

The Washington Post

Libertarian criticism of police militarization

By [David Kopel](#)

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Ilya's [post below](#) takes on the astonishing [claim](#) by *Washington Post* blogger Paul Waldman that libertarians have not spoken out against the militarization of law enforcement. To the contrary, they have doing so for decades. The Cato Institute, for which I am Associate Policy Analyst, has for the last decade encouraged the work of [Radley Balko](#), who is the nation's leading journalist on the subject of police militarization. These days, [Balko writes a column](#) for the *Washington Post*. When Balko was in Denver last fall for a tour for his new book *The Rise of the Warrior Cop*, the Independence Institute (for which I am Research Director) hosted a book event for him, and [interviewed him for our weekly Colorado Public Television show](#).

My own work in this field includes the book [No More Wacos: What's Wrong with Federal Law Enforcement and How to Fix It](#). Waco and militarization is also addressed in my law review article [Can Soldiers Be Peace Officers? The Waco Disaster and The Militarization of American Law Enforcement](#), 30 Akron Law Review 619 (1997).

Then there's my chapter [Militarized Law Enforcement: The Drug War's Deadly Fruit](#) in the Cato Institute book [After Prohibition: An Adult Approach to Drug Policies in the 21st Century](#) (Timothy Lynch ed., 2000).

And my essay [Smash-up Policing: When Law Enforcement Goes Military](#), originally published in National Review, and reprinted in [Busted: Stone Cowboys, Narco-Lords and Washington's War on Drugs](#) (Mike Bray, ed; Nation Books, 2002).

If Mr. Waldman's article is construed to be solely a complaint about people not opining on the events in Ferguson, Missouri, my personal answer is that the Volokh Conspiracy, and its individual writers, are not some public utility with an obligation to write analyses of every law-related topic in the news. If and when I have something to say which advances public understanding of the story, I'll say so. My colleague Radley is covering the story, most recently with [a long essay on how police should respond to mass protests](#).

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