



Captain Mark Searle
Chairman, BALPA
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Dear Captain Searle,

You no doubt know that your colleagues in the Allied Pilots Association have issued guidelines recommending that their members do not submit themselves to body scanners at airports.

This seems sensible given that members of associations such as yours are the most frequent flyers of all, and are therefore already exposed to a higher level of radiation than the rest of the population.

Furthermore, you are no doubt also aware that Dr David Brenner, head of Columbia University's Centre for Radiological Research, has concluded in a report which is (as far as I know) entirely uncontested by any scientist or airline body that because the beam from scanners concentrates on the skin - one of the most radiation-sensitive organs of the human body - that the radiation dose from scanners may be up to 20 times higher than first estimated.

Dr Brenner also concludes that some members of the population are particularly prone to harm from such radiation (he estimates this to be around one in 20 of the population). As far as I know, there has been no research conducted by your Association (or anyone else) to establish whether or not members of your Association fall into that group and are therefore particularly vulnerable as they go through scanners.

The Inter-Agency Committee on Radiation Safety (which includes the European Commission, International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear Energy Agency and the World Health Organization) has written an authoritative report that states that

- 1) Air passengers should be made aware of the health risks of airport body screenings,
- 2) Governments must explain any decision to expose the public to higher levels of cancer-causing radiation
- 3) Pregnant women and children should not be subject to scanning (i.e. *at all*).

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You will no doubt appreciate that in fact none of this has been done in the United Kingdom. To reiterate the point I have made above, you will doubtless also appreciate that if such risks apply to the population at large then they inevitably apply to your members, at a higher level.

In these circumstances, I was dismayed to see your Association issue blithe assurances in the media yesterday that the scanners were perfectly safe. I simply do not know how you can have reached such a position on the evidence available, and subsequently cannot help but feel that you are failing properly to serve the interests of your members with this position. Why should British pilots fail to receive guidance which reflects the best available scientific evidence, unlike their American counterparts? The consequences of such a position in future years for some or indeed many of your members are potentially most serious.

I furthermore point out that your Association is widely viewed as a responsible and authoritative body and that your position is – wrongly, in my view – therefore stifling debate in this country. Whilst our American friends are now discussing this openly, the British media remains unwilling to engage with this serious issue because of the false reassurance gained from the approach that you have adopted.

You will appreciate that all that I have written here is said without regard to privacy concerns about the scanners – suffice it to say that my organisation would suggest that such concerns are significant and that if you would like further information of the numerous abuses of body scanner technology by staff, they can be found on our website, www.bigbrotherwatch.org.uk.

I finally note that I was also surprised to read that your spokesman told the press that one can opt for a pat-down instead of going through the scanners. As I'm sure you're aware, in the United Kingdom, this is simply incorrect. Here, alone in the world, if one's picked out for a scan one *has to* be scanned – no scan, no fly. I'm sure that this was inadvertent and that your Association regrets unintentionally misleading people on this point.

I would be delighted to meet with you to discuss these issues further, or to speak via the telephone or on e-mail if that is more convenient to you.

With best wishes



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