

# TSA – Is It All Worth It?

✘ I've previously written about my airport experiences which, overall, have been generally good. I fly often enough to know what I can and can't bring on the airplane; I know what I have to remove from my bags to get through security without any significant hassles; and I've been willing to put aside any privacy issues because I believed the scanners are doing the job they were intended to do.

But, I continue to read unsettling news reports that the scanners may not be as effective as we were led to believe.

When Canada installed these scanners, Rafi Sela, a leading Israeli airport security expert, called them "useless" and said, "I don't know why everybody is running to buy these expensive and useless machines. I can overcome the body scanners with enough explosives to bring down a Boeing 747. That's why we haven't put them in our airport," referring to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International

Airport, which apparently has some of the toughest security in the world.

Last year, the Government Accountability Office concluded in scanners might well not have found the explosives concealed in the underwear of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who did not go through a body scanner in Amsterdam. The Nigerian tried to detonate plastic explosives on a flight to Detroit from Amsterdam on Christmas 2009.

Earlier this year, the Seattle Times reported about a 27-year-old engineer named Jonathan Corbett, who outsmarted the scanners when he sewed a pocket to the side of his shirt, placed a metal carrying case that he says would "easily alarm any of the old metal detectors" inside it and walked through the full-body scanners without incident (watch here). Corbett's theory was that the case, hanging to the side

of his body rather than in front of or behind it, would disappear into the black background of the scanned image, thus escaping detection.

And, finally, last month, I read yet another article that some scanners are used less than 30 percent of the time, and at one of 12 airports that the GAO investigators visited, the TSA deployed three scanners in a terminal that handled one flight a day with about 230 passengers. This is all wasting millions of taxpayers' money.

I've always been in favor of profiling and I'm hoping that the TSA is actually doing it even if it is an unwritten protocol. After all, 60-year gray-haired American ladies of Polish and German descent and 65-year Native American men, like me and my husband, are not flying planes into buildings or carrying explosives in our underwear!

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

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## To Scan Or Not To Scan – That Is The Question

✘ I like airports. They're a great place to people watch. It's still a wonder how an airplane gets off the ground and stays in the air, but I'm a lawyer and haven't a clue about aeronautics.

I'm especially astounded at how flight attendants – whose job description must read “being nice to stupid people” – maintain their composure. One of my flight attendant friends calls it the “Boeing Brain Suck.” Some people seem to lose all common sense when they enter the jetway and almost every passenger

develops “irritable bladder syndrome” the moment they hear the wheels of the drink cart coming down the aisle.

One of my pet peeves is the “one carry-on and one personal item” rule. I don’t have a problem with the rule itself but with the lack of enforcement. Because I have a carry-on and my computer case, I always pack my purse in my carry-on luggage. How many times do I see women with a carry-on, a personal item AND a purse? It drives me insane. Why do they get to carry three items when the rule says two items?

I’ve learned to live with all the new security changes since 9/11. I may be having a senior moment about “how things used to be,” but I wonder if I really carried large bottles of perfume, shampoo and hand lotion in my carry-on before 9/11. I’ve adapted and am content with carrying my all-important 3 oz. bottle of hair gel. Three ounces is better than no ounces!

On our recent trip to Denver for Thanksgiving, I was a little apprehensive about security because of all the hype about the new full-body scanners and pat-downs. I knew before we left I’d opt for the scanners, but I was concerned that we’d be late because of anticipated delays. Well, we had nothing to worry about when we left on Sunday because there were only two people ahead of us on the security line in Seattle. We didn’t have to go through the scanner and were not subjected to a pat down. On the way home, on Friday, we went through the scanner, waited about 30 seconds for the TSA worker to get the ok to let us through, and we were on our way to the gate.

I’ve heard all the arguments about the scanners and the infringement of our rights, etc. The idiot who came up with “National Opt-Out Day” on Wednesday was just that, an idiot. The idea was for everyone to opt out of the scanners and require the TSA to conduct pat downs. Did the numbskull who came up with the idea actually believe the TSA wouldn’t conduct its pat downs if everyone opted out of the scanners?

So, what was the point? The only thing that would've happened is that there would've been a mile long line of people waiting to be patted down and God only knows how many delayed flights and people even more crazed than they normally are at the airport. Fortunately, the idea was a bust, but it never made any sense to me.

The scanners are an intrusion and pat downs violate my right not to be groped. But, I guess, I could choose not to fly. On the other hand, my question has always been, "why isn't the TSA profiling passengers?" Muslim terrorists, men ages 18 to 40, flew planes into the WTC. Almost 60-year old stylishly gray-haired women like me, or 64-year old Native American men like my husband, did not.

Fortunately, pilots have finally been excluded from scanning, but why weren't they exempt in the first place? Doesn't a pilot already know how to bring down a plane? Would it really be necessary for a pilot to carry some type of explosive device in his tidy whities? Or her hipster? Flight attendants are now exempt because of their extensive background checks, but only after one was asked to remove her prosthetic breast form.

Will the scanners make us safe? Would they have prevented terrorists like the Christmas Day underwear bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, from getting on the plane in Amsterdam to Detroit? I haven't a clue and I'm betting we'll never get a straight answer from the TSA. What we did know at the time was that the CIA received warnings about Addulmutallab from his own father regarding his extreme religious views, he bought his one-way ticket with cash, had no passport when he boarded the plane and no coat heading for frigid Detroit. The warning signs were there. It didn't require a scanner to view his genital area to know something wasn't right with this guy – profiling, in my opinion, would've been far more effective.

But until the TSA adopts profiling as its official policy,

which the ACLU and other bleeding hearts on the left would adamantly oppose no matter how inconvenient it is now for every grandparent, tow-headed 3-year old, Asian person, nun, and anyone else who doesn't fit into the 18- to 40-year old category of Muslim men, we'll all have to put up with these violations and indignities.

Whatever your opinion of these security measures, the TSA workers, like flight attendants, have a thankless job. I'm guessing some passengers get hassled just because they're so rude. Instead of directing their anger at the terrorists, they take it out on the TSA people. Personally, I find that a smile and a "how are you today?" goes a very long way at the airport.

Yes, it's a hassle. Yes, it's an invasion of privacy. Yes, it's an inconvenience. But, I find it far more annoying when I'm on the phone and prompted to press 1 to continue in English; more aggravating when, after 15 years of doing business in the same bank, a new teller asks for my identification; and far more troublesome when my bank has to cancel my credit card because some low-life decides to buy \$2,000 wheel rims after gaining access to my credit card number. I think morons who text while driving pose a far greater danger to me than radio waves from scanners.

I'm far more concerned about the infringement of my right to choose whether or not to buy health insurance with the enactment of Obamacare; it's far more intrusive that I'll have to report whether or not I carry health insurance on my income tax return; and far more disturbing that there will be 16,000 new IRS workers just to enforce Obamacare. So, if you think the TSA is out of control, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.