



**THE PENTAGON TO POLICE PIPELINE:
HOW THE PENTAGON BUDGET
MILITARIZES THE POLICING
OF OUR COMMUNITIES**

A REPORT BY THE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS CENTER

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INTRODUCTION

In neighborhoods across America, the rate of police shootings and deaths of innocent people is increasing. Inflated municipal police budgets, racial profiling, lack of training, officer corruption, and lack of accountability all contribute to police violence. Another significant factor fueling this state violence is our **bloated defense budget**. As we discuss, **the Department of Defense's military weapons, training, and equipment facilitate a more brutal form of policing, increasing the likelihood of violent encounters with local law enforcement.**

This report analyzes government programs that allow for the transfer or purchase of military equipment by state and local law enforcement agencies and the residual harmful effects these acquisitions have on communities. This report also explores how militarized police departments have historically been deployed to crack down on progressive social movements and the policy alternatives available to lawmakers to move away from militarized responses to public safety.

For a detailed introduction into the ways in which the Pentagon budget contributes to the militarization of our borders, communities, law enforcement and more, read our overview report [here](#).

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MILITARIZING U.S. PROGRAMS



The 1033 Program









Local law enforcement approaches to public safety have continued to raise concerns about the use of force against individuals and communities. One concern underlying the excessive use of force is the trend toward the militarization of police units through the adoption of military tactics and the acquisition of military equipment through programs administered by the Department of Defense (DOD). One of these programs, the 1033 program (also known as “Section 1033”), was established in the 1990 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The 1033 program allows local police and law enforcement agencies to reuse surplus “articles” transferred from the Pentagon. These articles include anything from furniture, computers, and clipboards to military tanks, helicopters, and bayonets. Law enforcement agencies can acquire these items for free, paying only the transportation costs to their local headquarters. The program expanded in 2006 when the U.S. military used it to offload equipment no longer needed in Iraq and Afghanistan, fueling a pipeline of weapons used to fight wars abroad to local police departments. Since 1997, the Section 1033 program has transferred \$7.4 billion worth of equipment to state and local law enforcement.

MILITARIZING U.S. PROGRAMS

Proponents of the 1033 program suggest that police departments and local law enforcement agencies can acquire equipment that their budgets could otherwise not afford. They claim the program makes officers safer, lowers crime rates, decreases police budgets, and saves taxpayer money. **However, data has shown (see Table 1 below for more) that 1033 acquisitions have no effect on officer safety or crime rates and that the budgets of local police departments do not decrease when they receive 1033 equipment.**

The program is also riddled with mismanagement. In 2017, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the program had deficiencies in its process for verifying the validity of an agency's application for the transfer of weapons. For example, the GAO found that a fake agency was able to secure \$1.2 million worth of controlled items and also received items it did not even request.

Table 1: Quick Data on 1033 Weapon Transfers

 <p>1 in 5 weapons transferred through 1033 (over the course of the entire program) are rifles (\$31m)</p>	<p>25,950 items transferred in 2020, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,930 field dressings 2,850 packing supplies 2,734 jacket liners 2,052 axes 1,526 jackets 1,518 shirts 43 laser range-finders, which makes up over 20% of the total value of items transferred 15 unmanned ground vehicles, which makes up 15% of the total value of items transferred
 <p>\$560.6m of aircraft/aircraft components, predominantly between 2014 and 2017</p>	
 <p>1,080 mine-resistant vehicles transferred—456 since Obama EO signed, including 153 in 2019</p>	
 <p>215 drones transferred, including 23 in 2019</p>	
 <p>13 long-range acoustic devices ("sound cannons" transferred, including 7 to Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department</p>	 <p>Transfers of counter-protest equipment peaked in 2015, but spiked again in 2018, when 2,129 items were transferred—predominantly tasers and face shields, but including armored vehicles, pepper spray, and batons</p>
 <p>50 canisters of pepper spray (banned internationally as a chemical weapon) transferred</p>	
 <p>16,499 items transferred for us against protesters (\$860 million) including 5,267 face shields, 2,362 tasers, 1,416 shotguns, and 1,145 batons</p>	

