

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING

Department of Defense's human tracking project, LifeLog, is a privacy invasion

Big Brother might not be watching everything right now, but soon the Department of Defense could be. The plans the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has will go further than simply watching a suspicious citizen's actions. DARPA's new project will record and analyze everything a person sees, hears, reads, touches, says and the places they go through a digital diary system called LifeLog.



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sations they want to save and discard and when to have their personal sensors on, the underlying threat is that the people they interact with are likely unaware that every word they say and every expressions on their faces are being documented. The possibility of anyone recording each interaction and experience

will drive others to do the same, causing mass cases of tracking and analyzing until no conversation is truly private and nothing is completely personal.

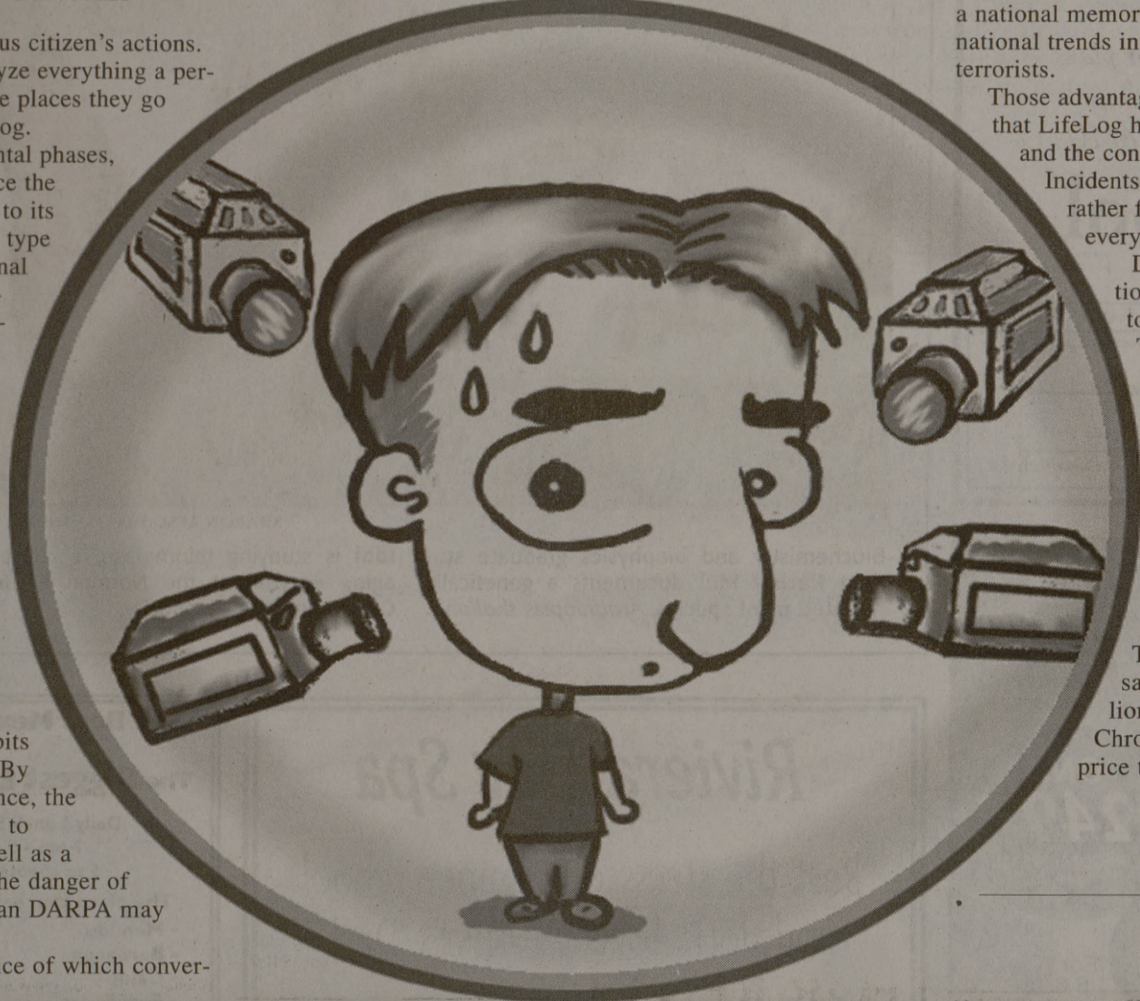
Furthermore, while users may assume that they hold the only copy of their individual life database, the information will go to a national memory bank in the Pentagon to analyze possible national trends in illness outbreaks or to identify possible terrorists.

