



cnsnews.com
THE RIGHT NEWS. RIGHT NOW.™

DOD Transferred Over \$4.3B in Military Equipment to Local Police

By Paul Lagarde
August 21, 2014

(CNSNews.com)-- The Department of Defense transferred over \$4.3 billion worth of surplus military equipment--including 345 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAPs), 205 grenade launchers and over 12,000 bayonets--to more than 17,000 state and local law enforcement agencies across the nation since 1997.

The transfers were made under the 1033 program of the National Defense Authorization Act and administered by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), according to a report by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) entitled *War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing*.

The DLA website does not include a comprehensive list of where surplus military equipment winds up, but a spokesman for the agency told CNSNews.com that a database found on the *Detroit Free Press* website that lists military equipment distributed since 2006 was accurate because the data had previously been obtained from the DLA under the Freedom of Information Act.

A CNSNews.com review of the database found that some of the surplus items, such as binoculars and .45-caliber pistols, can easily transition to a civilian police setting.

But other equipment clearly intended for military use has also been sent to local law enforcement agencies. For example, in March, Wyoming's Laramie County received an MRAP from the DLA. The Laramie County sheriff's office told CNSNews.com that there have never been any recorded instances of landmines in the rural county, which has a population of just over 91,000.

Concerns over increased militarization of the police have prompted calls from both the left and the right for an end to the 1033 program.

"Militarization unfairly impacts people of color and undermines individual liberties, and it has been allowed to happen in the absence of any meaningful public discussion," the ACLU report stated.

“Dressing police officers as soldiers is dangerous because the mindset of a soldier is entirely inappropriate for a police officer,” writes Tim Lynch of the Cato Institute. “Soldiers fight a military enemy; police officers deal with citizens, who are protected by the Bill of Rights.”

“If the Pentagon hands local cops millions of dollars’ worth of hammers, it should be no surprise when suddenly everything looks like a nail,” Lynch added.

But Crisp County, GA Sheriff Bill Hancock disagrees that the 1033 program should be scrapped, pointing out the benefits for small local law enforcement agencies like his.

Hancock told CNSNews.com that Crisp County also received a MRAP in February through the 1033 program, but that the sheriff’s office has removed the gun mount from the top and has not used it to date. He added that it would only be used in a hostage or shooting situation where officers’ lives could be in danger.

“It’s a good program,” Hancock told CNSNews.com. “You take that program away and somebody my size is not going to be able to equip all their SRT [Special Response Team] members with bulletproof vests. We’re not going to be able to equip them with night vision equipment. We’re not going to have some small handguns that we need because you’re gonna do away with the whole program.”

“So let’s put restrictions and guidelines on it; [but] let’s don’t just arbitrarily jump up and say, ‘Do away with the program.’”