Section 1122 Program

Another DOD program, Section 1122, was established in the 1994 NDAA to support “counter-drug activities.” In the 2009 NDAA, it was expanded to include “homeland security and emergency response activities.” Like 1033, it allows state and local law enforcement to procure military and other equipment from the Pentagon. However, unlike the 1033 program, it allows police departments and local law enforcement to purchase new equipment from the Pentagon at a discounted rate. The 1122 program is also significantly less transparent than the 1033 program. Because it is not a weapons transfer program like 1033, it is not subject to the same audits or tracking as 1033. Therefore, tracking stockpiles, inventory, purchases, and ownership and sales is incredibly difficult.

More specifically, there is scarce public information on the equipment and sales involved in the 1122 program, beyond the General Service Administration’s (GSA) list of military equipment available under the 1122 program and the states that participate in the program. However, in December 2022, President Biden signed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 NDAA into law, which included a provision that required the DOD and the General Services Administration (GSA) to submit annual reports to Congress that list the equipment sold under the 1122 program to state and local law enforcement. However, this program still lacks oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance with the mandate to assist local law enforcement with “counter-drug, homeland security, and emergency response activities.” This risks improper use of equipment for activities outside the intended scope and leads to less accountability in the procurement of these weapons and equipment.

The 1033 and 1122 programs are riddled with mismanagement and inaccurate recordkeeping, further complicating meaningful transparency. This lack of transparency means it is difficult to hold local law enforcement and the Pentagon accountable for weapons transfers and purchases that lead to violent and deadly interactions with police. **Additional insight into the specific equipment purchased under these programs and what they are used for is necessary to further understand the extent to which these programs cause harm in our communities and lead to more violent and deadly policing outcomes.**

It is clear, though, that military transfers and acquisitions via the 1033 and 1122 programs aid in creating a policing culture that reflects militaristic tactics and attitudes. Allowing law enforcement agencies to obtain excess military equipment can blur the lines between the police and the military and lead to increased violent behavior by police officers—particularly in communities with a high proportion of Black residents. A 2017 study on 1033 militarization and police violence found that increasing LEA access to military equipment not only leads to higher levels of police violence but seeps into the cultural, organizational, and operational practices of law enforcement agencies. As with the case of police officers using military equipment on protesters during demonstrations against the killings of unarmed black men, the militarization of police exacerbates excessive police violence against Black, brown, and already marginalized individuals.

Other Militarized Equipment Programs in the Federal Budget

Outside of the 1033 and 1122 programs, police departments acquire military-based equipment through other programs within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ). For example, the DHS' Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) provides grants to state and local law enforcement agencies that can be used to “prevent, protect against, mitigate, and respond to acts of terrorism and other threats,” according to DHS' website. These grants are intended to fund equipment and programs for local disaster responses. They are administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), allowing police agencies to acquire surplus military equipment for disaster-related “emergency preparedness activities.” Since FEMA was absorbed by DHS in 2002, federal dollars for disaster relief have been tied to counterterrorism efforts, meaning programs intended for disaster relief under this grant are also used to funnel money to local and state law enforcement agencies for broad policing and surveillance purposes.

A December 2022 report from the Action Center on Race & the Economy (ACRE) shows that the largest HSGP program– the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) – has provided billions of dollars in funding to local and state agencies in “high threat” areas (defined as those with the highest likelihood of terrorism). These funds have been used to target and surveil Muslims and communities of color using biased and discriminatory pretenses, a subject we will explore in detail in the next report in this series.

A list of authorized equipment under FEMA's preparedness grant program enables **police departments to acquire equipment such as body armor, explosives, and surveillance technologies via this program.** The program has also been linked directly to militarized police training. UASI has been used to fund operations such as Urban Shield, a California-based global weapons expo, and SWAT training event for domestic and international law enforcement officers. Since the disbandment of Urban Shield following controversy over its war-esque demonstrations, police training facilities have continued to propel police militarization and violence. More specifically, police violence has occurred at facilities such as Cop City in Atlanta, where 26-year-old climate activist, Tortuguita, was shot 57 times while police attempted to clear the protestors' encampment.



