Airport Security & Double Standards

September 11, 2013 By David Menzies

"Take off the cap!" barked the TSA official working security at Los Angeles International Airport.

The recipient of this curt order was my young son, Sean, who was brandishing a Batman baseball cap. News Flash: Apparently, 11-year-old Canadians are responsible for a disproportionate amount of terrorism. But I digress…

In any event, the kid complied and dad (for a change) kept his triple-XL mouth shut. When you have a flight to catch it's seldom prudent to perturb those ever-so-pleasant folks working airport security.

Still, I felt compelled to return to the screening area once the family was safely seated in the departure lounge. And here's what I observed: some Muslim women proceeded through the checkpoint without having to **_remove their headwear (hijabs.)_**

How odd. If one can presumably stash a box-cutter or a dollop of C4 underneath a baseball cap, surely an **hijab** can serve the same purpose?

I approached a policeman standing guard. I politely asked him: why the apparent double-standard?

He told me **hijabs** cannot be removed because "that would be against their religion."

I corrected the officer, noting there's nothing in the Koran that mandates the wearing of the **hijab**.

"OK," he conceded. "But it's a cultural thing or something."

Or something.

Then he said in a tone reminiscent of how a principal would speak to a seven-year-old: "You see, sir, in America, Americans and people visiting America have rights."

No argument there. Except for a small caveat: surely there's a reasonable expectation that one's "rights" will be curtailed somewhat when one enters an

airport. That's why we are prodded and poked and X-rayed when we proceed through security in the first place. That's why one can't waltz into a terminal brandishing a legal handgun.

The cop simply shrugged. I upped the ante: if those women had been wearing full-face coverings such as a **burqa** or **niqab**, would they have been forced to unveil to confirm their identities?
"Nope," came the reply. "It's because that's a religion thing, too."
My jaw was now resting on the linoleum.

Reminding him that the vast amount of terrorism in the world today emanates from those shouting *"Allahu Akbar!"* before pressing the detonator, the poor constable's face contoured as though he had just bitten into a sour lemon. Our conversation was over.

Still, on reflection, perhaps I got off easy. After all, I wasn't detained against my will and put through the wringer – which is precisely what happened to author David Jones at London's Gatwick Airport last year.

According to an article in *The Telegraph*, Jones placed his belongings into a tray to pass through the X-ray scanner when he spotted a Muslim woman in a **niqab** breeze through the area without showing her face.

In a light-hearted aside to a security official who had been assisting him, the 67-year-old said: "If I was wearing this scarf over my face, I wonder what would happen?"

Oh dear. Red alert! Jones was promptly accused of racism and sequestered. An airport security guard, a British Airlines official, and even a policeman all agreed he had been "insensitive" with his comment and needed to apologize. After being detained for almost half-an-hour, Jones issued a *mea culpa*; otherwise, he risked missing his flight to Portugal.

But Jones also rightly noted: "I had not made a racist remark but purely an observation that we were in a maximum security situation being searched thoroughly whilst a woman with her face covered walked through. I made no reference to race or religion."

Amazingly, Department for Transport rules don't prevent people covering their faces at U.K. airports for – you got it – "religious reasons."

Bottom line: Wednesday marks the 12th anniversary of 9/11. How sad that whatever lessons we supposedly learned on that dark day back in 2001 already seem to have been sacrificed upon the alter of political correctness.