



USA Today: Local Police Acquiring Less Military Gear from Feds

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Over the weekend, USA Today reported that state and local law enforcement have acquired far less military equipment this year than they had at this point last year. This decline came in spite of President Trump's executive order last August that removed some administrative hurdles to getting some of that equipment that had been implemented by the Obama Administration. The story contains a number of plausible explanations for the decline, including decreased demand from local departments and certain items not being available. There may be several factors at play in what appears to be a dramatic decrease in acquisition, but whatever the underlying reasons, the reduction is the latest evidence that much of the pro-police rhetoric and actions of the Trump Administration are less about improving police efficacy than they are about promoting the administration's hollow posturing.

Recall that local police aren't always jazzed about aggressive enforcement of federal immigration policy. Police who depend on the trust of the community to solve crimes and intervene in personal crises have been vocal about Trump's impact on local crime enforcement. There are troubling signs that domestic violence and sexual assault are being underreported in Latino communities because of the distrust the administration is sowing between those communities and law enforcement. Over-the-top actions, such as raiding courthouses and seizing victims seeking protection and justice, erode public safety by enabling abusers and rapists to prey on their victims without fear of arrest or criminal charge. The cruel irony is that so much of this damage is done under the guise of restoring "law and order."

Time will tell whether this decrease in military gear acquisition represents a genuine shift in local police priorities or is simply a lull that may end at the first sign of potential unrest in American cities. But some critics may take comfort that making it easier for police departments to attain new weapons of war didn't automatically lead them to do it. Hopefully, the growing evidence that police militarization is detrimental to public safety and harmful to community relations is starting to sink in with local police, even if Washington isn't listening.

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