Additionally, police departments rely on other resources, such as the DOJ's s Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) and donations from private police foundations to acquire militarized equipment and surveillance used on civilians. **Our next report will focus on the harmful effects of government programs that contribute to mass surveillance in greater detail.**

How Excessive Pentagon Spending Fuels Militarism

A significant reason the Pentagon ends up with a surplus of military equipment is its bloated budget. Over half the discretionary budget goes to the Pentagon. Defense contractors are the major beneficiaries of massive Pentagon spending, receiving almost half of the Pentagon's base budget, and one-third of that amount going to Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, General Dynamics, and Northrop Grumman. Lockheed Martin receives an estimated 90 percent of its revenue from the federal government. These contractors create some of the military equipment that gets transferred to local police and law enforcement while making a profit.

Excessive Pentagon spending also militarizes non-military agencies. For example, the DOE, DOJ, DHS, and the CIA are not agencies that are primarily responsible for "defense" in terms of being engaged in active military operations. However, Pentagon weapons, militarized tactics, surveillance technology, and the overall culture of militarism show up in the operations of these agencies. DHS has used Pentagon weapons to militarize the U.S. border, even though the agency is primarily responsible for immigration, a non-military policy. The CIA has been involved in countless military operations, despite being an intelligence agency.

Currently, U.S. military spending is \$858 billion for FY2023. In the debt ceiling agreement legislation, or the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, which was signed into law on June 3, 2023, Congress enacted two-year spending caps for defense and non-defense programs. For FY2024, defense spending would be \$886 billion, which is a 3.3 percent (\$28 billion) increase from FY2023.

