



## **ISSUE BRIEF:** **Enhanced TSA Screening Practices**

### Discussion Points:

In response to the attempted attack on Northwest Flight 293 in December 2009, the Administration has conducted a review of transportation safety and aviation that includes troubling reports that individuals traveling from or through Afghanistan, Algeria, Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen will be automatically subjected to enhanced screening procedures, including full body searches and luggage inspection, before boarding inbound flights to the United States.

Mandating secondary screening for every traveler from select Muslim-majority countries across the Middle East and Africa (Cuba is the lone exception), without indication of suspicious behavior or harmful intent, is an ineffective process that:

- diverts valuable security resources and distracts from real and sophisticated threats
- ultimately weakens American security interests by adding layers of inconsistency and confusion to the interagency process
- discourages citizens in Middle Eastern countries from seeking opportunities in the United States
- elevates barriers of mistrust between communities both at home and abroad

### Recommendations:

The Administration and Congress should conduct a full review of existing screening programs and establish a comprehensive system, based on common interagency standards, to be universally applied to all foreign visitors.

Additional resources should be directed to U.S. Embassy personnel and agencies overseeing visa application and traveling processes, rather than increasing dependence on cumbersome airport screening that burdens a single agency.

Questions of intent or suspicion are effectively determined by evaluating an individual's conduct or patterns of behavior. Sweeping, reactive policies that include profiling based on national origin, ethnicity, religion, or race have proven ineffective and distract from genuine security threats.