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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 14, 2010

MICHAEL L. ALEXANDER, STAFF DIRECTOR  
BRANDON L. MILHORN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR AND CHIEF COUNSEL

Ralph Nader  
POB 19312  
Washington, DC 20036

Marc Rotenberg, Executive Director  
EPIC  
1718 Connecticut Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Nader and Mr. Rotenberg:

Thank you for contacting me regarding your concerns with the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) deployment of Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) machines at passenger screening checkpoints in U.S. airports. I agree wholeheartedly that TSA must ensure that this new security technology is proven effective and comes with sufficient protections to the health and privacy of all persons who will encounter it as the technology gains widespread usage in the United States.

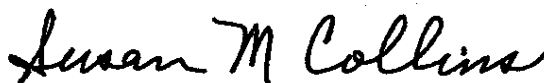
As Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I have expressed many concerns regarding the AIT program. As you have noted, I sent a letter to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano last month requesting that the Department's Chief Medical Officer be directed to complete a comprehensive review of potential health effects of repeated exposure to radiation from backscatter x-ray AITs.

Additionally, I sent a letter to Secretary Napolitano in April 2010 requesting that DHS evaluate and consider adopting Automatic Target Recognition (ATR) auto-detection software for AITs. ATR software removes the need for a TSA employee to view the images from AIT scans, thereby providing additional privacy protection during passenger checkpoint screening. A copy of that letter is enclosed for your information.

Furthermore, I too have cited the puffer machines' failures under real world conditions as evidence of the need for successful completion of operational testing and evaluation of AITs. In multiple Committee hearings, I have asked DHS officials, including Secretary Napolitano and TSA Administrator John Pistole, to commit to the successful completion of operational testing and evaluation for AITs and all other new technologies prior to their deployment.

Thank you again for contacting me regarding this important issue.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
Ranking Member

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2010

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

As the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) begins the deployment of whole body imaging machines at airport screening checkpoints, we urge the Department to evaluate the imaging technology that we saw demonstrated last week at Schiphol International Airport in Amsterdam. The screening machines used by Schiphol incorporate auto-detection technology that addresses many of the privacy concerns raised by the scanners DHS is currently testing, while also appearing to provide a highly effective scan.

Computer-based auto-detection technology identifies potentially threatening objects on a person and highlights with boxes on a featureless human body outline those areas of the individual that may require further inspection. If the computer scan finds no problems, then the passenger and screener at the imaging machine are notified almost immediately that the passenger may proceed. The system we saw demonstrated obviates the need for a screening officer to review a detailed image of a passenger in a separate viewing room. Separate image viewing areas also take up vital physical space, which is already tightly constrained at most airports. Eliminating the need to view detailed images of passengers' bodies in separate rooms would, therefore, address privacy concerns and save the government and airports money on physical space for screening. The automated review of images by a computer, rather than by a screener examining the image in a separate room, also appears to improve the speed of the whole body imaging process.

Another advantage of this technology is that it avoids exposing passengers and screeners to radiation.

Dutch officials have deployed this technology in response to the attempted Christmas Day bombing by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. While no technology is 100 percent effective at detecting dangerous items, the Dutch officials we talked to expressed confidence that there was a "high probability" that this technology would have detected Abdulmutallab's concealed explosives.

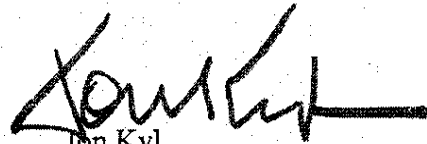
We wanted to bring this technology to your attention because it appears to offer a solution to the significant privacy concerns that have been raised about DHS's deployment of whole body imaging machines in the United States. We would appreciate the Department providing our staff with an update on the Department's efforts to acquire and deploy this auto-detection technology, which appears to be superior to the whole body screening technology that is now being installed at U.S. airports.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions about this request, please contact us directly or have your staff contact Rob Strayer on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee staff at (202) 224-4751.

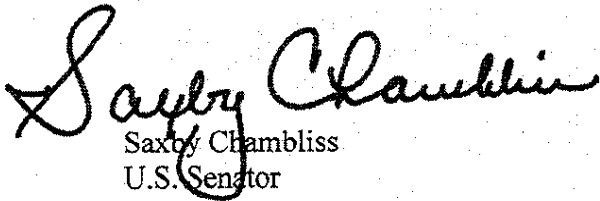
Sincerely,



Susan Collins  
U.S. Senator



Jon Kyl  
U.S. Senator



Saxby Chambliss  
U.S. Senator