

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, August 3, 2010, 3:00pm EST

Contact:

Ginger McCall
EPIC Staff Counsel
(202) 482-1140 x 223

DOCUMENTS REVEAL THAT BODY SCANNERS
ROUTINELY STORE AND RECORD IMAGES

EPIC Says Concerns Regarding Airport Body Scanners Are Well-Founded

WASHINGTON, DC – The Electronic Privacy Information Center has obtained more than one hundred images of undressed individuals entering federal courthouses, stored and recorded by a digital body scanner operated by the United States Marshals Service, as part of an open government lawsuit.

The Washington-based privacy organization has raised objections to these devices, which are being widely deployed in US airports.

In the lawsuit against the Marshals Service, EPIC learned that the devices routinely store and record images of people entering courthouses. The Marshals Service acknowledged that it has retained thousands of such images. It agreed to provide a representative sample to EPIC as part of a settlement agreement.

The disclosed images are not test images. They are images of ordinary Americans who passed through these machines as they entered a federal courthouse. The images were retained on the body scanner machines and were easily accessible and transferrable onto external devices.

“These documents demonstrate that body scanners do routinely store and record images of individuals,” said Marc Rotenberg, President of EPIC. “In complying with our Freedom of Information Act request, the Marshals Service has helped the public more fully understand the capabilities of these devices. But the DHS continues to conceal the truth from American air travelers who could be subject to similar intrusive recorded searches in U.S. airports.”

EPIC is pursuing a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security to obtain further information about the body scanners in airports. DHS has refused to release more than 2,000 body scanner images in its possession. EPIC subsequently asked a federal court in Washington to suspend the program, citing violations of several federal laws and the United States Constitution.

Ginger McCall, EPIC Staff Counsel said, “The ability of body scanners to store images – and DHS’s reluctance to make this known to the public – underscores the need for the court to take action on EPIC’s emergency motion.”

EPIC is a public interest research center based in Washington, DC. EPIC focuses public attention on emerging privacy and civil liberties issues. In a previous Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the DHS, EPIC obtained the technical specifications and vendor contracts for the devices.

RESOURCES:

United States Marshals Service: Disclosure Letter

http://epic.org/privacy/body_scanners/Disclosure_letter_Aug_2_2010.pdf

EPIC: Body Scanner Technology

<http://epic.org/privacy/airtravel/backscatter/>

EPIC v. DHS (FOIA)

http://epic.org/privacy/body_scanners/epic_v_dhs_suspension_of_body.html

EPIC v. DHS (petition and motion for emergency stay)

http://epic.org/privacy/airtravel/backscatter/epic_v_dhs.html

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