



## Obama to Continue Arming Nation's Police with Military Gear, But with Some Tweaks

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He expressed serious concerns over the police shooting in Ferguson, Missouri, and the subsequent public outcry over the heavily militarized response by the police to the protests. He went so far as to say the nation needed to keep its police forces from turning too much into military units. But in the end President Barack Obama is unwilling to slow down or stop the transfer of military weapons and equipment to law enforcement agencies.

Instead, he just wants to tweak the federal programs responsible for helping militarize police departments across the United States.

“We found that in many cases these programs actually serve a very useful purpose,” said White House press secretary Josh Earnest. Supporters claim that providing surplus military gear to local law enforcement help police departments that are strapped for funds. A review by the Obama administration found that nearly half a million pieces of military-type gear—including mine-resistant vehicles and night-vision equipment—have landed in the hands of local police departments across the U.S.

An announcement out of the White House this week said the administration would establish new standards and guidelines for programs, such as the much discussed [1033 program](#) operated by the Pentagon. But officials won't end them or scale them back.

This from a president who said in August “there is a big difference between our military and our local law enforcement, and we don't want those lines blurred.”

Now, he just wants to improve “transparency and consistency” when it comes to federal efforts that have transformed police officers into looking like soldiers with body armor and assault rifles that ride around in tanks.

One change Obama wants is for more officers to be equipped with body cameras to record their actions while on duty. This plan would cost \$75 million and buy upwards of 50,000 cameras for local departments to employ.

He also is seeking better coordination between the five federal agencies that provide military hardware and other items to police and sheriffs.

“Agencies do little to coordinate efforts and often lack mechanisms to hold police accountable for misusing equipment,” according to *The Wall Street Journal*, so Obama has “directed his staff to draft an executive order to develop common standards for the programs. He said the new standards would ensure that law enforcement agencies aren’t building a militarized culture.”

Trevor Burrus, a research fellow at the libertarian [Cato Institute](#), was critical of the Obama administration’s unwillingness to curb the outflow of military gear to the nation’s police. “It is possible to constrain these programs with oversight, but it doesn’t seem like many people are really wanting to do it,” he told the *Journal*. “The gear that they have needs to be reassessed...some of it has no legitimate law enforcement purpose.”