.S. District Court in Newark, New Jersey, for his admitted role in accepting bribes and kickbacks from a colleague who regularly stole money from passengers during security screenings, as reported by [Reuters](#):

Arato, 41, admitted he took kickbacks from a subordinate officer, whom he permitted to steal between \$10,000 and \$30,000 in cash from travelers over the course of a year ending in October 2010, the U.S. Attorney's office said.

During a three-week period ending on October 5, video surveillance showed Arato pocketing some \$3,100 in kickbacks from the scheme, mostly in \$100 bills, authorities said.

He also admitted he regularly stole from passengers at his own checkpoint at the airport's Terminal B.

In a previous incident this past December, TSA agent Troy Davis was sentenced to three years' probation for stealing laptop computers from passengers' luggage at Philadelphia International Airport, [as reported by](#) CBS's Philadelphia Associate, WKYW:

Federal prosecutor Arlene Fisk says defendant Troy Davis, upset about a demotion and lost pay, admitted stealing five laptops and a Sony Playstation.

Fisk says Davis actually used the surveillance equipment for his own greedy purpose.

"He put the luggage through special machines to see whether there were any explosives or



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anything of concern in the luggage," she told KYW Newsradio. "When he saw that there was something of value in the luggage, he took out the computers or the games."

Just as the TSA routinely violates the human dignity and constitutional rights of the American people against unreasonable searches and seizures — as its invasive procedures cause numerous psychological traumas to those whose most intimate body parts are manhandled by its agents — it also has no regard for what John Locke and the Framers considered among the chief natural rights of the human person: the fundamental right to private property, as evident in what can only be described as an epidemic of theft and corruption among its agents.

As is the case with other bureaucratic structures, the TSA lends itself well to a culture of corruption and recklessness characteristic of big government.

In December 2008, another TSA agent at Newark-Liberty International Airport, [Pythias Brown](#), was charged with stealing numerous articles from passenger luggage, including dozens of cameras, laptops and other electronic equipment, and then subsequently selling the items on the auction website eBay. Brown was also entrusted with his well-paid government job after having had his driver's license revoked several times in the past, and failing to appear in traffic court on the charges.

Further demonstrating the extent to which a culture of theft has become commonplace within the TSA, yet another theft ring of the agency was discovered in Miami, Florida, in September 2009. In [this case](#), sources report that six TSA employees were fired for running an organized operation in which they would steal pricey passenger belongings and then redistribute the wealth among themselves. One agent returned 31 passenger items, including an iPod, and another brought back 25 stolen articles, including jewelry and a camera, after both were discovered by Miami-Dade International Airport police.

In one of the more heinous TSA heists, [Christopher Burley](#), an agent at Little Rock National Airport in Little Rock, Arkansas, was arrested and charged with theft after he was caught on camera removing a passenger's pain medication from his suitcase. Likewise, again at Newark Airport, on February 3, 2010, TSA agent Leroy Ray was caught on surveillance video taking an envelope containing \$500 in cash from a wheelchair-bound woman's bag as it went through an x-ray machine, according to a criminal complaint.

The TSA has also targeted other disabled persons, especially within the context of its relatively new policy of conducting invasive body searches. In one of the most egregious examples, TSA agents at Detroit International Airport in Michigan conducted an "enhanced pat-down" procedure on Thomas Sawyer, a retired schoolteacher and bladder cancer survivor who wears a urostomy bag. The agents ignored Sawyer's warnings that the enhanced pat-down would break open his urostomy bag, and consequently their actions caused the bag to tear, soiling Sawyer. According to his interview with [MSNBC](#),

"Humiliated, upset and wet, Sawyer said he had to walk through the airport soaked in urine, board his plane and wait until after takeoff before he could clean up."

"I am totally appalled by the fact that agents that are performing these pat-downs have so little concern for people with medical conditions," said Sawyer.

In another shocking incident, a four-year-old disabled boy at Philadelphia International Airport was [forced to remove](#) his leg braces by TSA agents and made to walk through the metal detector without the assistance of his braces — a move which violates even TSA policy, which states that those with orthopedic appliances or other such bodily aids should be taken to a "private screening area," where he



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could have been swabbed for traces of explosive materials.

Champions of limited government and civil liberties, such as Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas) and others, have long opposed the creation of the TSA. Now it seems their warnings were justified, as the TSA has demonstrated a lack of regard for the dignity of human life and property in its treatment of airline passengers, including the most vulnerable among them — the disabled and infirm — as evident in these examples of theft, scandal, and degradation.

The great philosopher John Locke's theory of Natural Rights of Life, Liberty, and Property which provides the theoretical basis for the U.S. Constitution's guarantee that government cannot justly violate these rights, clearly has fallen by the wayside, as the TSA's actions demonstrate a disregard for all three natural rights. Locke, who believed that government exists solely for the purpose of promoting and protecting these principles, would have found it unconscionable that a government agency which functions only through taxpayer funds would actively deprive innocent Americans of the right to travel by airplane unmolested in their persons and property.

Most Americans, perhaps naïvely, still believe that the government fulfills its intended purpose, and generally does not transgress these boundaries. They believe that the TSA, like the police and other personnel, generally protects constitutional rights in its actions, and have the minimal expectation that their property will be safe from theft and their bodies free from actions akin to government-sanctioned molestation and groping.

While the TSA [alleges](#) that it has a zero tolerance policy for thieves in its ranks, it cannot be expected that an agency which mandates a policy of invasive pat-downs violating the intimate corporeal integrity of American travelers will have any respect for their property rights. If agents believe they have the right to manhandle a person's leg braces, urostomy bag, or genitals, then there is nothing to prevent them from helping themselves to an individual's cash, electronics, or pain medication.

In response to the latest instance of theft committed by TSA agents, the agency issued a statement [saying](#): "the disgraceful actions of a few should not reflect negatively on the approximately 50,000 TSA officers across the country who work each day to keep the traveling public safe." The statement also said: "The agency is working closely with law enforcement authorities to ensure the individuals responsible are prosecuted and we will move swiftly and decisively to end the federal careers of any employee who engages in illegal activity on the job."

The agency also [reported](#) Thursday that the arrests of the two men are the result of an investigation initiated by the TSA in partnership with Port Authority police after another TSA employee at JFK reported the thefts to agency management. The TSA also says that it has fired 12 TSA officers for theft from the security checkpoint or from checked baggage.

The TSA suffers from an institutional problem, not a personnel problem. This latest episode demonstrates that its very existence is built upon faulty principles and anti-Lockean notions of individual rights.

*Photo: AP Images*



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