Our government monitors potentially dangerous suspects each and every day, but what should be the limit regarding whom and for what reason they monitor someone? Where is the line for invasion of privacy and keeping us safe? Should our government be able to monitor you without a warrant, or should they have to go through a process to obtain the ability to do so?

A person should have to be found guilty of performing certain actions of questionable purpose before being fully monitored. For instance, if a citizen looks up instructions on how to make a bomb, then that individual should be fully monitored. Also, if someone makes an international call to certain parts of the world, then they should be checked to see if they have any reason to make such a call. If they have no legitimate reason—family connections, educational interests, or occupational obligations—then they should be monitored in order to assess the threat posed by that individual.

The government should start to monitor people when they are acting suspicious. For example, if an individual is calling people from other countries, their phones, computers, and any other electronic device that can connect to the Internet should be monitored until our government sees what he or she is doing, and if the action is deemed a threat to national security.

If someone is, in fact, being monitored, it should be done in a specific way, such as watching over a person’s phone and Internet usage. Our government should follow these rules to keep us safe, but not sacrifice freedoms.

The question is though: does the government uphold these rules? In many ways, it does. Our government is forced to go to a court to get a warrant under the FISA Act, which is designed to regulate the government’s monitoring of American citizens. Additionally, in 2001, President George W. Bush signed into action the Patriot Act. This allowed the U.S. government to monitor anyone without a warrant. This act was designed in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon. However, while the Patriot Act was designed to protect citizens and provide a feeling of personal safety and national security, it has been found to violate specific civil liberties granted by the Constitution and its amendments. The Patriot Act is a particularly visible example of the American government encroaching on the individual freedoms American citizens are not willing to sacrifice.

The government is not perfect, but they do their best to uphold these rules and keep us safe while not infringing on our freedoms. Our system of checks and balances is designed to ensure that the government, when they do cross the line between securing safety and sacrificing liberty, is brought into check.