

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.