

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Transportation Security Administration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 27, 2003

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**TSA screeners find hidden weapons during security searches;
Discoveries emphasize need for continued vigilance**

Razor blades hidden in tennis shoes, an artificial leg hollowed out to hide a bayonet, and a handgun taped to the side of a similarly shaped drill are among the weapons that some passengers have recently tried to sneak past Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security screeners.

“People who are tempted to discount the importance of screening need to think again,” said Adm. James M. Loy, TSA Administrator. “Every day screeners are meeting the challenge of keeping flights secure, and all too often they are finding dangerous weapons that passengers are trying to take on flights.”

Admiral Loy commented as security screeners at all of the nation’s airports prepared to check every passenger and every bag over the long Labor Day weekend. “Passengers can help by being prepared to go through security,” Admiral Loy said.

The problem of concealed weapons drew international attention last month when screeners at Orlando (Fla.) International Airport found a teddy bear with a loaded handgun hidden inside. The bear belonged to a 10-year-old boy who had received it from another child. While unusual, such finds are not isolated.

Recently at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, a man tried to hide two razor blades in the insoles of his tennis shoes – underscoring why TSA has always emphasized screening shoes. TSA screeners have found “lipstick” and “belt buckle” knives and canes with swords hidden inside. In Hartford, Conn., screeners caught a man who had hollowed out his prosthetic leg to conceal a nine-inch military knife.

Screeners discovered a handgun taped to the side of a similarly shaped drill in an effort to get it past X-ray equipment, and a man with a culinary bent tried to conceal two handguns in a checked bag by taping them between frying pans. At Austin-Bergstrom International in Texas, a man tried to hide a 9 mm handgun inside a car stereo.

Since February 2002, TSA has intercepted more than 7.5 million items, including 1,437 firearms, 2.3 million knives and 49,331 boxcutters – the terrorists’ weapon on 9/11.

Passengers preparing to travel can help security move smoothly by checking the TSA website at www.tsatraveltips.us.