

## Some nations treated 'differently'

Richard J. Brennan, Toronto Star

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Transport Minister John Baird says while Canada has taken a dim view of racial profiling, it already treats certain countries differently when their citizens travel to Canada.

Baird was asked Wednesday whether Canada is going to fall in line with the U. S. in targeting travellers from 14 mostly Muslim countries as part of heightened airport security in the wake of a Dec. 25 foiled bombing of a Detroit-bound Northwest Airline flight.

"We do put already ... visa requirements on some citizens of some countries so we do treat people from different countries differently today," he said.

Canada requires visas of travellers from more than 145 countries and territories.

"In terms of Canada, we will get the specifics on what the request is from the United States and then come up with a Canadian response," Baird said.

Baird has announced the government has ordered 44 full-body scanners at a cost of \$11 million to boost the screening of travellers to the United States and critics fear the next step is to mirror U.S.-style racial profiling.

But an exemption for people under 18 has created controversy.

Baird said minors were exempted because they were unable to give consent for a full-body scan, but Canada's assistant privacy commissioner said that was news to her.

"That's their own conclusion," said assistant privacy commissioner Chantal Bernier. "That's the first I heard of that because the information we have is that minors were not going to be subjected to the scanners and we were never told of the reasoning for that."

Baird made no mention of concerns in Britain where such scans have been equated with child pornography and rejected suggestions that would-be terrorists would merely recruit minors.

When it was suggested terrorists could recruit minors to avoid the scanners, Baird said: "To date there has been no issues involving families with respect to terrorism with respect to civil aviation."

Those working to prevent the sexual exploitation of children applauded the measure.

But the exemption of people under 18 is a loophole, David Murakami Wood, Canada research chair in surveillance studies at Queen's University told The Canadian Press. "This is the thing I find most mystifying about this," he said.

Peter St. John, an aviation security expert, wondered how a physical pat-down was preferable for children and teens.

"The body pat-down is more uncomfortable and more invasive than the scanner, " he said.

To exclude everyone up to 18 seems "arbitrary," he said.

"You can blow up a plane at ... 17."

NDP MP Don Davies (Vancouver-Kingsway) said he feared if Baird had already bowed to U.S. pressure to put body scanners in airports, he could also succumb to the pressure to profile based on the U.S. rules.

Liberal MP Joe Volpe (Eglinton-Lawrence) said opposition MPs don't even get a chance to question the manner in which the Conservative government is handling the latest security scare because Prime Minister Stephen Harper has suspended Parliament until March 3.

The United States has slapped tougher rules on travellers from Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen.

Harper noted in an interview with CBC TV that it may be somewhat difficult to adopt carte blanche U.S. security policies, including profiling some passengers.

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