

ELECTRONIC  
SURVEILLANCE



# VITAL TO NATIONAL SECURITY

— OR —

# VIOLATION OF PRIVACY?

## PRO

Electronic surveillance, including video technology and face recognition systems, can protect innocent lives by helping law enforcement officials detect, investigate, prosecute and prevent crime. It can improve national security by allowing us to check the identity of suspicious persons and suspected terrorists before they get on airplanes. Today, terrorists and other criminals can board flights in the U.S. using false names and fake IDs. The inconvenience of video surveillance during a war on terrorism is certainly a small price to pay for the safety of thousands of people. And the use of passive electronic surveillance systems in certain very public buildings violates no Fourth Amendment principles because they don't require that people be stopped and searched.

## CON

Even though the courts have ruled that various video surveillance techniques don't violate the Fourth Amendment, these intrusive techniques raise serious issues of privacy and accountability. They should be stringently controlled. Moreover, the idea that electronic surveillance always makes us safer is a myth. Experts have demonstrated that face recognition technology is less accurate than a coin toss and is easily evaded by terrorists. Electronic surveillance is also dangerous because it can be used...and has been used in the past...to spy illegally on American citizens. Civil rights are as vital to our democracy in times of war as in times of peace. They should not be discarded just because we have been attacked by terrorists.

**There are at least two sides to every issue. Our democracy is built on the rule of law. We resolve differences of opinion through dialogue and debate. Disagreement is inevitable. Violence is not.**

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