

New software to end 'naked' airport scans

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A January 2011 illustration shows lobbying material protesting against full body scans outside of a conference on Transportation Security Administration procedures in Washington, DC. In the face of an outcry over so-called "naked" body scans at airports, US authorities on Wednesday announced plans for a new scanning system that eliminates "passenger-specific images."

In the face of an outcry over so-called "naked" body scans at airports, US authorities on Wednesday announced plans for a new scanning system that eliminates "passenger-specific images."

Transportation Security Administration Administrator John Pistole said the agency would begin installing new software on its scanners "designed to enhance privacy."

The new software "will auto-detect items that could pose a potential threat using a generic outline of a person for all passengers," the agency said.

"By eliminating the image of an actual passenger and replacing it with a generic outline of a person, passengers are able to view the same outline that the TSA officer sees," a TSA statement said.

"Further, a separate TSA officer will no longer be required to view the image in a remotely located viewing room."

The news comes after protests and lawsuits over the use of so-called "naked" scanners that take full-body X-ray images that show passengers' genitals. In cases where people refuse such scans, TSA agents manually pat down passengers.

The TSA says the scanners protect fliers following the foiled 2009 Christmas Day plot to down a US jet by a Nigerian traveler who concealed explosives in his underwear.

Critics say the devices and the pat downs are invasive and demeaning.

US President Barack Obama last year said he understood "frustrations" over the measures and had asked the TSA to "constantly refine and measure whether what we're doing is the only way to assure the American people's safety."

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