Those advantages are insignificant when compared to the fact that LifeLog holds the capability to rob users of their privacy and the confidentiality of anyone they interact with.

Incidents and short conversations that many would rather forget will be stored permanently, not only in everyone else's pocket, but in Washington, D.C.

DARPA already has plans to trace "transactional data" in the form of who e-mails are sent to and where purchases are made, under the Total Information Awareness database project, according to GlobalSecurity.org. If that isn't intrusive enough for the Department of Defense, it wants to take it even further.

This kind of personal information is not necessary for the government to obtain, and it is ridiculous for even the busiest of CEOs to record on a daily basis. Aside from the usage of a digital scrapbook, this system is useless and current technology can perform what little service this device will provide. The elimination of this project would not only save the American people a reported \$7.3 million in research contracts, according to the Chronicle, but something no American can put a price tag on — his freedom.



Sara Foley is a sophomore journalism major.

Graphic by Radhika Thirumarayanan.

Bush's tax cut fails to provide relief for all

More than eight million low and middle income families receive no tax cut

When President George W. Bush set out to gain support for his tax cut proposal, he claimed that it would provide relief for just about everyone. "My jobs and growth plan would reduce tax rates for everyone who pays income tax," he said in his April 26 radio address. The words of the Bush administration, however, have since proven false.



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most from it, and (they are) the lowest income workers in America ... this certainly does deliver tax relief to the people who pay income taxes."

None of these statements turned out to be true. The latest tax cut does not provide relief for everyone paying income tax, is not necessary for returning troops, and is not beneficial to Americans who fall into the lower tax brackets.

Obviously, those Americans who serve in the military full-time do not need to worry about looking for a job when they return home. Also, employers must grant those returning reservists positions similar to the jobs they held before they left. In fact, a business is legally bound to do so, unless it can prove serious hardship, according to the Federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. Though more businesses may

be able to claim hardship given the current state of the economy, this will still not result in an overabundance of out-of-work reservists, especially not one massive enough to warrant a \$350 billion tax cut. Still, it should not matter if the tax cut benefits American workers who are, as Bush says, "America's greatest economic strength." But, unfortunately, this tax cut does not. An analysis by the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center shows unequivocally that 8.1 million Americans who fall into low and middle income tax brackets receive no tax cut under the legislation. It is not as if these people were left out when Congress trimmed the tax cut to \$350 billion. Even under the Bush administration's proposed plan, they would have gotten no tax relief.

Contrast the 8.1 million average taxpayers left out of the legislation with the 184,000 taxpayers with incomes of greater than \$1 million.

The latter will be given approximately \$17 billion in tax cuts in 2003 alone.

This exclusion of eight million taxpayers from the law, along with the concentration of tax benefits for high-income taxpayers, makes the legislation much less effective in boosting the economy for the short term. It amounts to less revenue for the federal government, making it less able to buy goods and services from the private sector. Furthermore, economic theory states that people who fall into the lower tax brackets are more likely to spend tax-cut dollars, as opposed to high-income people, who generally save the money. It is when the money received from a tax cut is spent that the demand for goods and services increases, a characteristic essential to improving the economy in the near term.