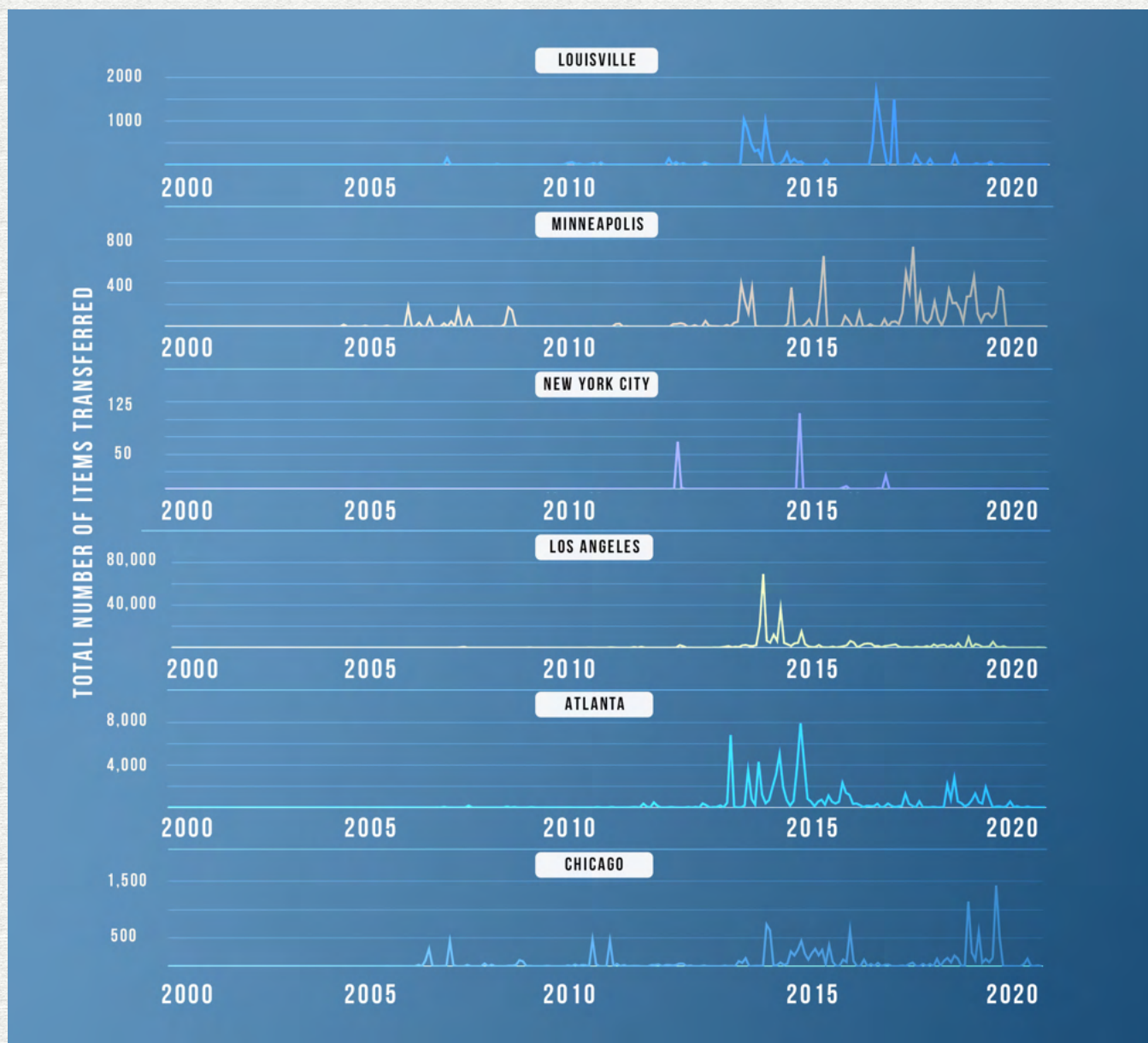
While some argue that continual increases to the Pentagon budget are necessary to adequately address national security and national defense challenges to protect Americans, a recent IPS and NPP report illustrates how funding for militarism can compromise our welfare. According to the report, since 2001, the U.S. has added \$2 to the discretionary budget for militarism for every \$1 added to invest in communities. In FY2023, militarism (defined as military, veterans, homeland security, and federal law enforcement programs) accounted for 63 percent of the U.S. discretionary budget. This amounts to less than \$2 out of every \$5 of discretionary spending going towards programs that provide investments in programs that fund child care, education, affordable housing, and environmental safety and protections.

IMPACT OF MILITARIZATION ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Weapons of war in the hands of local police turn neighborhoods into war zones and disproportionately increase police violence in Black and Brown neighborhoods. A 2018 study from the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) found that militarized police units are deployed to communities with a larger share of Black residents at a significantly higher rate—a **10 percent increase in the Black population of a zip code correlated with a 10 percent increase in the likelihood of that zip code being raided by a SWAT team, even after controlling for local crime rates.**

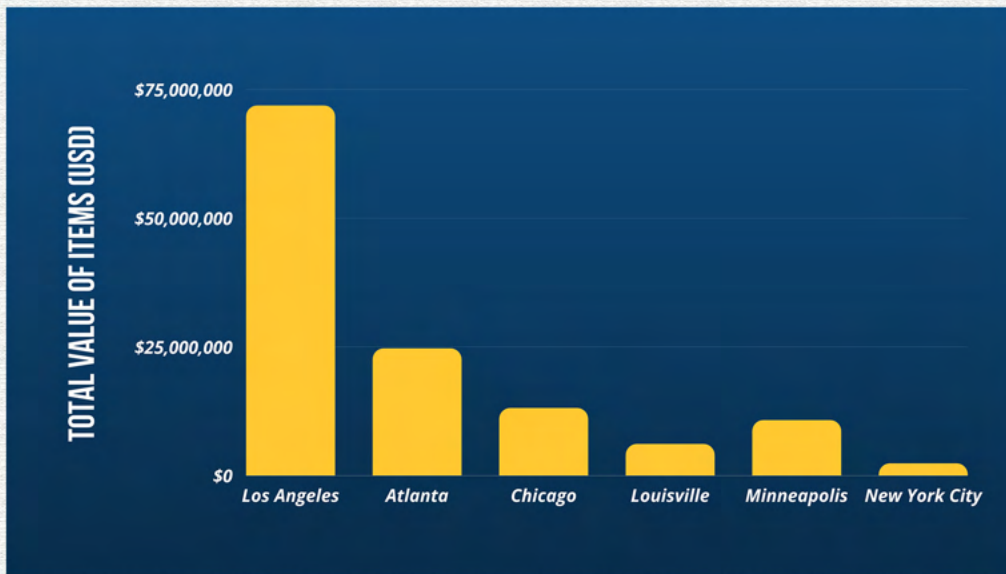
In Table 2, below, we show the total number of item transfers from the 1033 program to six localities from 2000 to 2020.

