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Fighting Terrorism at Our Border

**Introduction**

Terrorist attacks and other similar crimes have increased in frequency resulting in tragedy and loss of innocent lives all over the world. Bombings, shootings, and massacres have become so common that people have become desensitized to such violence. Many institutions and government agencies perform security procedures as well as safety regulations to protect the lives of American citizens. The increase of technology in developed societies has opened a door to accessibility of others information. Electronic components such as full-body scanners and mass databases of personal information allow the government to prevent catastrophes and discover suspects or criminals. This topic affects every citizen of this country and has increased in relevance for the past several decades.

Just like all controversies related to the safety of American lives, both positive and negative opinions can be observed. Many consider these safety precautions unreasonable violations of personal privacy, while others view it as a necessary step in ceasing the despicable acts that occur too frequently in our world. A vast spectrum of preferred government involvement in this issue can be observed. Either way, how can we sit here and do nothing while innocent lives are being taken? (RHETORICAL QUESTION).

As technology develops and terrorist attacks continue, ther way the government decides to handle it will continue to change. As of now, many airports have implemented full body screening devices and cell-phone companies have rivaled against the government in an effort to keep our information confidential. The courts continue to estimate what searches can be done under the law by police and security and American citizens suspect they are being stalked, tracked, and watched by the government. We may not even know how much personal information our government has access to but we must consider if these rights are worth giving up for a fight for better security against terrorists. (Thesis)

**Literature Review**

The truth about technology is that it is a massive element of how our society functions and the rate of improvement in this field will not subside anytime soon. As the growth continues, many people believe that the terrorists will only adapt to it. Micheal McCaul and Mark Warner, journalists for the *New York Times*, have studied and described the complex relationship between privacy and security in preventing terrorist attacks. In fact, terrorists and criminals alike have gone into complete secrecy and bear the ability to adapt to new technology even faster than our own government can. The technology platforms that Americans use everyday to safely communicate with others, shop online, and run businesses are the same modes used by criminals to recruit and plan (McCaul and Warner). The digital age can be considered extremely complex but it all comes down to the simple question of how much privacy we are willing to give up. (ANTITHESIS) Some argue against more security so that they can maintain their privacy because they believe the sacrifice is not a fair trade off. Others contend that the more information we know due to technology and encryption (and frankly, less privacy), the better we will know our world and the better we can protect ourselves. (Gibson).

When it comes to technological advancements that contribute to increasing security, the focus is often narrowed into the discussion of airport surveillance. David B. Savage, a writer for *LA Times*, proposes that full body scanners in airports discard our privacy rights. He argues that this technological convenience has not demonstrated much success and it appears unfair to individuals who have self-conscious ideas about their bodies. Savage speaks for these individuals by claiming that “air travelers should not have to face the prospect of exposing potentially embarrassing medical details, such as colostomy bags or mastectomy scars or the use of adult diapers.” Many privacy advocates concur with Savage’s notion that full-body scanners have uncertain benefits and are not worth the embarrassment. Those who agree with this perspective also argue that the installation of these devices, as well as the use of mass databases of personal information, has led to an excessive number of innocent individuals appearing on watch lists. From the opposing point of view, Transportation Security Administration members suggest that the concerns about full-body scanners are excessive and dramatic. They also declare that they will significantly strengthen security in new ways by detecting potentially dangerous items that can be hidden under clothing or in body cavities (Savage). To some people’s understanding, the jobs of the TSA are necessary and for our benefits, but to others this agency is eradicating our civil rights and invading our privacy. Others citizens, however, take a stance in between. Some groups argue for the concentration of security measures being taken on limited ethnic groups. Philip B Heymann, author of *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in the Aftermath of September 11,* acknowledges the desire for greater security during times of threat. He also recognizes that narrowing investigations to a smaller group is less time consuming and less expensive but he asserts that “Every member of the class denied access or subjected to special investigation before being granted access will be made to feel less than a full citizen of the United States or less than a fully wanted visitor” (446). Heymann also acknowledges that the number of innocent suspects would far outnumber the amount guilty individuals, therefore it is potentially a pointless process. There is no limit to the number of positions people chose to take on this issue, whether they strongly support it or just simply agree.

It is up to the government and the courts to discover a solution that establishes harmony for both groups. In order to fabricate such a plan, the current legislation affecting the issues must be evaluated and regulated. Some of the legislation concerning privacy rights and travel security are The Fourth Amendment, The Fourteenth Amendment, The Privacy Act, and The Patriot Act. The justice system has been battling over what actions are technically within the meaning of these regulations. This reasonable expectation test becomes especially difficult when it comes to legislation that was enacted a long time ago, such as the Fourth Amendment. The courts are left to use their best judgment because “there isn’t always an available 18th century analog for current government conduct, like GPS tracking” (Friedman). Friedman’s point is that the development of new technology has increased the availability and convenience of searches and seizures therefore, the behaviors that this law can stand up against are only an estimate of translation by the courts.

Works Cited

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