



Gun fight: Sheriff Clarke calls B.S. on Milwaukee County spokesman

By M.D. Kittle
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MADISON, Wis. – Milwaukee County Sheriff [David A. Clarke Jr.](#)^[1] is calling out the spokesman for the county executive who insisted the government office could not disclose detailed information on the guns and ammunition purchased by the Milwaukee County District Attorney's office for its [growing, gun-toting investigative staff.](#)^[2]

Brendan Conway, communications director for Milwaukee County Executive [Chris Abele](#)^[3], told Wisconsin Reporter last week releasing information on weapons and ammunition purchases to the public could “compromise investigations or officer safety.”

The spokesman directed questions to the DA's office regarding the kinds of weapons to which investigators have access.

Milwaukee County DA John Chisholm and his [Deputy District Attorney Kent Lovern,](#)^[5] who heads the investigative teams, didn't return more than a half-dozen phone calls last week from Wisconsin Reporter seeking comment for an [investigative report](#)^[2] on the DA's ever-expanding investigation squad.

“Conway is full of it,” said Clarke, never one to mince words in his very public battles with Democrat Abele. “It is not an officer safety issue to disclose how many bullets the DA's Office buys. He's making that crap up. He has no law enforcement experience to even make that determination.”

“Conway might be getting his law enforcement advice from Abele. Abele talks just as foolishly,” Clarke said.

Wisconsin Reporter's story took a closer look at Chisholm's campaign over the past several years to bulk up the number of armed investigators at the DA's office.

Chisholm has more than doubled the size of his office's armed investigative team since he was first elected in 2006, from six to 14. His budget calls for another four investigators in 2015, tripling its size in less than a decade.

Documents obtained by Wisconsin Reporter indicate that over a two-year period, between February 2012 and February 2014, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's office ordered at least \$25,000 worth of ammunition, [Taser electro-shock weapon](#)^[6] cartridges and battery packs.

It appears the DA's office had a change of heart, at least for some of the ammunition, according to the purchase orders. The agency appears to have canceled more than \$10,000 in orders, a change confirmed by a Milwaukee County purchasing administrator.

Sources told Wisconsin Reporter the DA's office is in possession of high-powered weapons.

In Milwaukee County, Conway said, "All of the investigators are armed, have police powers and are extremely experienced and highly trained."

Waukesha County District Attorney [Brad Schimel](#)^[7], the Republican candidate for Wisconsin attorney general, said he thinks it makes "good sense" to arm these agents.

"They are going to be confronting characters who don't like to be confronted," said Schimel, who added that his office employs one investigator. "Anyone doing that law enforcement kind of work, whatever it takes for them to get home safely at the end of the day I am on board with."

But Walter Olson, senior fellow with the [CATO Institute's Center for Constitutional Studies](#)^[8], said the Milwaukee County DA's arming of all of its investigators is just another example of "weaponizing people who don't need to be armed."

Clarke, too, has been critical of Chisholm's expanded and armed investigator force, which, he says, has come at a cost to his department as Abele has shifted resources from the sheriff's department to the DA's office.

"Why does he (Chisholm) also want to be the sheriff's office, as well as the prosecuting officer?" the sheriff told Wisconsin Reporter for the story.

"The role of the prosecutor's office is to prosecute, not to investigate a crime," said Clarke, adding that Chisholm's move to expand his gun-carrying investigative team is "mission creep."