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NOAA stockpiling military weapons... EPA, USDA amass their own paramilitary forces

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Most Americans can understand why the FBI, CIA, DHS and the government's various law enforcement agencies are all armed – and some heavily – but they question why seemingly benign agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) – which falls under the Commerce Department, and is primarily responsible for weather-related research – needs so many *armed agents*.

As noted by *PJ Media's* Rick Moran, the agency now has 96 armed agents, and that in the era of an uber-militarized federal government. NOAA – the government's primary weather and environmental research agency – is arming up at a time of increasing intolerance from Left-wing officials inside the Obama administration as well as some state attorneys general, over what they call "climate change denial."

NOAA officials justify the existence of armed agents as a means of enforcing various laws under the agency's jurisdiction. But honestly, if a waterway is being over-fished, or there is some other violation of environmental law, can't another traditionally armed federal agency handle the arrest?

You know – like the armed Environmental Protection Agency. Yes, that's right, the notorious EPA has its own armed force as well, and it was (ridiculously) on display when the agency carried out an armed raid on a mine in Chicken, Alaska (real name), to enforce a provision of the Clean Water Act – a raid that eventually sparked a special investigation and congressional hearing. After all, Chicken, Alaska, has a whopping population of 7 as per the last census.

The number of armed agencies keeps growing

Nevertheless, as *Reason* magazine reported:

"The agency sent a heavily armed team eight strong over possible violations of the Clean Water Act, an act the miners said amounted to intimidation. Residents questioned the need for armed agents to participate in what amounted to a water safety check, as well as the public safety threat the action posed."

But why *wouldn't* the EPA use this tactic to enforce an insignificant statute? After all, when you're equipping a small army, the temptation to use it is obviously strong. As reported by *The Daily Signal*, the agency recently spent \$1.4 million on heavy and automatic weapons, ammunition, night vision gear and camouflage clothing.

"We were shocked ourselves to find these kinds of pervasive expenditures at an agency that is supposed to be involved in clean air and clean water," said Adam Andrzejewski, founder of public watchdog group, Open The Books. "Some of these weapons are for full-scale military operations."

As further noted by *The Daily Signal*:

"And not just a few weapons. Open the Books found that the agency has spent millions of dollars over the last decade on guns, ammo, body armor, camouflage equipment, unmanned aircraft, amphibious assault ships, radar and night-vision gear, and other military-style weaponry and surveillance activities."

The question is, why? Based on this weapons list you'd think that the EPA was getting ready to invade Russia or something. Or maybe New Orleans.

Next on the list is the Department of Agriculture, believe it or not. As reported by *CNN* in September 2014, the "food stamp" agency, like other federal departments, is using a provision of the Homeland Security Act as a reason to arm up:

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General has 85 shiny new submachine guns, locked and loaded.

"They've long had a small police force, and they're not alone, thanks to a mostly forgotten provision in the behemoth 2002 Homeland Security Act that allows certain the [sic] Offices of Inspector General to equip themselves with agents who carry guns.

"Criminal investigators at agencies like the USDA, the Small Business Administration and NASA can carry firearms."

Who are all these weapons REALLY targeted at?

The USDA has had the ability to arm agents since 1981, *CNN* reported. But the 2002 "Homeland Security" legislation that Congress passed so quickly after the 9/11 attacks is obviously being abused by federal agencies that are spending taxpayer money on weaponry and military gear like drunken sailors – and apparently without much congressional oversight or explanation to the public.

That could be because Congress doesn't know much about the weapons purchases. Rep. Chris Stewart, R-Utah, sought to request a Government Accountability Office study of all the purchases a couple of years ago, so the American people and their elected leaders could get a handle on the situation. He also introduced legislation that would strip OIGs of their weapons,

but that didn't go anywhere.

"Americans don't see why dozens of federal agencies need their own highly armed police forces with the authority to raid homes and businesses," Stewart told *CNN* at the time.

So how come investigators at agencies known more for meat inspections and processing crop insurance claims need automatic weapons?

"Regarding the need for weapons' procurements, OIG's Investigations division conducts hundreds of criminal investigations each year, some of which involve OIG agents, USDA employees, and/or members of the public facing potentially life threatening situations," USDA Deputy Counsel Paul Feeney told the news network.

Agencies won't wage war against each other, right?

Fine, but that still doesn't answer the question. And it doesn't answer the question about why other federal agencies – like the Department of Education – have armed agents.

For his part, Stewart agrees that any legitimate law enforcement needs to be done by legitimate federal *law enforcement agencies* that have much better-trained staff.

"When there are genuinely dangerous situations involving federal law, that's the job of the Department of Justice, not regulatory agencies like the FDA or the Department of Education," he said.

Adds Tim Lynch, director of the Project on Criminal Justice at the Cato Institute, a libertarian-leaning think tank in Washington, D.C., "There's no question there's been a proliferation of police units at the federal level. To me, it's been a never-ending expansion, a natural progression, if you will, of these administrative agencies always asking for bigger budgets and a little bit more power."

And, obviously, they are getting it.

Without question, the vast bureaucracy of the federal government no longer feels like its sole purpose and reason for existence is to serve the American people. Rather, the bureaucracy has become an entity unto itself, untouchable by Congress, and increasingly utilized by presidents as a weapon to suppress liberty, freedom and individualism. That much is evident by the level of armament these agencies think they need.

These agencies aren't ultimately planning on warring against each other, *are they?*