

## **This Conservative Congressman Now Opposes the Feds Giving Military Equipment to Local Police**

By David Mark  
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Democrats aren't the only ones questioning the use of military equipment by local police departments.

Rep. Jeff Duncan says he's going to give tougher scrutiny to the practice after recent clashes in Ferguson, Mo. The South Carolina Republican is usually a reliable supporter of law enforcement.

Duncan is specifically questioning his vote on this year's Department of Defense Appropriations bill that "dealt with surplus equipment being sold/given to local and state Law Enforcement," according to a long post from the congressman on his Facebook page.

"With the activities we are witnessing in MO, coupled with the other incidents that I am reading about from around the country, I am now of the position that providing the kind of surplus military items, like Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, to local and state law enforcement units is wrong.

"I don't live with a utopian mindset that the world is Mayberry and all LE should be Andy Griffith - although I am just nostalgic enough to yearn for that kind of return."

Duncan added:

"Our police should be able to protect themselves as well as us, the average citizen, in doing their jobs. It is one thing to have protection, though - and completely another to have the kind of overkill that a MRAP provides.

"We should question our local officials - our sheriffs, our chiefs of police and our city, county and state officials, about their desire for, need for and acquisition of this surplus military equipment.

"And I, going forward, will question any support for these programs, the type of surplus equipment that might be available from the military and why law enforcement might find it necessary."

## Change of Course

It's a somewhat surprising turn for a lawmaker like Duncan, among the most conservative in the House. The 2014 *Almanac of American Politics* writes of the 48-year-old, two-term congressman: "Duncan's deploy-held conservative beliefs at time manifest themselves in fierce rhetoric, which angers Democrats but plays well among his like-minded colleagues and at home."

"He likened the issue of illegal immigration in November 2011 to 'taking the door off the hinges and allowing any kind of vagrant of animal' to enter." And, the *Almanac* adds, "He tweeted in 2012 that 83% of doctors considered leaving the profession because of Obama's health care law, which became widely circulated in the blogosphere. The fact-checking site *PolitFact* found it was based on a survey that did not specifically mention the law and labeled it 'false.'"

But Duncan isn't the only conservative having second thoughts on the military equipment issue. *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat writes:

"Within the commentariat, the most interesting division has opened within American conservatism, where a large group of conservative and libertarian writers have been much less inclined than perhaps they/we would have been thirty years ago to give the police the benefit of the doubt.

"More interesting still is the breadth and diversity of this group: It's not only the predictable police skeptics, the Cato Institute and *Reason* types; you also have elite-media squishes like myself, fiercer polemicists like Kevin Williamson and Mark Steyn, and the populist crew at *RedState* (Erick Erickson, Leon Wolf) raising similar questions about police conduct, along with many other writers (and, of course, Rand Paul) as well."