



American Police Departments Are Losing Tons Of Military Grade Weaponry

By Giuseppe Macri
August 27, 2014

Police departments across the United States have been losing large amounts of military gear including assault rifles, shotguns, handguns and even Humvees provided under a controversial Pentagon program.

The “1033 program,” which is now under White House review in the wake of the police response to riots in Ferguson, Missouri, has provided surplus military gear to police departments across the country in the aftermath of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The departments themselves, however, haven’t been keeping very good track of it.

Fusion reports 184 state and local departments have been suspended from the program for misplacing M14, M15 and M16 assault rifles, .45-caliber pistols, shotguns and two Humvees. It’s unclear whether the weapons, which were provided to assist police in the “wars on terrorism and drugs,” have been unintentionally lost or sold on the black market.

“[The program] is obviously very sloppy, and it’s another reason that Congress needs to revisit this promptly,” CATO Institute project on criminal justice director Tim Lynch told Fusion. “We don’t know where these weapons are going, whether they are really lost, or whether there is corruption involved.”

“That uncertainty is very unsettling.”

The Mississippi Meridian Police Department was suspended in February 2013 after an inventory showed four missing M14s. The Arkansas Lawrence County Sheriff’s Department was suspended the same month for a missing M14 and a damaged nightvision scope. Ten law enforcement entities in California have also been suspended including the Huntington Beach Police Department for losing an M16, the Stockton Police Department for losing two M16s, and the Sutter County Sheriff’s Office for losing two M15s and an M14.

In Arizona, the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Department lost more than 10 .45-caliber pistols and one rifle, and was suspended in September 2012. Georgia’s Sparta Police

Department received reprimands twice for losing .45-caliber pistols before being removed from the program completely, and ordered to return all of its remaining inventory.

Missouri's Ripley County Sheriff's Department was also suspended last February amid an ongoing investigation, and seven departments in Florida were suspended for missing equipment earlier this year, which has since been located.

Suspended law enforcement agencies are typically allowed to keep remaining equipment acquired under the program, according to the report. The program does not designate at the federal level a specific state agency to handle the program's coordination, resulting in a lack of consistent coordination and oversight all the way from the Pentagon to the individual departments, and making the tracking of allocated equipment exceedingly difficult.