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# RACIAL PROFILING: NO PLACE IN THE AVSEC ARSENAL

by Philip Baum

In case you didn't know, I'm an ardent supporter of profiling! And it certainly seems as if Donald Trump favours profiling too. The only problem is that he obviously has no comprehension of the fact that racial profiling does nothing to enhance security. Quite the opposite; his outspoken, ill-judged remarks regarding the entry of Muslims into the United States and the controls that might be placed on mosques should he be elected President of the United States sent shivers down the spines of America's friends and allies around the world...and, hopefully, many at home as well. His comments were incendiary and are likely to contribute to radicalisation as even more disillusioned youth become alienated by the political elite.

In the UK, reflecting the international disdain, more than half a million people have (at the time of writing) signed a petition to have Trump banned from entering the country and the British parliament is bound to formally debate any petition that attracts more than 100,000 signatories. So not only have Trump's headline-grabbing remarks caused insult to the very community we need to better engage with, they also have the potential to cause a political rift between the US and its Western partners (even if the idea of the UK actually banning a US presidential hopeful is a non-starter). For the likes of Islamic State and al-Qaeda that in itself would be a coup.

At the same time, there is no doubt that Islamic fundamentalism poses the greatest threat to society, as exemplified with the recent attacks in Sinai, Paris, Bamako and California. The aviation industry, being the prime target, is forced to deliberate how best to counter that threat without allowing itself to succumb to Trumpeque tactics.

Part of the solution lies in the use of an ever-increasing and impressive array of security screening technologies and processes, which might highlight the presence of explosives in baggage or cargo, on the person, or inside vehicles accessing security-restricted areas. There is nothing politically incorrect about this; it is merely a question of government and industry buy-in. Improving the calibre of the personnel we are employing to operate the sophisticated high-tech equipment we are deploying, and to enact the various procedures developed to safeguard flights, is also key. Again, few question this, albeit a disturbing number of states consider the number of bodies on duty to be indicative of their commitment to human factors, rather than the skills and commitment of those people.

But the third element is that of profiling... although call it 'behavioural analysis' if that sits more comfortably with you. It's time to cease the one-size-fits-all approach to screening, desist from continually placing the topic on the back burner as a solution too challenging to deploy, and embrace it as being the key reason why there have not been more successful attacks perpetrated against our way of life. Thankfully, the security services do use profiling - and successfully.

But racial profiling? No. Not only is it morally reprehensible, it is also counter-productive. Firstly it focuses the attention of screeners on one group of people, blinkering them from considering threats posed by others (somewhat akin to the paranoia over liquids, aerosols and gels in carry-on luggage, whereby the detection of excess quantities of these innocuous substances has become a fixation). Secondly,

adopting racial - or rather Muslim - profiling simply encourages Islamic fundamentalists keen on effecting an attack to select people who do not look Muslim to be their front-line soldiers. And linked to this, thirdly, who is to say what a Muslim looks like anyway? It is a religion, not an ethnicity. In the same way that one cannot tell a Christian or a Jew by the colour of their skin, passport nationality or dress sense, nor can one determine who is a Muslim, or a follower of any other faith, by such criteria.

**"...who is to say what a Muslim looks like anyway? It is a religion, not an ethnicity..."**

If you had any doubt, Google images of Adam Gadahn (the white, American, Christian-raised, prominent al-Qaeda activist - with a Jewish grandfather - killed in a US drone strike near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in January 2015) or Samantha Lewthwaite (the British widow of 7/7 attacker Germaine Lindsay, now believed to be training female suicide bombers for IS in Syria) and reconsider the value of racial profiling. According to a 2014 report by Richard Barrett of the Soufan Group, "Over 12,000 fighters from at least 81 countries have joined the civil war in Syria" and "on average 6% of foreign fighters from EU countries are converts" to Islam; the figure is more like 25% in the case of the French contingent.

Were one to adopt a racial profiling system, how would it even work? Pick on the woman wearing the veil? Or maybe the man with the long beard? Were such a bigoted system to be introduced, we would have made it far easier for fundamentalists to circumvent the system. All they'd need to do is dress and act in a more secular manner - and that has been a key element of fundamentalist plots against civil aviation to date.

I can see justification for banning the veil in an airport environment; not because we are targeting Muslims, rather because we should be requiring people of all backgrounds to be identifiable and their behaviours, and facial expressions, to be easily readable. So ban the niqab and burkha (not the hijab - a headscarf which does not conceal the face), but also ban hoodies and any other garment which either prevents facial detection technology identifying people or screeners from detecting facial reactions and indicators of stress. Elements of the Islamic community might resent this, but it is not an action being taken because we are specifically targeting Muslims.

We need to see more empathy than vilification. Consider the plight of the millions of law-abiding Muslims who abhor the actions of those who have embraced IS or AQ ideologies. They go about their daily lives knowing that, if a woman wears a hijab or a man dons a dishdash, passers-by are asking themselves whether they have just seen a terrorist. Racial profiling, as a security methodology, is one which needs to be trumped. ■

