



Police Departments Have Lost Assault Rifles And Humvees They Received From The Pentagon

A new report from Fusion reveals that police departments around the country have lost track of military hardware they've received from the federal government since 1990.

By Juan E. Gastelum
August 26, 2014

A media investigation into a Pentagon program that provides local law enforcement with military-grade weapons found that 184 state and local police departments were suspended from the program for missing weapons or failing to comply with other guidelines.

The ongoing investigation by TV and digital network Fusion found there was “a pattern of missing M14 and M16 assault rifles... as well as instances of missing .45-caliber pistols, shotguns, and 2 cases of Humvee vehicles.”

Included among the suspended are departments in Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, Georgia, California, and Arizona, where a state coordinator said about a dozen weapons — mostly .45-caliber pistols and one rifle — went missing from the department led by the controversial Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Maricopa County.

Under the “1033 program,” the Pentagon has provided more than \$4.3 billion in equipment and weapons to more than 8,000 participating departments nationwide since 1990, Fusion reported.

The purpose of the program is “to enhance public safety and improve homeland security by leveraging taxpayer investments in defense technology and equipment,” a Pentagon spokeswoman said.

Administration of the program varies from state to state, but governor-appointed coordinators are in charge of making sure local police departments comply with federal regulations. Departments are subject to bi-annual compliance reviews, Fusion reported.

Tim Lynch, a director of the CATO Institute’s project on criminal justice, called on Congress to revisit the decentralized program, which he called “sloppy.”

“The case for giving military weaponry to these small police departments was already thin in the beginning,” Lynch told Fusion. “Now that we’re finding that there is insufficient accountability for tracking this equipment, then the case is beginning to fall apart.”

The White House is reviewing the program following violent clashes between protestors and heavily militarized police in Ferguson, Mo., the New York Times reported.