

# Senators call for investigation of Transportation Security Administration

Concerned that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) may be squandering taxpayer dollars, U.S. Senators Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) have requested a federal investigation of TSA recruitment procedures.

The call for the investigation was sparked by reports that 20 TSA employees engaged in a seven-week recruiting stint at a luxury resort in Telluride, Colo. — a trip that cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars while only resulting in 50 new federal TSA baggage screeners.

In a letter sent to TSA Administrator Admiral James Loy, Wyden and Dorgan wrote that "The stated purpose of the recruitment trip was to hire federal security screeners; however the reports indicate the luxury resort is isolated from working population centers, and the effort was so poorly publicized, that in some cases

only one or two recruits came in per day...The information available about this recruitment trip calls into question TSA's entire recruitment program and leads us to ask whether TSA has exercised any oversight over that program."

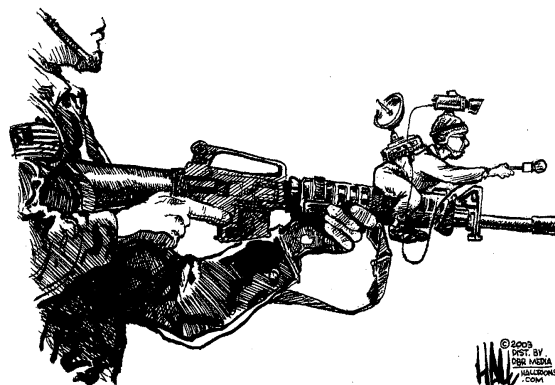
"It's especially troubling that an agency developed specifically to protect Americans in the fight against terrorism is squandering precious resources on extravagant resorts and fluffy robes," Wyden said.

In the letter, Wyden and Dorgan asked Loy to answer questions about the TSA recruitment program, its oversight, cost and effectiveness. They also concluded that the reports about TSA's recruitment programs are more than just embarrassing indictments of waste in government; they threaten to undermine the aviation security program Congress established to prevent future terrorist attacks on the aviation sec-

tor and the flying public." We believe they also undermine efforts to exercise fiscal responsibility in a time of ballooning deficits," Wyden and Doran wrote.

The problem at TSA may be more pervasive than illustrated by the Telluride example. During a Feb. 5 Senate Aviation Subcommittee hearing, Department of Transportation Inspector General Ken Mead testified that a TSA subcontractor charged TSA approximately \$18 million for screener recruitment efforts, \$6-9 million of which may have been fraudulent. At that hearing, Wyden encouraged Mead to investigate this charge and encouraged that this investigation not be hampered when the new Department of Homeland Security absorbed TSA on March 1.

In response to the September 11 attacks, Congress created the TSA to direct all aviation security activities.



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