

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY EXPRESSED CONCERNS ABOUT “GATE RAPE” ON SEPTEMBER 22



Chairman of the House Homeland Security
Committee Bennie Thompson sent

Transportation Security Administration Director John Pistole a letter on Friday expressing concern that the TSA did not review privacy and civil liberty concerns before implementing the new “gate rape” procedures at airports. The letter demands additional information on the pat-downs and calls on Pistole to reconsider them.

But most troubling, it reveals that at a member briefing on the new protocol conducted on September 22, the Committee expressed concern about the pat-downs.

As you know, on September 22, 2010, the Committee on Homeland Security held a Member briefing on a pilot that TSA was conducting at Boston Logan International Airport and Las Vegas McCarran International Airport to evaluate enhanced passenger screening protocols. At that time, Members viewed a demonstration of the protocols and expressed concern about their intrusiveness as well as about the risk of inconsistent nationwide implementation and urged TSA to work to educate the traveling public on the need for these reforms. Subsequently, TSA, over a two month period, began implementing these new protocols at our Nation’s airports.

While some of this appears to be a belated attempt to raise privacy issues about the “gate

rape," Thompson rightly points out the Administration's failures to fulfill privacy and civil liberties requirements.

In the absence of an Executive branch level Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board that would evaluate decisions such as this, it was crucial that the Department of Homeland Security's Privacy Officer and Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties thoroughly evaluate and publish written assessments on how this decision affects the privacy and civil rights of the traveling public. To date, the Department has not published either a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) nor a Civil Liberties Impact Assessment (CLIA) on the enhanced pat down procedures. Without a published PIA or CLIA, we cannot ascertain the extent to which TSA has considered how these procedures should be implemented with respect to certain populations such as children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. By not issuing these assessments, the traveling public has no assurance that these procedures have been thoroughly evaluated for constitutionality.

Now, Thompson has been successful in the past at forestalling abusive surveillance by raising precisely these kinds of privacy issues, notably when he prevented Michael Chertoff from implementing a satellite surveillance program in the US. But that was when the Democrats had a majority in the House. In just weeks, Thompson will lose his gavel and Peter King—who used to materially support terrorists in Ireland but now loves to fearmonger on terror—will take over.

Which means Pistole and the Obama Administration will probably just blow off this request for some proof that gate rape has passed constitutional review.

**Sign the petition demanding Congress investigate
the TSA's porno scanners, aggressive groping,
and abuses of power.**