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Turban screening measures questioned

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WASHINGTON (AP) — A new airport screening policy for turbans and other headwear has the country's Sikhs concerned they are being unfairly targeted.

The federal policy change went into effect Aug. 4, subjecting travelers to secondary screening at security checkpoints if they are wearing head coverings, such as cowboy hats, berets or turbans. The screenings could include a pat-down search of the head covering if the screener finds it necessary.

The New York-based Sikh Coalition believes the new policy singles out Sikhs and others who wear religious head coverings. More than 25 ethnic and religious organizations, such as the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Asian American Justice Center, have signed the coalition's petition against the policy change.

In the Sikh religion, the turban is considered private, and removing a turban would be like removing a woman's blouse, Neha Singh, the coalition's advocacy director, said Wednesday. Since 2001, federal policy has required screeners to search turbans only if they do not clear a metal detector.

The Transportation Security Administration denies any use of racial or religious profiling in its security screening practices. The recent policy change applies to all head coverings that could be used to conceal something, said TSA spokeswoman Amy Kudwo. The change was not a result of any specific threat information about hiding explosives or weapons in head coverings, she said. And all travelers have the right to request a private screening.

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"Head coverings do not 'require' a search under the new policy," Kudwo said in an e-mail. "Individuals MAY be referred for additional screening if the security officer cannot reasonably determine that the head area is free of a detectable threat item."

The Sikh Coalition has documented 40 incidents when Sikhs were subjected to these searches since Aug. 4. And some of these travelers were not offered a private area for screening, Singh said, adding, "This is going to lead to profiling."

TSA will not disclose the details of new policy for security reasons. It broadly explains the screening procedures on its website with a picture of a white cowboy hat and another picture of three young women laughing and wearing winter hats.

The Sikh community was not notified of the screening changes as it has been in the past, the advocacy group said. The organization met with TSA officials on Aug. 22 and has another conference call scheduled next week to

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discuss the issue, Singh said. TSA told the coalition the airport screeners decide to perform secondary screening on turbans at their own discretion.

If the policy remains broad and unregulated, it could lead to profiling, said David Harris, a racial profiling expert at the University of Toledo College of Law.

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EurosnoB wrote: 14m ago

And what about baseball caps? Can't they be forbidden because they make people look silly?

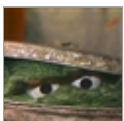
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mel wrote: 1h 45m ago

The Silk has religious freedom in USA like all the rest of us. His religion is not the issue here. His turban was inspected for security and he will understand if he put himself in the shoes of other people travelling with him.

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Bigrcube wrote: 1h 52m ago

This here is the USA folks. You want it like back home, then just return to the sand where the gov't is just full of peachy folks who *REALLY* can't get along, ay?!

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panthergrowl wrote: 4h 43m ago

Whatever happened to separation of church from state? When it comes to Muslim's I guess that doesn't count. Your religion won't let you take it off. The state won't let you get on a plane without checking it. Get with the program. We have women wanting to have their drivers license wearing a veil. BS....then you don't get a friggin' drivers license. I'm tired of bending over backwards for people who won't conform due to religious beliefs. You're in America now. Do what you want in your own home but when you get out in public, speak the language and follow the rules that are made for everyone. If you don't like it, change the laws or get your @ss back to the desert.

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Democats R Evil wrote: 5h 5m ago

Madd Maxx,
If you wear a cod piece, I bet it gets searched. 8^)

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Allison Helms wrote: 5h 23m ago

iaseabee--I am with you on that. I have two metal knees ,a picture of each, a metal bar and wire cage in a wrist that can practically be seen, and several of the wire cages on my back, and a certified letter describing each and I still have to show my knees and pull my shirt up for them to see the scars. If I can do this any one can and must do any thing they require and like it or get out of the country.

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steelbird wrote: 5h 25m ago

I get so tired hearing complaints about the poor muslims/islamist/sikh's being profiled. If the vast majority of terrorist are middle eastern or SE asian then they should be profiled. If you are robbed by a 20yr old hispanic male, the police don't look for 60 year old white women to question. They profile the suspects based on the victims description. Profiling individuals based on what we know of the individuals committing terrorist acts is not immoral, it is good police and intelligence work.

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Madd Maxx wrote: 6h 41m ago

The Sikh Coalition has documented 40 incidents when Sikhs were subjected to these searches since Aug. 4. And some of these travelers were not offered a private area for screening, Singh said, adding, "This is going to lead to profiling."

No its going to lead to longer lines at the airport. But if they are given the right to the special attention why are they complaining?

Can you wear a burka through security?

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iaseabee wrote: 7h 18m ago

I have a new chrome plated knee with a card from the surgen like millions of others SO ITS STRIP AND SEARCH EACH TIME I TRAVEL so I do not see why they think it THEY are the ONLY ONES beig denied rights

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