

Vince Peppard, Victim of the Checkpoint Abuse

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Vince Peppard is a retired social worker who currently manages a number of rental properties. On September 27, 2008 Vince and his wife, Berlant, traveled into Mexico to shop for tile. They returned in the afternoon and after a few brief questions were waived across the border back into the US. However as they returned home the couple was stopped at an “interior” border checkpoint east of Jamul, CA (about 15 miles from the Tecate border crossing). Mr. and Mrs. Peppard were asked about their citizenship and immediately presented valid US passports. That should have been the end of the stop. Instead border officers sought to search the couple’s car. The Peppards refused.

The Peppards were then subject to half an hour of harassment. They had to pull over to the side of the road. They were badgered to consent to a search. Eventually, when they continued to refuse a dog was brought out. When the dog barked they were told they had no choice but to allow the search. Nothing was discovered. They were threatened when they tried to take pictures of the officers. Their background was questioned and they were asked for additional identification which, along with their passport, was photocopied.

This process left the Peppard’s feeling embarrassed and angry. They felt like criminals. By not complying would they be placed on a watch list? Can anyone be stopped and searched any time? Can this type of thing really be happening in America?