Table 2: Timeline of item transfers to localities through the 1033 program (2000 - 2020)



In Table 3, below, we show the total value of item transfers from the 1033 program to six localities for the duration of the program.

Table 3: Total value (USD) of transfers to localities through the 1033 program



Police have employed militarized equipment and tactics to disrupt movements for liberation and social justice, including movements for economic justice, environmental justice, gender justice, racial justice, and numerous others throughout U.S. history. The police response to a Black liberation organization, MOVE, provides one example of this persistent trend. In response to the actions and progress of MOVE, the Philadelphia Police Department dropped a bomb from a helicopter onto a building known to contain women and children. The C-4 explosive used by the police is designed for military use. The resulting explosion and fire destroyed 61 houses over two city blocks. Only two people survived the bombing—which later would be found to be excessive use of force and a violation of the individual’s constitutional rights—and five of those murdered were children.

This tragedy is but one example of a great many. In 2014, peaceful protestors in Ferguson, MO, demonstrated against the protesting police violence that led to the death of 18-year-old Michael Brown. During these protests, militarized police utilized tactical gear and equipment typically used by the military, such as rifles, tear gas, mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles (MRAPs), and bayonets. At Standing Rock in 2016, law enforcement and National Guard troops used automatic rifles, sound cannons, and concussion grenades to intimidate and disperse Native American water protectors (300 arrested injured; 700+ arrested). These incidents are pulled from dozens more that span both geography and timeframe—a fact that, in short, makes militarized policing a shared threat across all progressive spaces. Police use of this equipment is an urgent priority for criminal-legal advocates and a core threat to all movement voices who have the constitutional right to demand change.

IMPACT OF MILITARIZATION ABROAD

The massive U.S. defense budget not only militarizes police units across the U.S. but police units around the world as well. Under the State Department's foreign security assistance programs, the U.S. trains, equips, and arms an estimated 200,000 foreign police officers, soldiers, and security forces. The U.S. also trains foreign officers under the DOD Global Train and Equip programs. Recipients of these trainings include the Colombian police force, which violently oppresses protestors, the authoritarian regime of Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the inhumane security forces in the Philippines, and the Israel Defense Forces.

Win Without War has pointed out that *“the Department of Defense-led School of the Americas (SOA) trained politicians, military leaders, and police officers from across Latin America in a variety of areas including intelligence and counterintelligence, “riot control,” guerilla warfare, and 15 even torture. SOA’s esteemed alumni now include dictators, coup-leaders, torturers, massacres, and war criminals.”*

A violent security force in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group, received SOA training and has since carried out a range of gross human rights violations, including surveillance, kidnapping, and torture of Saudi citizens; repatriation of Saudi citizens living abroad; and detainment of clerics and activists. The Saudi operatives who murdered Washington Post journalist Jamaal Khashoggi also received paramilitary training under a State Department contract.

