Governments sometime claim that it must violate the privacy of its citizens; this is done under the assumption that it is protecting national security. While this is an admirable action, if specific evidence is present for an identified threat, this is not always the case. The problem arises when the government casts out a large net to gather large amounts of information in the hopes of discovering unknown threats. While citizens should feel a certain level of comfort allowing the government to take certain liberties with personal privacy in pursuit of a known threat, American citizens should not be expected to give up their freedom based on the government searching through vast amounts of information probing for a threat that exists only as a possibility.

On occasion, the government requires the sacrifice of freedom and personal liberties for national security. For instance, when crossing the border back into the United States from an overseas trip, government agencies will likely search luggage for illegal drugs, weapons, or other items that could pose a hazard. American citizens should understand how harmful these items could be in our country, therefore it is generally understood that a citizen would allow this breach of personal space.

However, there is nothing preventing the government from abusing its power. One just has to trust that one’s government will not cause more harm than good trying to protect its citizens. There are certain issues of civil liberty that one faces when using the internet. One has to trust that the information sent is not compromised and used against the sender. For instance, one person could research books on the topic AL Qaeda and click on a link to a website that is being monitored by the government. That one person could then be added to a list of potential suspects of terrorism. This person could be detained and questioned without formal charges, in essence a suspension of Habeas Corpus, under the guise of the Patriot Act.

American citizens expect a certain level of individual rights; these rights are engraved in the unique government that defines America. Citizens understand that a certain amount of personal freedom may be infringed upon, if the government has a valid reason. However, to agree to sacrifice all personal freedoms to the government, ostensibly for the greater good, is to the very thing that defines and American citizen.