In light of recent events concerning the NSA’s Surveillance program, specifically their request of Verizon; a reevaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the PRISM program as a whole seems appropriate. Enumerating the benefits of the security measures in place by the NSA was fairly trivial, considering they are few in number. The most apparent benefits of the NSA surveillance are its capabilities to detect suspicious activity and track down terrorists/criminals noticeably faster than in the past. Some offices of government, such as the FBI and CIA, stress that the implications of such a program have been an effective deterrent to terrorist attacks. Also, stockpiling a massive collection of every citizen’s information, despite not being a detail that was released to the public, grants easy access to your personal info by keeping it all organized in their database in Utah. This provides improvements in efficiency when attempting to access important documents/information you need, while also creating your business portfolio and resume free-of-charge.

This may seem like an effective use of resources, though, out of around the 251 million profiles collected by the NSA, only 300 have been set aside by the NSA as potential terrorists. This leads into the slightly less apparent disadvantages of such the NSA’s surveillance system. One of the most notable disadvantages of allowing this system being that the government proved they are able to suspend rights simply by asking. The right in question is the 4th amendment which restrict search and seizure without a probable cause. Allowing the NSA to do this has thrown the innocent until proven guilty stance out the door by not trusting Americans enough to respect their privacy. Also, thanks to several leaked documents, the NSA appears not too keen on telling the public what they are in possession of. The idea of conducting these decisions behind closed doors is a violation of the Declaration of Independence. It states in the first paragraph that the powers of the Government are derived from the consent of the Governed. Yet, if it is secret, it cannot be consented. This secrecy not only bodes badly for the public, but major corporations and other figures as well. Large corporations could potentially buy trade secrets that the NSA has secretly obtained from other corporations, as well as blackmail material.

The premise behind starting the surveillance program is not inherently bad, although the invasiveness and secrecy of the whole process created a negative reaction from the population of those who did not see the NSA’s reasons as justified. A more compromising solution may be possible in the future when the program has started to make noticeable changes in everyday life, if it does. This will give the population good idea of what needs to be changed. A possible solution could be, instead of secretly collecting data from corporations, to have it reviewed by officials and the public. This allows the NSA to still track down possible suspects, while also allowing the public to keep their constitutional rights.

(US Const., amend. IV).

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(U.S., Declaration of Ind.)