U.S. militarism abroad also appears domestically through veterans joining law enforcement agencies post-deployment. About 19 percent of police officers across the U.S. are veterans, even though veterans make up just 6 percent of the U.S. population. Members of the U.S. armed forces are trained in powerful, violent, and deadly combat skills. When service members retire from the armed forces and become veterans, some members bring these tactics they learned in combat to train police departments across the country. This can be reflected not only in weapons and tactical gear but in the attitudes and behaviors exhibited through policing. A Pew Research Center survey found that police officers who were veterans were more likely to fire their weapons than non-veteran officers. Historically, the U.S. has needlessly drawn on expressions of war— “the war on terror” and “the war on drugs” —to shape U.S. foreign and domestic policy. The same “rules-based order” with which the U.S. applies its foreign policies globally engenders an orientation towards aggressive and militaristic policing domestically.



Militarized police unit in Zipaquirá, Colombia

LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE REFORM

Congressional Actions

Congress and the current and former Administrations have taken a number of actions to repeal or restrict the 1033 and 1122 programs. Lawmakers have introduced amendments to the annual NDAA as well as other bills to rein in these programs. Those legislative actions include the following:

- A [FY2021 Amendment](#) by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) to prohibit the transfers of bayonets, grenades, combat vehicles, and drones (Adopted and signed by the President).¹
- A [FY2022 Amendment](#) by Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY-7) to repeal the 1033 program. Rep. Velazquez also introduced the [Demilitarizing Law Enforcement Act](#) to repeal the weapons transfer program (Introduced; no vote).
- A [FY2022 Amendment](#) by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY-14) to prohibit the transfer of certain items, such as ammunition, grenade launchers, and ambush vehicles (Introduced; no vote).
- A [FY2022 Amendment](#) by Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-7) introduced an amendment that would ban the transfers of “controlled items” such as weapons, vehicles, and night vision equipment (Introduced; no vote).
- A [FY2022 Amendment](#) by Rep. Hank Johnson (D-GA-4) to limit weapons transfers such as firearms, ammunition, grenade launchers, and explosives. Rep. Johnson introduced the bipartisan [Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act](#) to restrict DOD from transferring these items to local law enforcement agencies and institute transparency and tracking measures for allowable transfers. (Introduced; no vote).
- A [FY2023 Amendment](#) by [Sen. Brian Schatz \(D-HI\)](#) to require the Pentagon and the General Services Administration (GSA) to submit an annual report to Congress for five years on the equipment sold to state and local law enforcement under the 1122 program (as previously mentioned and was included in the FY23 NDAA bill). This provision reflects language by [Rep. Veronica Escobar \(D-TX-16\)](#) that calls for establishing a publicly available website, providing up-to-date information on 1122 purchases.

¹Sen. Schatz’s amendment reinstated restrictions on the transfer of weapons under President Obama’s executive order that President Trump rescinded. (Executive orders explained below).

LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE REFORM

Legislation

Lawmakers in the House have tackled the issue of militarized policing more broadly with measures. One is the [George Floyd Justice in Policing Act](#), a bipartisan bill that aims to increase police accountability, end racial profiling, and address police misconduct. Contextually, the Act limits—but does not end—the transfer of military equipment, like drones and body armor. The legislation also prohibits the transfer of certain weapons and vehicles, including bayonets, grenades, and drones. However, state and local police departments could still acquire some equipment via a grant waiver. Any transferred equipment banned under this Act or given to a police department found liable for civil rights violations would be returned to DOD.

Executive Orders

Several administrations have also taken steps to restrict (or prohibit the restriction of) the 1033 program, referenced below:

January 2015: Obama Administration issues [E.O. 13688](#) to limit the types of equipment that can be transferred via 1033. The order prevented DOD from transferring what it considered “highly militarized equipment.” However, an [in-depth analysis](#) by the ACLU illustrates this directive fell short of having any material impact on weapons transfers due in part to its limited scope of prohibited equipment and lack of enforcement of oversight protocols. During the time of the E.O.’s enactment, **the order failed to prevent more than 100,000 items of controlled equipment (totaling \$576,000,000) from being transferred, and the total number of items recalled amounted to less than a tenth of one percent of all 1033 equipment across police departments.**

August 2017: Trump Administration issues E.O. to rescind Obama-era restrictions (mentioned above). Trump’s then-Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, announces the lift while speaking to a group of officers, citing the Obama-era E.O. as a threat to public safety.

