

Better Intelligence is Key to Better Security and Behavioral Profiling is Key to Better Intelligence.

Politically Correct (PC) and Privacy (or civil liberty) each have very different meanings for different people. Neither has any meaning if there is no public exposure or consequences which result from the activity. Privacy and security share a common premise that information is transferred to a restricted audience on a "need to know" basis.

Observations of a person's public behavior and queries concerning "generic" activities do not expose anyone to either public embarrassment, nor do they have any consequence unless there is "probable cause" established. This is behavioral profiling. If the follow on screening or closer observation associated with having tripped a threshold (probable cause), then there is a case to be made that there is a need to know more about the person.

However, the follow-on activities associated with having established a need to know should be either covert or done in isolation. The only public exposure is the isolation process. Notice of random screening of persons (with occasional actual isolation of "non-suspect" individuals) negates any public stigma that might result.

Clearly any information that can be collected in advance from travel documents, travel itinerary, payment method, etc. should be included in the overall risk assessment. Age information from the travel document (hopefully an authenticated one!) can be used to exclude children and the elderly from the "random" selection process. However, because these people and the handicapped (could be faked) may be used as "mules," they like everyone needs to undergo a minimal level of screening. Intelligence activities are the only way to intercept criminal activities (terrorists are criminals) before they reach the execution stage. Associative analysis of relationships between passengers, (travel itinerary, same family names, noted conversations, same hotels ...), is a part of a good behavioral profiling schema. It needs to be clearly understood that a bomb detonated at a screening point upon fear of detection will have nearly the same impact as bringing down the airliner.

Airports are vulnerable to attacks launched from the periphery and there are many high-risk targets besides airports and airliners. The distinguishing feature in Israeli security methods lies in the focus on the terrorist and not the bomb. You still need to deploy the best technology available to detect explosives or other hazardous materials (guns, knives, etc.). Whether they are carrying bombs, weapons or nothing at all, it is still prudent (note the sarcasm) to keep the criminal/terrorist out of the country and away from potential targets. Behavioral/psychological profiling avoids the need to subject everyone or whole classes of people to public embarrassment. We still need to have an efficient and effective screening process for everyone to detect banned substances. However, the benefit brought by behavioral profiling is that not everyone needs to be subjected to the same level of scrutiny. This means

greater efficiency and effectiveness in allocation of resources i.e. better security, lower cost, and faster throughput.

Today's hot topic is full-body scanners or "pat downs." I will not comment on the relative benefits/weaknesses here. However, I think that the issue of Privacy is a contextual one. We all have physical examinations to detect possible health issues, go to public beaches, and visit locker rooms these place will expose more of us than any proposal for a broadly applied screening method. Per the discussion above, there should not be a need to go to strip searches and body cavity exams unless there is a very strong case of need to know. There is no reason that full-body scans should be viewed by anyone except the actual screeners. After an hour or two of brief views of indistinct body parts, the biggest problem will not be voyeurism but boredom. The screener doing the "pat downs" (out of the public eye!) has similar issues to deal with and the added element of contending with issues of personal hygiene and harassment. In the end it is a responsibility for management to ensure professionalism and alertness (motivation). Since all such activities should be carried out without exposure to public scrutiny and without any consequence to the individual beyond a reason time loss, then there is no loss of privacy or civil liberty. Retention of imagery for training or product improvement purposes would have no link to an individual, therefore, no violation of privacy or civil liberties in that case either.

In short, behavioral profiling is a must, but it must be done right and be supported by a hierarchy of screening methodologies built on a base-level for everyone. Automated processes and assignment of resources on based on a risk assessment will likely result in both more secure and faster screening.