

Airports to test 'virtual strip search'

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Transportation Security Administration said Monday they intend to use new body scanners to search for weapons on passengers. The "backscatter" X-ray machines use low-intensity millimeter waves to see possible weapons or other metal objects under a passenger's clothing. The airports of Sky Harbor in Phoenix, Los Angeles International, and Kennedy International plan to test the technology. TSA officials in February installed the scanners in Phoenix as part of a supplement to conventional pat downs and wandering by security screeners. The machine's sensitivity allows it to produce anatomically correct bodily images of a passenger, though Phoenix employs a "privacy algorithm" producing a cartoon-like image instead, USA Today reported. Though 79 percent of those given the option chose the new body scanners over conventional pat downs, the American Civil Liberties Union called the technology a "virtual strip search." The ACLU voiced concerns over the testing of the Rapiscan Secure 1000 at Florida's Orlando International Airport in 2002. Barry Steinhardt of the ACLU told CNN in 2002 that he didn't oppose the use of new security measures, however, he was concerned because the new technology produced "a very graphic picture of the naked body."

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