American skies safe from terrorist miniature shrimp

I am here to report that our airways are safe from terrorist attack. Our government, in cooperation with the airlines, has completely eliminated the possibility of fanatics from foreign worlds attacking us from on high.

I have witnessed this victory firsthand.

We are 100 percent safe from terrorist attack — that is from those terrorists bent on using miniature shrimp as weapons. We might still need to fear knives, guns, box cutters, bombs and sundry other weapons.

But there’s no longer a need to worry about someone boarding with the sinister idea of using miniature shrimp to take over the airplane. It won’t happen.

I was in Denver for my nephew’s high-school graduation. As a gift, my brother-in-law gave me a small, capped vase that contained brackish water with six miniature shrimp. He’d found them at the florist and thought they were interesting.

The shrimp were from Hawaii and so small that it almost took a magnifying glass to see them swimming. If disturbed, they changed colors, almost disappearing in an attempt to camouflage themselves.

I was fascinated, but wondered aloud if I could get the shrimp home without spilling or killing them.

“Hand-carry them,” my sister suggested. We considered pouring the brackish water the shrimp require into a plastic drinking water bottle, the kind every other passenger boards with. But there remained the problem of packing the vase, so I simply taped the lid on tight and left the description of the shrimp — replete with instructions on how to maintain their ecosystem — in the box.

People fly with dogs, birds, cats and all manner of pets, so why not mini shrimp?

To be on the safe side, I declared my new pets with the airline, Northwest, when I checked my baggage.

“Can I take these miniature shrimp aboard?” I asked, feeling foolish.

“Sure,” a friendly clerk said.

Feeling perfectly legal, I said goodbye to my relatives and began undressing to board the plane. I walked through the metal detector with no problem, and looked back for my shoes, jacket, jewelry and other belongings. A security guard had stopped the belt and was staring at the X-ray of my vase.

“They are miniature shrimp,” I said, helpfully. “I know that sounds redundant, but technically that’s what they are.”

The guard studied the vase closely. The shrimp were in camouflage mode and even harder than usual to see.

“I’ll have to ask my supervisor about these,” the guard said, heading off with her catch in another direction. Soon enough, she returned.

“We are attempting to phone the airline,” she said.

“Oh,” I said, feeling good about things. “I already checked with them, and they said no problem.”

But she ignored me, turned around and was off once more. I waited.

“There’s nobody at the Northwest counter, so we cannot allow you to carry these on,” she reported upon returning. “If you want to go back to the baggage counter and get written permission, you may.”

What I didn’t want to do was miss my plane. She’d already said nobody alive was presently at the counter. I made what I thought was a generous offer. I asked if she had kids. She did. Wouldn’t she like to carry the shrimp home for them?

“You cannot abandon these here,” she snapped.

So I backed out of security and, amazingly, saw my sister still in the airport. She took the shrimp.

Moral: Don’t try to board a jumbo jet with miniature shrimp and some fishy story or you’ll be treated like a barbarian with a box cutter.

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