

224 Chapter 12 *Evaluate Your Argument on the Issue*

ISSUE FOR EXTENDED ANALYSIS

Following is a more comprehensive thinking challenge than the others in the chapter. Analyze and respond to it, following the instructions for extended analysis at the end of Chapter 1. Also, review “The Basis of Moral Judgment” and “Dealing with Dilemmas” in Chapter 2.

THE ISSUE: TSA SECURITY PROCEDURES

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created not long after 9/11. At first a division of the Department of Transportation, it was later transferred to the Department of Homeland Security. Its function is to ensure the safety of U.S. travel, particularly air travel. Airports can elect to use private firms to conduct screening, but the great majority use TSA. Although travelers grumbled over the ban on fingernail clippers and liquids, such rules were generally considered necessary for security. In 2010, however, when travelers were forced to submit to full-body scans or pat-downs, controversy erupted.

THE ESSAYS:

If You Don't Like It, Don't Fly

By Brian Costello

No one enjoys waiting in security lines, emptying pockets, removing shoes, and the rest of the airport routine, including body scanning and pat-downs. But sensible people accept the procedures as necessary in the age of terrorism. They regard the inconvenience as the price of safety.

Alas, not everyone is sensible. Many people are so obsessed with their rights, imagined as well as real, that they can't appreciate that the scanning procedures protect them. They worry more about people seeing beneath their clothes or putting their hands too close to their private parts than about being blown to bits at 40,000 feet. That's beyond paranoia. It's insanity.

Ironically, if there were no such procedures and terrorists caused a plane to crash, those same nuts who are now protesting about invasions of privacy would be the first ones to

We'll Never Win Playing Catch Up

By Joshua Levy

The full-body scans and pat-downs used by TSA officials at airports are an outrage. They treat everyone in a way no court of law would—as guilty until proven innocent. Ironically, that is the very kind of regime that terrorists would like to impose on us. We have let fear change America for the worse.

If my opposition to TSA procedures seems extreme, consider this: many members of Congress hold similar views, notably Representative John Mica, who was instrumental in creating the TSA. He believes the TSA has become both bloated and ineffective. As a result, he claims that while screeners have been casting a suspicious eye on grandmothers, nuns, and children, real terrorists have slipped past them, unnoticed.

It's bad enough that TSA screening wastes innocent people's time and assaults their dignity. Worse is that they are reactive rather than proactive.

blame Congress and the President for not protecting them.

Instead of assuming the worst about the TSA and the entire Homeland Security Agency, we ought to acknowledge that everything they do is based on information that has not been made public—intelligence reports about the latest terrorist tactics and even specific threats to security. The body scanners and pat-down procedures were not designed to create pornographic images or provide sexual gratification, as some critics claim, and there is not the slightest danger that they will be used in that way. After all, the procedures take place in full view of other travelers. No, the new procedures were designed to protect our lives. TSA has its priorities right, for without life, “liberty and the pursuit of happiness” are meaningless.

Someone carried liquid explosives, so TSA banned liquids. Someone else put a bomb in a shoe, so TSA made us all remove our shoes. A third person hid a bomb in his underwear, so TSA started more intrusive searches. The next strategy for terrorists, experts warn, is to carry explosive materials in body cavities or in implants. I shudder to think of how TSA will respond to that.

What we desperately need is a more intelligent and effective approach. We needn't invent it—it already exists. El Al, the Israeli airline, developed what it calls “behavioral profiling,” not to be confused with ethnic or racial profiling. They train their agents to detect people who seem nervous or suspicious and subject just those people to searches and in-depth interviews. By adopting that approach, we'd both preserve our liberty and increase our safety.

CLASS DISCUSSION

REBECCA: I get tired of all the criticism of our government. I say we should let the TSA do its job.

NIGEL: If TSA was doing its job, I'd agree. But they are wasting time and money, offending people, and *not* detecting terrorists.

REBECCA: What else can they do? I don't like the Israeli approach because it profiles people.

NIGEL: No it doesn't. It ignores travelers' race and ethnicity and focuses on their behavior. As I understand it, there are certain behavioral characteristics that can't be disguised. When security staff observe those characteristics, they conduct in-depth interviews with the individuals and do thorough searches of them and their belongings.

REBECCA: Doesn't TSA do the same thing in a different way?

NIGEL: No. TSA focuses on finding objects, weapons or bomb materials. The Israelis focus on people's behavior. Big difference.

REBECCA: That may work in a small country, but would it work in one as large as the U.S.?

NIGEL: Perhaps it would have to be modified, but I believe it would work better than our system.