



TSA agents subpoena bloggers to find out who leaked new security document

By Alison Grant, The Plain Dealer

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Associated Press

Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on the runway after arriving at Detroit Metropolitan Airport from Amsterdam on Dec. 25. Officials say a passenger aboard the plane was trying to ignite an explosive device.

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Two East Coast travel bloggers who posted a sensitive airport security memo on their Internet sites have been subpoenaed by federal officials trying to find out who sent them the document.

One of the writers, **Steve Frischling**, also had his laptop seized by agents looking for evidence of his source for the **Transportation Security Administration** directive. It outlined stricter security guidelines adopted by TSA in the wake of a failed Christmas Day terrorist attack on a Northwest Airlines flight.

The memo, which Frischling said was sent to airports and airlines worldwide that fly into the United States, set forth screening measures such as increased pat-downs at airport check points, concentrating on upper legs and torsos, and a rule that passengers stay in their seats for one hour before planes landed.

Frischling said the document was not marked as privileged information. But TSA spokesman Jim Fotenos said security rules are not for public disclosure.

"TSA's Office of Inspections is currently investigating how the recent (security directives) were acquired and published by parties who should not have been privy to this information," he said.

The extra measures were set to expire Tuesday but the agency extended them through at least Wednesday as it sought to further refine them. TSA has given airlines discretion on implementing portions of the directive, including passenger movement within the

For more information

TSA Guidance for Passengers on Heightened Security Measures in Place Following Dec. 25 Incident

Around the Web

Full text of my subpoena from the Department of Homeland Security by Christopher Elliott (elliott.org)

TSA Security Directive SD-1544-09-06 : The Fallout From NW 253 (boardingarea.com)

Homeland Security Subpoenas and Search Computer of Two Bloggers (seattlepi.com)

TSA extends expanded airline security (CNN)

Previous coverage

Dec. 8: TSA accidentally posts screening procedures that were supposed to be secret

cabin and access to carryon items.

Frischling said two Department of Homeland Security agents pulled up in a sedan in front of his home in central Connecticut Tuesday evening. They served him a subpoena demanding documents, emails and faxes related to his receipt of the security actions.

They also went through Frischling's BlackBerry and asked whether a number they saw, tagged ICE-MOM, was "a source in Immigrations and Customs Enforcement." Frischling explained that ICE was shorthand for "in case of emergency" -- and that the listing was his mother's phone.

They were "polite and professional," Frischling said, and spent two hours at the house, with a promise to be back the next day.

On a return visit Wednesday they took Frischling's laptop. Frischling said he was told that a Secret Service computer expert from Boston would do a forensic analysis of its contents. The investigation is fruitless, according to Frischling.

The author of the **Flying With Fish** travel blog said he gets his email via a Web server, so the email that contained the TSA memo is not stored in his computer. He says he doesn't know who sent the email, which had only a first name in an email address. He did recognize the sender as apparently the same person who first emailed him after he appeared on Good Morning America in early 2008, where he talked about airport security issues.

Another travel journalist, Christopher Elliott, said on his **blog** that he decided it was best to publish the full document because the government was unresponsive to his requests to clarify the security measures.

Elliott, who lives in Orlando, Fla., is National Geographic Traveler's reader advocate, writes a regular column for the Washington Post and produces a weekly segment for MSNBC. He referred inquiries to his attorney, who did not return a call.

Elliot describes on his blog how he was contacted in the Homeland Security investigation.

"We had just put the kids in the bathtub when Special Agent Robert Flaherty knocked on my front door with a subpoena. He was very polite, and used 'sir' a lot, and he said he just wanted a name: Who sent me the security directive," Elliott wrote.

" 'A subpoena?' " I asked the special agent. 'Is that really necessary?'"

The Internet dispersal of the screening procedures was the second time in recent weeks that TSA documents landed on the Internet.

A complete 2008 copy of TSA's standard operating procedures for airport security checkpoints appeared on blogger sites in the first week of December. TSA said the rules had been "improperly posted" on a federal business opportunities site with redacted material that was not adequately protected. The agency placed five employees on leave as it investigated the mistake.

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