

## Prism: US data mining programme must be challenged by the EU

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Following yesterday's ALDE request, the European Parliament held today a first debate on the US Internet surveillance programme (PRISM).

"The Commission must clarify in detail to what extent EU citizens data has been misused and abused by the US authorities. The ALDE group expects the President of the European Commission to report back fully to the Parliament on the outcome of the discussion with the US administration and what measures the Commission intends to take" said ALDE President Guy Verhofstadt who proposes to hold another debate with the Commission in the July plenary session.

ALDE spokesperson Sophie in't Veld (D66, Netherlands) said: "500 million citizens were shocked to find out that a foreign nation has unlimited access to every intimate detail of their private life. We lose moral authority and credibility if we allow our citizens to be spied upon while claiming that our EU legislation offers adequate protection".

"How can we speak about an EU-US special relationship, when President Obama explicitly says that they only spy on foreigners? That means us. Over the past 12 years Europe has bent over backwards to be the closest ally to the US in the fight against terrorism. I am sure we will continue to be their ally but then we need to see eye to eye".

"We expect the Commission to request urgent clarifications to the Americans and to impose a commitment to the respect of our data protection and privacy as well as to finally show political leadership in striking a more proportionate balance between preserving our freedom as private citizens whilst protecting us from terrorist plots".

This Friday a bilateral meeting between EU and US justice ministers will take place in Dublin. The Commission has confirmed that it will raise this matter with our American partners to ascertain the true extent of the data mining of non US citizens.

Recalling the Echelon case, Sophie In't Veld concluded: "This case is far from being over and needs to be followed up. We must find out how much EU data is being compromised and used by American intelligence agencies. The ALDE group will be asking the Commission for a report back after the ministerial bilateral and, if necessary, consider setting up a special committee to inquire further into the matter".