

## TSA screener makes LAX security fun with songs, one-liners

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#### New policy, sound system add one-liners to defuse tensions, speed checks



Before Carl Revis joined the Transportation Security Administration about four years ago, he was an emcee at weddings.

So when the TSA installed microphones and speakers at many Los Angeles International Airport security screening stations recently, Revis knew what to do. He grabbed the microphone and started performing for the 50 or so travelers waiting in line.

The one-liners come quickly.

“It doesn’t matter what line you choose,” he said on a recent morning, “they all lead to the same Starbucks.”

Then he asked travelers older than 75 to raise their hands, since they would be exempt from taking off their shoes. He looked at one woman. “You?” he asked. “You’re remarkably well-preserved.”

This is his shtick five days a week, usually eight times per day, part of a TSA drive to make airport security a little friendlier and more efficient.

Revis, who generally works at the Tom Bradley International Terminal, isn’t the only screener tasked with microphone duty. The TSA has similar systems installed throughout the airport. But he almost certainly takes his routine more seriously than others.

The 42-year-old Torrance resident has about 10-15 minutes of material, which he recycles throughout the day. He generally closes with the same song, a riff on airport security sung to the tune of “Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh (A Letter from Camp).” In it, he sings all the rules travelers must follow, from regulations on liquids and gels to footwear and head wear.

He gets plenty of laughs, which is part of the goal.

“TSA doesn’t necessarily have the best image,” Revis said. “It’s a sad fact because we have an important job. My job is to change the hearts and minds here, one person at a time.”

Tiffany Thomas, a TSA supervisor, said Revis is popular among passengers. They like his bit when he

tells passengers not to take off their wedding rings when they go through security screening. "I'm not going to explain to your spouse how you lost it," Revis tells them.

"Carl gets an amazing number of compliments on a daily basis," Thomas said. "It helps us move along a little faster, and people can be entertained. Sometimes they may not notice it's a long wait. He even gets them applauding."

It is not always an easy audience. Many of the passengers at the Bradley terminal are not from the United States and do not speak English as their first language. And many are from countries in which security officials are not so friendly.

"It works well with the culture here," said Dino Erdmann, 30, who was heading home to Germany recently. "I think this sort of thing wouldn't work in Germany."

There is also a fine line between funny and mean. Revis straddles it well, though sometimes he does poke a bit of fun at passengers. "Sir," he said to one man, "that is a very manly zebra bag you have right there." The man smiled as he slipped the bag on the x-ray belt.

"I'm not trying to be insulting," Revis said. "I am trying to get them through the process as quickly and as efficiently as possible."

That was good enough for Shannon Puuohau of San Clemente.

"This is not usually a fun experience," she said of airport security. "But he manages to make everyone laugh. I don't think I've ever come to the airport and had such a smile on my face."

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