

Old Chattanooga airport search video in news again

By Michael Stone

Wednesday, November 17, 2010

Chattanooga airport spokeswoman Christina Siebold jokingly blamed "the magic of the Internet" as the reason she started receiving calls Monday.

They were from local news stations, CNN, The Associated Press and other media inquiring about a years-old airport security incident.

A story about the matter, which involves a 3-year-old girl struggling against a Transportation Security Administration employee at a Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport security checkpoint, was aired on the CBS show "Inside Edition" on Monday.

A video of the incident was filmed with a cell phone by the girl's father, Steven Simon, a reporter for KIAH-TV, Houston's CW news affiliate.

But the incident, according to the TSA, occurred in March 2008.

"I started getting calls [Monday], and the first guy who called, reporting from one of the local stations, said, 'Hey, I want to talk to you about this Houston reporter,'" Siebold said. "And I was like, 'Are you talking about the thing from a couple years ago?'"

KIAH-TV confirmed Tuesday that the incident is old news. The station did a report about it years ago and said that someone recently posted it on a website "out of context."

In the video, Simon's daughter, Mandy, can be heard crying and screaming "Stop touching me!" as a gloved TSA employee tries to pat her down.

"All of this happened after Mandy's teddy bear was taken away for screening through the X-ray machine," Simon said in the old news report. "And that started the crying."

In the report, James Marchand, a TSA regional security director, told Simon that communicating properly with children at security checkpoints "isn't reiterated enough."

"And since you brought it up," he said, "I will ask my training department to look into it and put it back into the training again."

TSA spokesman Jon Allen told the Chattanooga Times Free Press via e-mail that "TSA officers are trained to work with parents to ensure a respectful screening process for the entire family while providing the best possible security for all travelers.

"We reviewed the circumstances surrounding the screening of this family at the time and determined that procedures in place then were followed," Allen wrote.