



# Campus police acquiring surplus military gear

**The militarization of police extends to college campuses, as campus police forces acquire surplus armored vehicles, assault rifles and other equipment from the Pentagon.**

By [JC Sevcik](#)

September 15, 2014

Amid national debate about militarized police forces, highlighted by police response to protests in Ferguson, Missouri, a Freedom of Information Act request reveals colleges and universities around the country are using the Pentagon's 1033 program to outfit campus police with surplus military equipment, including body armor, armored vehicles, and assault rifles.

Supporters argue the gear is needed to respond to school shootings and other "special situations," while detractors claim college campuses are no place for military-grade weaponry.

A [report in the Indianapolis Star](#) found community and campus police in Indiana acquired more than 4,400 items -- including Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected (MRAP) armored vehicles, Humvees, M-14 and M-16 rifles -- through the Pentagon program, which supplies surplus defense equipment to local law enforcement, requiring them to pay only the cost of shipping.

"Particularly after we have just read about Ferguson, I have been re-evaluating the need of an M-14," Purdue University Calumet Police Chief Anthony Martin said of the high-powered assault rifle. "It's a heavy weapon."

Tim Lynch, director of the Project on Criminal Justice at the libertarian Cato Institute, commented on the increasingly ambiguous difference between the roles of the military, local law enforcement, and specialized tactical response units like SWAT teams.

"The military is trained to fight the enemy and wreak havoc on them. With the civilian police, they are dealing with people who have constitutional rights, and we want them to avoid the use of force if possible and to use the minimum required to bring a the suspect into a court of law."

"On college campuses, police roles are even more narrowly defined: They're there to protect students and faculty," said Martin.

Jerry Minger, who oversees seven campus police departments at Indiana University asked, "How do you protect the community if you don't have the appropriate equipment to do so?"

The question isn't being faced only by colleges in Indiana -- last month, [Politico reported](#) more than 100 college campuses with sworn-in police departments participate in the Pentagon's 1033 program.

"As trained, professional officers, we know well the difference between our role as law enforcement for our university community and the role of the military," Florida International Police Chief Alexander Casas said. "This equipment allows us to be better prepared to respond to a variety of critical incidents, from active shooter incidents to disaster recovery."

According to the [Lafayette Journal & Courier](#), Indiana colleges alone equipped themselves with no less than 54 assault rifles in the past four years.

"We really have evaluated it carefully and didn't try to have more equipment than we really needed or was really rational to have," Minger told the IndyStar.