



Democrats Introduce Bill to Ban Civilian Body Armor

By Betsy Woodruff
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Police militarization has become a central concern for many in the wake of the Ferguson protests. But a small group of Democratic lawmakers has decided to focus on civilian demilitarization.

Rep. Mike Honda has introduced legislation that would ban everyone owning enhanced (or Type III) body armor “except certain authorized users, such as first-responders and law enforcement,” per Honda’s press release. The legislation hasn’t gotten much media attention, and its small, partisan base of support means it’s likely dead on arrival in the House. But it has some corners of the Internet up in arms.

The bill's proponents argue that Type III body armor only exists for military purposes, and that there's no reason civilians should use it. Honda and the bill’s other supporters have expressed concerns that shooters would use body armor to protect themselves from police while committing violent crime.

But Truth and Action, a site that also devotes real estate to water fluoridation skepticism, calls it, “Yet more garbage from a communist politician who knows nothing about guns.” Alex Jones’ site Infowars is all over it too, saying “Democratic members of Congress apparently aren’t going to be satisfied until American citizens are completely and utterly defenseless.

Some mainstream conservatives are also alarmed. Adam Bates, a criminal justice policy analyst at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute, says the bill “looks like a solution in search of a problem,” citing FBI data that shows only 5 percent of active shooters wear any body armor (and that data doesn’t distinguish between body armor this bill would allow and the armor it would criminalize).

“It’s certainly against the spirit of the Second Amendment, which is that people have the right to protect themselves,” he said. “This idea that people have to be preemptively unprotected in case the government needs to shoot them at some point—I think that’s basically the implication of the bill.”

Honda’s press release quotes Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O’Malley saying that the bill “will serve to combat our nation’s epidemic of gun violence.”