May 2022: President Biden signs an [executive order](#) to reinstate limits on 1033 controlled equipment transfers and improve police accountability. The order expanded upon the Obama Administration’s previous directive by broadening the list of prohibited equipment and making these restrictions applicable to all relevant programs that aid in police militarization beyond the Defense Department’s 1033 program.

Our [overview report](#) noted that the impact of 1033 reforms is likely muted because current restrictions are too narrow and poorly enforced to affect acquisition decisions. More comprehensive actions could be explored to curb the transfer and flow of dangerous militarized equipment to state and local law enforcement agencies, including broadening the range of weapons limited under the 1033 program and outright repeal.

REIMAGINING MILITARIZED POLICE



We have explored a number of U.S. government programs that contribute to an atmosphere of militarization. As discussions of limiting or repealing weapon transfer and purchase programs continue, it is important to acknowledge that such reforms do not repair the harm inflicted on communities. As such, some advocates have called for more sweeping reforms to both prohibit weapon acquisitions and account for the harmful effects of militarized policing. Such repair can take multiple forms, including centers like the [Chicago Torture Justice Center](#)—which provides healing and wellness services, trauma-informed resources, and community connection to communities that withstood this police violence—and through investments in organizations like [Art of Peace](#) that repurposes militarized equipment into art projects that can help communities heal. Given the volume of militarized equipment already flooding streets nationwide, policy changes could encourage police departments to surrender militarized equipment that they already have. One model for both ending weapons transfer programs and accounting for harms done is The BREATHE Act, which is supported by a coalition of Black activist groups and Representatives Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-07) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI-13). The Breathe Act calls for divestment from the federal criminal-legal system by repealing both the 1033 and 1122 programs within the DOD.

REIMAGINING MILITARIZED POLICE

The bill would rescind several programs within the DOJ and DHS that contribute to increased militarization of police departments and over-surveillance of communities of color. The bill also addresses the issue of weapons that would still be in supply should the 1033 and 1122 programs be discontinued, creating a grant program entitled the Neighborhood Demilitarization Program. This program would fund local jurisdictions to destroy militarized equipment, turning this equipment into reused materials for tools, instruments, and art pieces or projects. The Act also calls for a reduction in the defense budget, with funds to be reinvested into grant programs that serve local communities, and would make several changes to federal policing practices. This includes banning qualified immunity for officers and categorically prohibiting officers from using “less than lethal” forms of weapons like rubber bullets, tear gas, and military-grade weaponry.

Additionally, federal legislation like the [People’s Response Act](#), introduced by Rep. Cori Bush (D-MO-01), offers a similar approach to demilitarizing police departments. Instead of sending militarized police to respond to health-related crises, this Act would launch a federal first responders unit to support states and local governments by hiring more emergency first responders, mental health counselors, and social workers to increase non-carceral, health-based approaches to public safety. Significant evidence demonstrates that non-carceral investments in communities can dramatically improve public safety. A [March 2023](#) report from the Civil Rights Corps describes how large-scale investments in social capital— economic and employment opportunities, community and youth services, healthcare, affordable housing, and other social spending— can dramatically improve community safety. Ultimately, we can find a way to repair and account for the harms thus far inflicted by militarism in law enforcement. As the federal budget for the military steadily increases, it is imperative that we find alternative methods to policing beyond equipping law enforcement officers with militarized training and excess weapons from the Pentagon. To accomplish this goal, lawmakers can explore investments in non-carceral policies to redress the destruction caused by militarism to the maximum degree possible. Beyond implementing reforms to weapon acquisition and transfer programs, we can strive for alternatives to current methods of policing that reflect the needs of the community, neighborhoods that are free of fear and violence, in which we can all thrive.

ENDNOTES

We use data from the Defense Logistics AGENCY (DLA) to analyze weapons and equipment transferred from the Department of Defense to local and state law enforcement agencies. We drew from the DLA's Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO) records to calculate the number and dollar amounts for the weapons and equipment transfers described in the text of the report and in Tables 1, 2, and 3.