

TSA techniques exceed ‘reasonable’ search



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White House spokesman Robert Gibbs recently said that that the Transportation Security Administration will “search” for ways of making security measures minimally invasive. I hope that they “search” in the right places and leave our bodies alone when we travel through the airport.

In the past month, TSA has adopted a more aggressive pat-down search technique at airports nationwide and has expanded the use of full-body scanners that use low levels of radiation to create what resembled naked images of passengers.

I have recently been subjected to this when taking a flight from Nashville to Atlanta. After my ticket and identification were verified and I removed my shoes, I had to step into a body-scan chamber. I did not feel safer. I felt that I was going to get beamed up somewhere.

This new device was silly. But then, I would rather be beamed up than patted down.

The government should not permit us to be touched in our private places absent compelling circumstances in individual cases. This is offensive and, in my view, borders on an illegal search.

Observant trumps hands-on

I am aware that I consent to a search when I go to the airport, but the Constitution only tolerates “reasonable” searches and not this mass invasion of our liberty. There are times when flying is the only option. The right of freedom of movement is now seriously compromised with little security in return.

It seems that the government is afraid of being accused of “profiling” because some folks might be offended if they are given a more rigorous inspection in appropriate cases. In this new, one-size-fits-all procedure, however, the government has now offended us all. Truly random searches are just as effective as a deterrent.

The Israeli airlines have been secure for decades, and their more intensive searches are based on trained officers who know what and whom to look for. We need observant people, not groping hands.

I have been subject to modest pat-downs at the Titans stadium. This is reasonable and is designed to protect people in a crowded environment. If this is satisfactory for the National Football League, it should be sufficient for an airport where similar security concerns are in play.

We all agree that safety at the airport is important. However, I believe that these most recent body scans and intrusive physical pat-downs at our airports have crossed the line of propriety. I see nothing that has changed to justify this radical intrusion that places yet more inconvenience on our air-traveling population. The expense and delay are now intolerable.

If terrorists have gotten past the CIA, the FBI and heavens knows what else, some bag inspector in blue gloves is not going to stop them. This creates only the illusion of security and accomplishes little.

The government should “search” for better ways of protecting us without completely destroying our privacy.

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