

Should Airports Use Racial And Religious Profiling?

by NPR STAFF



Chris Vultaggio

Moderator John Donvan addresses the team arguing against the motion "U.S. Airports Should Use Racial and Religious Profiling" in an Oxford-style debate on Nov. 22 at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. Seated are (from left) Hassan Abbas, Debra Burlingame and Michael Chertoff.

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text size **A A A**

The recent furor over screenings and pat-downs has catapulted airport security back into the spotlight. While travelers have gotten used to shedding their shoes and toting smaller containers of liquid through the security line, should airports be targeting their limited resources differently?

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Debate**

[50 min 3 sec]

**Full Audio Of The
Debate**

[1 hr 44 min 29 sec]

Coming Up

Some advocate the use of racial and religious profiling — specifically, looking for young fundamentalist Muslim males who come from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. But others counter that profiling just invites terrorist groups to recruit operatives who don't fit the profile — and that what's important is looking at behavior. Plus, they say, singling out one group sends a bad message to society and isolates the group in question.

A group of six experts recently took on the subject of profiling at an *Intelligence Squared U.S.* event. It was three against three in an Oxford-style debate on the motion "U.S. Airports Should Use Racial And Religious Profiling."

Before the debate, the audience at New York University's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts voted 37 percent in favor of the motion and 33 percent against, with 30 percent undecided. Afterward, the group arguing for the motion had shifted the most minds — 49 percent of the audience said that "U.S. Airports Should Use Racial And Religious Profiling," while 40 percent were against. Eleven percent remained undecided.

Intelligence Squared U.S. is taking a new approach for its spring season of debates. Each event will fit under the umbrella of "America's House Divided." The topics will include the two-party system, America's foreign policy, energy policy and immigration reform. The series kicks off Jan. 11 with [a debate on health care policy](#).

John Donovan, correspondent for ABC News' *Nightline*, moderated the Nov. 22 debate. Those debating:

FOR THE MOTION

Robert Baer was a CIA case officer in the Directorate of Operations from 1976 to 1997 and served in countries in the Middle East, including Iraq and Lebanon. He is the author of two *New York Times* bestsellers: *Sleeping with the Devil*, about the Saudi royal family and its relationship with the United States; and *See No Evil*, which recounts Baer's years as a top CIA operative and was the basis for the acclaimed film *Syriana*. He is Time.com's intelligence columnist and has contributed to *Vanity Fair*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. Baer is a frequent commentator and author about issues related to international relations, espionage and U.S. foreign policy.

Deroy Murdock is a syndicated columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service and media fellow with the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University. His column, *This Opinion Just In...*, reaches approximately 400 newspapers across America each week. He is a frequent guest on CNN, Fox News Channel, MSNBC and other TV and radio outlets. He has lectured or debated at Boston College, the Cato Institute, the Council on Foreign Relations and the Heritage Foundation, among many other venues.



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Experts arguing in favor of racial and religious profiling at airports were (from left) Robert Baer, Deroy Murdock and Asra Q. Nomani.

Asra Q. Nomani, a former reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* for 15 years, is the author of *Standing Alone: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam*. She is co-director of the Pearl Project, an investigation into the murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. Her activism for women's rights at her mosque in West Virginia is the subject of *The Mosque in Morgantown*, a PBS documentary. She recently published a monograph, *Milestones for a Spiritual Jihad: Toward an Islam of Grace*.

AGAINST THE MOTION

Hassan Abbas is Quaid-i-Azam professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He is also a senior adviser at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Bernard Schwartz fellow at Asia Society in New York. Abbas has also been a visiting fellow at the Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard Law School and a visiting scholar at the school's Program on Negotiation. Prior to his academic career, Abbas served as a Pakistani government official in the administrations of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Pervez Musharraf and in the Police Service of Pakistan.



Debra Burlingame is the sister of Charles F. "Chic" Burlingame III, pilot of American Airlines Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001. She is the co-founder of 9/11 Families for a Safe and Strong America and a director of the National



Former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff argued that racial and religious profiling "would be an engraved invitation to al-Qaida to recruit exactly the kind of people who don't fit the profile."

September 11 Memorial and Museum Foundation at the World Trade Center. She has published featured articles for *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications on national security issues. Burlingame was formerly a producer at Court TV, and prior to her career in television, was an attorney in New York City.

Michael Chertoff served as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security from 2005 to 2009. Before that, he served as a federal judge on

the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, and as a federal prosecutor for more than a decade, investigating and prosecuting cases of political corruption, organized crime, corporate fraud and terrorism — including the investigation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He is currently co-founder and managing principal of the Chertoff Group and senior of counsel at Covington & Burling LLP.

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Thomas Simmons (tsimm97) wrote:

If that told you anything, fine. But there are better objective and more telling evidence of whether to look at someone more closely.

Tuesday, November 30, 2010 1:18:18 PM

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D Boone (BearKiller) wrote:

What a CIA case officer, stationed in the middle east doesn't have good enough credentials. Of course all the other 'experts' appear to have no experience (besides talking). "We don't need no stinkin israelis" (chill, it's a movie line).

Tuesday, November 30, 2010 1:12:02 PM

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Peter Rabbit (peterabbit) wrote: