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| |  | | --- | | In fall 2010, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) stepped up its security efforts in US airports by incorporating random full-body searches as part of its counterterrorism efforts. These full-body searches were a response to the refusal of some people to accept the use of full-body scanners, which were judged by some to be excessively revealing. The chief of the TSA and the secretary of state both stated that, while they acknowledge every citizen’s desire for privacy, this desire must be considered in balance with safety measures. However, whatever safety full-body searches provide is not a reasonable tradeoff for the invasion of privacy that citizens must now suffer, so the TSA must abandon such measures.  Write a response in which you discuss what questions would need to be answered in order to decide whether the advice and the argument on which it is based are reasonable. Be sure to explain how the answers to these questions would help to evaluate the advice. | |

The argument reaches the conclusion that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) must abandon their measures of full-body searches, on the premise that this poses an invasion of privacy for air travellers that is not a reasonable trade-off for the safety that is claimed to be provided. In formulating this argument, its author fails to answer three important questions, the answers to which could make or break the argument's reasoning.

First, is a full-body scanning less invasive than a full-body search? It may be the case that a full-body scan sees through one’s clothes, and that these scans are checked by an official for potential weapons or arms. Meanwhile, the invasiveness of full-body searches depends on the degree to which it is done. In this case, a full-body search would, on average, be less invasive for air travellers, considering it is randomly done, as opposed to scans that everyone has to take part in. Thus, if the answer to this question is 'no', then the author's argument that the TSA should revert to its old measures would prove unwarranted.

Second, did the people who refuse to scan do so with the justification that it was an invasion of their privacy? Perhaps, these people did so for nefarious purposes or for fear of their accessories potentially being detected as weapons by the scan. If evidence arises in support of this, then the evidence provided by the author would not substantiate their claims, and the argument would significantly be weakened. Such a situation may possibly be better addressed by searches as opposed to scans, since the authority in-charge may even roughly judge a traveller's body language during a search to consider whether they are hiding a banned object.

Third, were full-body scans effective in the past? Also, consider a related question: is it possible that scans are, in general, more effective than searches? If the answer to these questions is 'no,' then it is possible that TSA considered this as one of their reasons to switch to searches. It may be possible that people could obscure weapons during scans, and that this would not occur in a search. It may also be the case that the rate of accuracy is lower for scans, due to possible issues with imaging or associated technology flaws.

In conclusion, the argument, as it stands now, is considerably flawed due to its inability to answer the aforementioned questions. The author should consult, perhaps, a comprehensive study by the TSA that checks the efficacy of the old and new security efforts. This may help the author in deducing if their assumptions were true or false, and if their stance is valid.