



## **Demilitarizing law enforcement: 10 local agencies requested \$6M in military-grade gear over 10 years**

By [Romney Smith](#)

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President Obama is now banning local police from getting certain military surplus equipment.

It includes some of those big machines seen controlling crowds in places like Ferguson, Missouri, and even conducting traffic stops in our area.

Action News took a look at what the move means for local law enforcement.

Ten local police and sheriff departments have requested more than \$6 million in military-grade gear over the past 10 years.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office said it requested and received a bullet-proof mine resistant tank for search-and-rescue efforts. Now, a new ban will limit what local departments can request in the future.

Moving forward, local departments will no longer get certain items like tracked armored vehicles, grenade launchers and .50-caliber or higher guns and ammunition, items many criticize as the militarization of local law enforcement.

“There's a big difference between things that make officers feel safer so they can get into harmful situations and trying to diffuse the situation versus gear that incentivizes them to approach it with a militarized attitude and make the situation more dangerous for the citizens involved,” said Trevor Burrus of the Cato Institute.

Locally in the past decade, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office received two helicopters, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office received eight utility trucks, an explosive disposal robot went to the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, a high-powered weather unit was obtained by the Nassau County Sheriff's Office and rifles were shipped to Bradford County.

Law enforcement members say agencies still need the deeply discounted gear to help protect their communities.

“We hope that there's not a situation that we have to have an armored vehicle to protect us from gunfire or other types of things,” said Lt. Chris Volz of the Baker County Sheriff’s Office.

The new ban is part of President Obama's plan to help fight crime and increase transparency when it comes to law enforcement.

To learn more about the LESO 1033 program click here: <http://www.dispositionservices.dla.mil/leso/pages/default.aspx>