



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 27, 2010

Janet Napolitano Considers Advanced Screenings for Mass Transit

Despite the public outcry against the virtual police state at airports, Department of Homeland Security chief Janet Napolitano indicates that she would like to see similar procedures utilized on trains, ships, and other varieties of mass transportation. Ironically, Napolitano made these statements after admitting that terrorists will eventually find a way past the naked-body scanners and enhanced pat-down procedures.



Appearing on the [Charlie Rose show on November 22](#), Napolitano said, "Terrorists are going to continue to probe the system and try to find a way through."

She added, "I think the tighter we get on aviation, we have to also be thinking now about going on to mass transit or to trains or maritime. So what do we need to be doing to strengthen our protections there?"

Later, an official at the Department of Homeland Security clarified that the use of the naked-body scanners at other mass transit facilities was not under consideration, as such procedures "would not be feasible in a system with hundreds or thousands of access points." But what *if it were* "feasible" in such a system? Indeed, it may not be "feasible" for the TSA to virtually strip search *every* person using mass transit at *every* access point — but why wouldn't the abusive agency, which unapologetically uses full-body scanners to view the naked bodies of travelers at airports, use the mobile version of the technology to see through the clothes of unsuspecting passersby at mass transit facilities and elsewhere. In fact, it would be hard to imagine the TSA not doing this, considering that [the full-body scan technology has already gone mobile!](#)

Napolitano's announcements come at the height of criticism against the screening procedures used by the Transportation Security Administration at American airports, particularly the use of the naked-body scanners that penetrate an individual's clothing and the enhanced pat-downs that under any other circumstance would be considered molestation under our laws.

The images taken by naked-body scanners are so graphic that they cannot be shown on television without being censored. In addition to the explicit pictures taken by the machines, the scanners also release radiation that many contend (contrary to TSA denials) presents a [health risk](#), particularly for those who fly repeatedly.

The TSA and Department of Homeland Security claim that the screening procedures are necessary to prevent future terror attacks, but critics assert that terrorists will continue to find ways past security as innocent Americans are subjected to privacy violations prohibited by the [Fourth Amendment](#).



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Defending the screening procedures, Napolitano remarked, "I really want to say, look, let's be realistic and use our common sense. This is not about the government itself. We all have a role to play in security."

"And so I really regret some groups saying, 'Well, we don't want to be a part of that.' I regret it because it's not what we're all about. What we're all about is shared responsibility," she added.

But why would Americans "want to be a part of that"? Why would they want to accept the notion that every person should be viewed as a terror suspect — and therefore subjected to naked-body machines and groping — by their own government? And why wouldn't a government that fears its own citizens be feared by its citizens? Indeed, if the purpose is to provide legitimate security without sacrificing liberty in the process, why not try freedom? Why not end the TSA and its regulations so that the airlines and airports and others in the transportation sector can decide the best ways to protect their own passengers, employees, and property?

[AntiWar.com](#) reports that it is unlikely Americans will have a change of heart over the invasive procedures. "It seems unlikely Napolitano's comments, a combination of bureaucrat indifference and appeals to fear, are going to convince the public of the wisdom of the administration's policies, but they do suggest that the Department of Homeland Security, itself a creation of Bush Administration paranoia, will not easily back down from its inexorable march toward more powers."

The security methods utilized by the TSA have provoked a variety of reactions, ranging from the introduction of a "[National Opt-Out Day](#)," a day in which passengers were to opt out of the body scanners in protest, [lawsuits](#), and [public officials calling for an investigation into the efficiency and constitutionality of TSA's procedures](#). Texas Representative Ron Paul even introduced a piece of legislation in response to the TSA's privacy violations entitled the "[American Traveler Dignity Act](#)."

The public objection to the screening procedures prompted TSA head John Pistole to give a [statement](#). On November 22, he claimed that he understands people's privacy concerns and that the TSA would consider altering some of the procedures to make them "as minimally invasive as possible." Pistole himself has been the subject of stark condemnation as critics complained that Americans should have been advised about the introduction of the naked-body scanners and enhanced pat-downs. Pistole claims, however, that he chose not to publicize the new techniques, lest terrorists would have time to make plans to circumvent the system — as if terrorists wouldn't find out about the techniques as soon as travelers were subjected to them.

According to [Fox News](#), regardless of the criticism, "The procedures may be on the rise. Senator Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, authored a bill in September that would allow testing of body scanners at certain federal buildings."

Napolitano continues to try to assure Americans that the screening procedures are short-term solutions, but given her long-term goals, one wonders how realistic it is to believe that the screening procedures will be phased out any time soon.

"The long-term [question] is, how do we get out of this having to have an ever-increasing security apparatus because of terrorists and a terrorist attack? I think having a better understanding of what causes someone to become a terrorist will be helpful."

Recognizing that the Department of Homeland Security is nowhere near achieving that goal, Napolitano admits, "We don't know much. If you were to try and devise a template about what connects this terrorist to this terrorist and how they were raised and what schools they went to and their



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socioeconomic status, or this or that, it's all over the map. I think there's some important work that's being done on that but ... the Secretary of Homeland Security cannot wait for that."

In the meantime, [Antiwar.com](#) reports, "Public opposition to the TSA's airport screenings have led a number of people to consider travel by other means, including trains, to avoid the screenings. It is noteworthy that the new talk about adding the scans to trains ... [has] only cropped up since people began looking to them as a way to avoid air travel." And an official for the U.S. Travel Association noted, "We have received hundreds of emails and phone calls from travelers vowing to stop flying."

But what options would be available should the naked-body scanners become common throughout the transportation sector? Indeed, considering that the scanners can be used to [see through walls as well as clothes](#), how can we even necessarily be secure from government snooping within our own homes?

Photo of Janet Napolitano: AP Images

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