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Military provisions include hummer, armored carrier for MSP

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Since April's rioting brought Maryland National Guard vehicles to Baltimore, four Maryland-based police departments have received equipment under a Pentagon provisioning program, according to information from the Defense Logistics Agency.

The Maryland State Police received an armored personnel carrier, the second such vehicle for the agency, spokesman Greg Shipley confirmed. However, most of this summer's Maryland shipments under what is known as the 1033 program were more generic items such as flashlights, storage cabinets and forklifts.

Other Maryland-based departments receiving items under the program since the end of May were the Allegany County sheriff's office, the La Plata Police Department and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement police.

The 1033 program transfers excess Department of Defense property to federal, state, and local law enforcement, according to a DLA [description](#) of the offerings.

Equipment released under the program most often includes office supplies, clothes and what Karl Milligan of the National Police Defense Foundation refers to as "defensive tools or equipment," including helmets, gas masks and protective gear.

Baltimore police limit requests for surplus military goods

Milligan notes that Humvees can be used for deliveries in [snow-emergency situations](#) and that even seemingly aggressive vehicles like armored personnel carriers play valuable defensive roles in hostage extractions and bomb neutralizations, or in reducing the need for shooting by SWAT teams.

The state police received two vehicles in the latest release: the armored personnel carrier and a Humvee. Shipley said the armored vehicle will be used for tactical operations or in situations where objects are being thrown or fired. The Humvee could be used for situations such as crowd control, snowstorms and flooding.

A 2014 [ACLU study](#) found that when used appropriately, armored personnel carriers can be extremely useful for the purposes Milligan describes.

The report cautioned, however, that "it was nearly impossible to track the use of [such vehicles] by SWAT teams." The report pointed to Allentown, Pa., and New Haven, Conn., as examples of localities where armored vehicles have been used almost casually for tasks like drug searches.

Tim Lynch of the Cato Institute's Project on Criminal Justice argues that the 1033 program can affect attitudes about policing.

Sending equipment to agencies such as Immigration and Customs can subvert intentional checks on their power, Lynch said.

"Instead of [ICE] assessing its own needs and then making that case to Congress, there's this flow of equipment and weaponry to the agency ... so another agency gets military arms, whether they really need it or not," he said. "The risk is then militarizing that agency culture — and that means more risks of unnecessary violence and confrontations."

He said there's "nothing wrong [with] temporary joint federal-state task forces on particular investigations. What's disturbing is more and more permanent overlap and task force operations that we're seeing in firearm, drug, immigration and terrorism."

That can lead to problems, including a muddled chain of command and arbitrary decisions about who is prosecuted — or ignored — in state and federal courts, he said.

In May, President Barack Obama ordered that certain items be disallowed under the 1033 program, citing images of militarized policing in Ferguson, Mo., and Baltimore, as well as the recommendations of a White House working group.

Analyses at the time by [The Baltimore Sun](#) and [NPR](#) showed that the president's changes would have limited impact, because most of the banned items were rarely given to police departments. For example, few departments had received rifles of the banned caliber or taken delivery of tank-like vehicles.

Lynch said that a more realistic worry is that armored personnel carriers will tip over.

"The armored vehicles are made for battlefield conditions, not American highways," he said.