

STOP MILITARIZING LAW ENFORCEMENT

Does Your Town Police Department Need free MRAP's and M16's To Do Its Job?

Support Legislation to Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement

Endorsed by: Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Defending Dissent Foundation

Dear Colleague:

Our main streets should be a place for business, families, and relaxation, not tanks and M16s. Unfortunately, due to a Department of Defense (DOD) Program that transfers surplus DOD equipment to state and local law enforcement; our local police are quickly beginning to resemble paramilitary forces. Please join me in supporting the "Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act" before this problem gets any worse. This bill will end the free transfers of certain aggressive military equipment to local law enforcement and ensure that all equipment can be accounted for.

The [Pentagon's surplus property, or "1033" program](#), provides surplus Department of Defense military equipment to state and local civilian law enforcement agencies without charge. This program is funneling military equipment to local police in unprecedented numbers. As the ACLU points out in a new study, "[War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing](#)", militarizing America's main streets won't make us any safer, just more fearful and more reticent.

Recently, a North Carolina town of roughly [16,000 people](#), acquired some [Humvees](#) and [Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicles](#) (or MRAPs), which it proudly displayed at a [recent car show](#). Roanoke Rapids got them [free](#) from the Pentagon, returned from our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Next door, in South Carolina, the [Columbia Police Department](#) also received a free MRAP from the Pentagon, which otherwise would have cost Columbia nearly \$700,000.

We should be concerned that we are giving away unprecedented amounts of military equipment and creating incentives for local police to use it in order to conduct ordinary law enforcement activities. That is why I will soon introduce "Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act" to reform the program. My bill will do two things.

- It will limit the type of equipment that can be transferred;
- It will require that states certify that they can account for all equipment.

In the last several months, the following towns around the country, many of them small, have acquired free MRAPs from U.S. war zones: Texas's [McLennan](#) and [Dallas](#) Counties; Idaho's [Boise and Nampa](#); Indiana's [West Lafayette](#), [Merrillville](#), and [Madison](#); Minnesota's [St. Cloud](#) and [Dakota](#) County; New York's [Warren](#) and [Jefferson](#) Counties; South Carolina's [North Augusta](#) and [Columbia](#); Tennessee's [Murfreesboro](#); Arizona's [Yuma](#); Illinois's [Kankakee](#) County; and Alabama's [Calhoun](#) County.

Seem like a lot? It is. And that's only in the last few months. This trend is not only sweeping America's small cities, it's hitting American college campuses as well. [Ohio State University](#) recently acquired an MRAP. Apparently, college kids are getting too rowdy.

In 2012, an Arizona Sheriff [was accused of distributing Humvees, fire trucks, medical equipment and other supplies](#) in violation of the programs rules. If we are going to give military equipment away for free, surely we must ensure that local police organizations are using the equipment properly and can account for this equipment?

Before another small town's police force gets a \$700,000 gift from the Defense Department that it can't maintain or manage, it behooves us to rein in the Pentagon's 1033 program and revisit the merits of a militarized America. I hope we can work together on this important issue. If you have any questions about the bill or the program, please contact Scott Goldstein at 5-1605 or scott.goldstein@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson