

Herd on the Street by Les Swift

Get Ready for the Nudie Cam

If modesty and decency are security threats, and nudity makes us safe from terrorism, we're gonna be real secure.

I think we would all agree that allowing people wearing exploding underwear to board commercial airliners is a bad idea. Even when the underwear bomb is a fake, the phony threat is a British intelligence probe, and the operation is designed to scare the American people into accepting further police-state measures in the name of "security."

So, let's amend our opening statement. I think we should all agree that allowing British agents, or people wearing exploding underwear, to board commercial airliners is a bad idea. Especially, when it's a British agent wearing the exploding underwear.

But we digress. The subject at hand is not the threat of exploding British agents, but the technology being put forward as a way to protect us all from such threats, real and imagined.

We're talking, of course, about whole-body scanners. These are the devices which show some guy in a booth what you look like naked. We used to call these types of booths "peep shows," but now they are "security screens," manned not by perverts but by highly trained professionals who are—they swear—completely uninterested in your, uh, personal features.

Given the purpose of these devices, we see no need to clothe them in the sexless euphemism of "imagers." Let's call them what they really are: nudie cams.

The nudie cams serve two important constituencies. The first is the military-industrial/security complex, which stands to make a bundle selling these devices, first to the airports, and

then to every government facility, and, after that, to everything from office buildings to sports facilities. The second is the Internet pornography business.

"We love the nudie cams!" one pornography mogul told me. "Personal porn videos are all the rage, and with the nudie cams, everybody gets a sex tape."

"But the government says these pictures are deleted after being viewed, and never saved," I responded.

"Right," he laughed. "The same government that reads your every e-mail, watches your website visits, monitors your every phone call, and tracks your every move via your cell phone. That government? You just keep on believing that they won't use those pictures for other purposes."

My porn mogul friend then gave me a rather astonishing tour through the world of nudie cams, describing the capabilities of the various models. It was, as they say, a real eye-opener.

The best of them, he asserted, are far more capable than the greenish images released to the public suggest.

"The top-of-the-line versions take pictures in full color," he revealed. "Not only that, but they come with network capability. One I tested can automatically upload your picture to your Facebook page! It takes voyeurism to a whole new level. We're already developing new web sites to cash in on this new bonanza."

That sent me scurrying to a security expert I know, one who specializes in the use of computers for hidden uses.

"It's certainly plausible," he told me. "The question is: Where else does the camera feed go? Take the traffic-camera systems used to catch speeders and red-light runners. They're generally run by private operators connected to the big defense contractors. Every time you drive by one, your license plate is read and entered into a database. The cops may not be tracking you, but the spooks certainly are. The same goes for many of the security cameras, which, combined with facial recognition systems, track you as you walk around town."

"Sounds like Big Brother," I replied.

"Bingo," he said. "That's where we're going, and pretty damn fast."

"But the government already has pictures of everyone's face," I objected. "Why would it need the nudie shots?"

"You're forgetting the commercial uses," he said. "There's big money in these pictures. Besides, it won't stop at the airports. Once we get them accepted there, then, we'll begin putting them in the Federal courthouses, and other Federal buildings. Then the private sector will start using them, and any control over the pictures will be lost completely. You do realize, don't you, that the big media companies run their own porn sites, through cut-outs?"

"This will be a boon to the private sector," he added. "Think of it as part of the bailout, and you're on the right track. Another way to milk the celebrity machine."

My head was swimming. Our government couldn't possibly do this to us, I told myself. But then, I began to reflect on just how it was systematically selling us out in every other area, and suddenly the idea of it pimping "security porn" seemed more likely.

Welcome to the brave nude world, America. We're all going to know each other a lot better than we want to, if we don't stop this asinine scheme.

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