As an astute politician, Bush knows this. In his radio address, he quoted small businessman Mike Kovach as saying, "Anytime you can

improve the bottom line of mainstream business, it's good for the city, it's good for the state and it's great for the nation. It all trickles up, instead of trickling down." Why, then, were these taxpayers left out of the new tax cut law?

When asked this question, Fleischer defended the legislation, while plainly contradicting his previous declaration that people in the lowest tax bracket would benefit most. "If any taxpayers did not get tax relief in this bill, it is because it was such a priority to get them a headstart on tax cuts in 2001," he said. "They had a two-year headstart because they were prioritized over upper-income taxpayers. The upper income taxpayers had to wait for tax relief for this bill." Unfortunately, it was a clarification, which for eight million people, came too late.

Midhat Farooqi is a senior genetics major.

MAIL CALL

Antitrust laws meant to be fair for consumers and corporations

In response to Mike Walters' June 11 column:

Mr. Walters has clearly missed the purpose of antitrust legislation. If any entity, be it public or private, is allowed to operate unchecked, it can only lead to disaster.

Antitrust laws were enacted to keep large corporations from charging excessive fees for their services. Naturally, as Mr. Walters mentioned, large companies are able to do business efficiently.

This efficiency is a byproduct of their size. If a large corporation is challenged in the open market, it can drastically reduce the fees for its services in order to undercut any startups that may come along forcing them from the market place.

Antitrust laws were designed to keep fees charged for service at a rate that is both fair to the consumer and to the corporation.

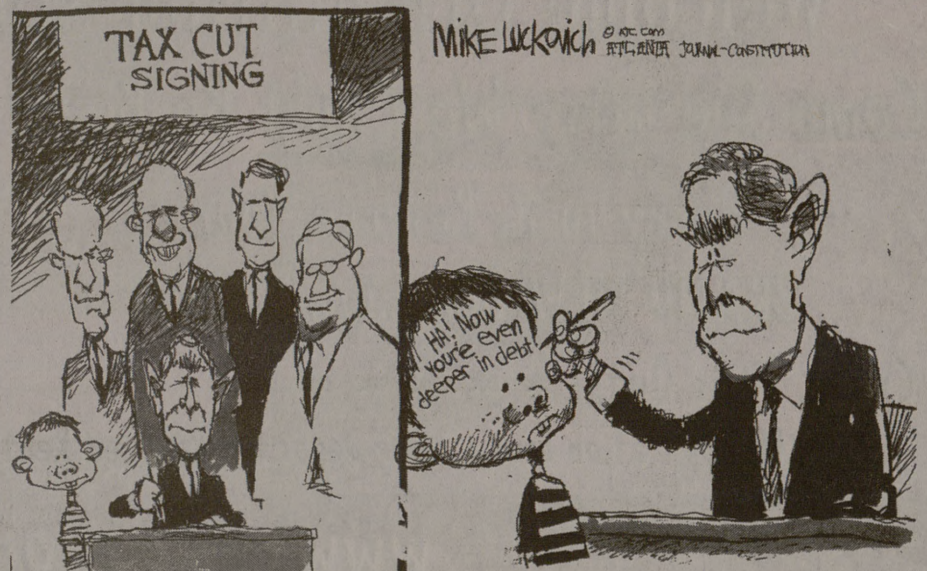
This kind of legislation needs to be policed by the public, not abolished by it. The kind of sweeping changes that Mr. Walters proposes only swing the pendulum entirely in the other direction. Then we would be back to where we started with utility companies charging too much for their services.

There is currently a monopoly in the cable market in Bryan and College Station. I guarantee that this service is cheaper in locations with more than one provider.

One solution may be for the government to buy the phone lines and other related hardware from the Bell family. Is it not, after all, the government's responsibility to maintain the infrastructure? Could one imagine how expensive travel would be if the highways were privately owned?

In order for equitable changes to be had by all, moderation is in order.

Robert Stackhouse
Class of 2005



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