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Fall November 19, 2010

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# IT'S TIME TO REPLACE TSA's JOHN PISTOLE BECAUSE OF HIS LACK OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

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The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) head, John Pistole, has become known by many Americans this week because of his hard-line, inflexible stance that aggressive patdowns of airport passengers will not be modified.

Passengers can choose between body scanners, which enable screeners to see them naked or opt out for the new aggressive patdowns that many airport travelers have described as molestation. A passenger's refusal to allow either can cause the passenger to be arrested. Worse, Pistole has announced that some passengers will be singled out for the aggressive patdown that extends to all private areas of a person's body.

The busiest travel season is upon us. Thanksgiving travelers will take to the airways this week. In response to the new patdown procedure, some are calling on passengers to refuse the aggressive patdowns—an effort that could cause chaos in our airports. Since Monday, at least three Lawsuits challenging the patdowns have been filed. The suits allege civil rights violations.

Pistole was an FBI agent before coming to the TSA. If his obstinance in defending the patdowns before the U.S. Senate is any indication of his degree of social skills, then one can assume that he did not get along well with co-workers in the FBI.

In order to be a solid Law Enforcement leader, one must possess excellent social skills. Included should be expertise in interpersonal conflict resolution. Yes, Pistole has an obligation to keep travelers safe; however, Pistole also has an obligation to guard children from being groped by TSA employees. Pistole has an obligation to allow men and women to be free from exploitation by TSA workers. Since we are a country characterized by Democracy, Pistole has an obligation to do what the people ask when the request is reasonable. This obligation extends to all of our federal elected officials. Let us commend the specific elected officials who ordered Pistole to Capital Hill this week to explain why law abiding American citizens are robbed of their dignity through "the" degrading, invasive patdown searches.

What is so bothersome is Pistole's unwillingness to compromise. But wait, perhaps Pistole will compromise. Early this morning, he capitulated to pilots' unions, which sounded like they were on the verge of striking if Pistole did not heed their concerns that they should not be subjected to groping or the radiation of the scanners.

The unyielding and defiant Pistole was called to the Senate floor. Pistole stated among things that new search procedures would not be changed and then he categorically held that children under age 12 are exempted from pat-downs. His integrity must be questioned, since a video clip posted to YouTube six days ago tells a different story.

Granted the FBI and TSA are not police work; however, both agencies interact with the public as do the police, the TSA in particular. This means that TSA screeners must have a toolbox full of interpersonal conflict resolution skills. Their leader, Pistole, should lead by example. It seems to me that the best person to head the TSA is a seasoned street cop who knows the value of negotiation.

**DR. Christopher C. Cooper** is a New York City native, a former Washington D.C. (Metropolitan) Police Officer and United States Marine Sergeant (2nd Reconnaissance Battalion and Iraq War veteran). Presently, he is a Civil Rights Attorney & Ph.D. based in Chicago. A Graduate of the City University of New York (John Jay College) Dispute Resolution Program, he is author of approximately 36 publications including books and peer-reviewed journal articles, most concerning Police Training, Use of Force and Conflict Resolution Processes. In 2009, he was a Post Doctoral Fulbright at the University of Akureyri, Iceland in the Faculty of Law & Social Science. In 1996, he was awarded and served as a Post Doctoral Fulbright Lecturer and Researcher at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark and did lecture and study Police Conflict Resolution Processes. Dr. Cooper has taught at police academies and was an enlisted instructor of Urban Combat at the U.S. Marine "Basic School", Quantico, VA. He has been featured as a consultant on and by MSNBC, CNN, BBC, NPR, CBC and other media regarding Police Work and as representative of the National Black Police Association.

