

Veterans For Peace Annual Lobby Days

May 18th-20th, 2015

Talking Points: HR 1232 - Stop the Militarization of Police Act

There is a legitimate role for the police to keep the peace in local communities, but there should be a difference between a police response and a military response. The 1033 program transfers excess military equipment – often from warzones overseas – to local law enforcement throughout the country. As military veterans, we are appalled to see military weapons, vehicles and equipment deployed in U.S. cities across the country as a means to control their actions. This program undermines the relationship between police and the communities they serve by providing military equipment – purchased by this Congress for the use in war or the defense of our nation – to local civilian law enforcement.

Reduction of Equipment Eligible for Transfer: Prohibit transfers of M16's and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAP's).

- Since the 1990s, the program has sent local law enforcement agencies large and small more than 5.4 billion in equipment.
- During the Obama administration, according to Pentagon data, police departments have received tens of thousands of machine guns; nearly 200,000 ammunition magazines; thousands of pieces of camouflage and night-vision equipment; and hundreds of silencers, armored cars and aircraft. This is unnecessary equipment for police forces to have.
- Since 2006, the police in six states have received magazines that carry 100 rounds of M-16 ammunition, allowing officers to fire continuously for three times longer than normal. Twenty-two states obtained equipment to detect buried land mines. The police in 38 states have received silencers, which soldiers use to muffle gunfire during raids and sniper attacks.

Transparency: Launch public website that will detail exactly where equipment has been issued.

- For more than 20 years, the Pentagon program has distributed surplus weapons, aircraft and vehicles to police departments nationwide with little public attention or scrutiny.
- In the past year, at least a dozen states have either rejected Freedom of Information Act requests for information about their programs or claimed not to have the information.
- Such a lack of transparency can result in the transferring of equipment in amounts that are often inconsistent with the size and training capacity of a police force.

Accountability End the requirement that law enforcement demonstrate the use of equipment within one year of using it. Ensure that equipment is not lost or otherwise misplaced by requiring the Secretary of Defense to provide to Congress an annual certification accounting for transferred property.