



H.R. 4934: A bill to disarm federal agencies

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In April, the country watched as tactical response teams from the Bureau of Land Management laid siege to the ranch of a Nevada man and his family. In the outrage that followed what many believed to be an irresponsible, and tyrannical use of force by a federal agency far exceeding its mission and scope, many Americans began to question the existence of the numerous, well-funded federal tactical response teams being maintained with taxpayer funds.

The Department of Education, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. National Park Service, and the Department of Energy are just some of the federal agencies which arm and maintain tactical response or SWAT teams.

One politician is out to change all of that.

In May, following the standoff between militia and heavily armed federal agents, Utah Representative Chris Stewart, R-Utah, voiced concern over the rising militarization of federal police forces.

“There are lots of people who are really concerned when the BLM shows up with its own SWAT team... They’re regulatory agencies; they’re not paramilitary units, and I think that concerns a lot of us.”

On Monday, June 23, Stewart took the next step in putting his money where his mouth is.

He introduced H.R. 4934: The RAD Act.

The RAD Act, or “Regulatory Agency Demilitarization Act,” intends to “prohibit certain Federal agencies from using or purchasing certain firearms, and for other purposes.”

The RAD Act would stop any federal regulatory agency from purchasing or even using a firearm within thirty days of its enactment. In addition, the act would require every federal agency to submit to Congress a report which includes “Each federal agency, including the office of the Inspector General for the federal agency, that has specialized units that receive special tactical or military-style training or use hard-plated body armor, shields, or helmets and that respond to

high-risk situations that fall outside the capabilities of regular law enforcement officers, including any special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team, tactical response teams, special events teams, special response teams, or active shooter teams.”

In addition, the agency is required to report a description of each unit, details of their training and the hardware and weapons they use in the line of duty.

Perhaps the most important requirement of this law as it pertains to each agency report is that the reporting federal agency provide important details about their special response teams:

- *“The criteria for activating each such unit and how often each such unit was activated for each year of the previous ten years.”*
- *“The annual cost of equipping and operating each unit.”*
- *“Any other information that is relevant to understanding the usefulness and justification for the units.”*

These reporting requirements are political and practical landmines, and would provide extremely valuable information for any politician going after government spending and overreaching power. The reports generated by this act would have the potential to spark a hurricane of media outrage.

The ten-year mark is the key for the reporting requirement; the reports would show how much spending and agency task-creep went on under both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. With Obama’s popularity on the wane, and even the most liberal news stations beginning to criticize his presidency, news outlets would most likely be unable to keep from plastering this all over the airwaves.

If the act does pass, if the reporting requirement is implemented, and if spending and agency task-creep did increase under Obama, then Obama’s supporters might simply observe that there is a surge in gun violence and an ever-present threat of terrorism.

Except there isn’t.

Violent crime is down, and you are more likely to be killed by a police officer than by a terrorist, a statistic which the Cato Institute concluded in 2012 was a result of the militarization of U.S. police forces. It will be very difficult for politicians and liberal media outlets to downplay the results of this report if indeed it does show increased spending and proliferation.

Rep. Stewart was smart enough to exempt armed federal agencies such as the CIA, DHS, DOJ, DOD, and Capitol Police. This makes the bill more passable and takes away an objection by potential opponents that the esteemed representative from Utah wants to disarm the FBI’s Hostage Rescue Team.

This bill will represent a very politically lucrative opportunity for Republicans, as well as a chance for red and purple state Democrats up for reelection to seem as though they care about the continually growing federal government. Supporting this bill would be a signal to

constituents that their representatives want to do something about the increasingly militarized American police forces. It would allow proponents to whip up conservative and libertarian-minded voters and garner support for reelection.

Opponents of this bill would have to tread lightly; the Bundy Ranch standoff is still fresh in the minds of many Americans, and stories run weekly about the militarization of small town police forces. This is a topic close to the hearts of many Americans, and opposing a law which asks for a report on why a federal agency has a tactical response team would make it seem as though one supports the growth of federal paramilitary forces.

This bill is part of a slowly growing trend to reduce federal power. Not many bills on record at the moment seek to rein in the power of Washington. Rep. Steve Stockman introduced a bill a few months ago to ban the federal government from funding firearms registries; Thad Cochran upped the ante by introducing a bill that would forbid the federal government from even maintaining a gun registry. There is a push by many Republicans, fueled by a nationwide resentment of growing federal power that is now being reflected in the legislature in Washington