



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 24, 2013

Blurring the Line between Police and Military

Chey Calvo, the mayor of Berwyn Heights, Maryland, was taking a shower in his home late Tuesday afternoon, July 29, 2008 in preparation for a meeting he had that night. He heard a loud explosion at the front door of his home followed by the screaming of his mother-in-law who was in the kitchen preparing dinner. Their two black Labs, Payton and Chase, started barking. Calvo [told what happened](#):



My wife and I are still in our 30s and don't have kids of our own. But we do have — or *we did have* — two black labs.

I was hosting a community meeting that evening, but before that I returned home from my day job to walk my dogs. Before I left on my walk, my mother-in-law, who was cooking, told me a package had been delivered and was on the front step. On the walk, I noticed a few black SUVs in the neighborhood, but thought little of it other than to wave to the drivers.

When I returned home, I picked up the box, which was addressed to my wife, and took it inside where I left it unopened on the living room table. I went back upstairs to get into business attire for my meeting.

I was in my boxer shorts when I heard my mother-in-law scream. It was a loud, fearful scream. I ran to the window, where I saw three or four men dressed in black with high-caliber rifles in my yard approaching my house.

I then heard an explosion, which was the sound of my door being blown open, followed by immediate gun fire. There were loud noises, the sounds of boots, and then more gunfire...

I could see my mother-in-law bound, lying face down on the kitchen floor. Payton, my older dog, was lying dead in a pool of his own blood on the other side of the living room. I soon learned that my younger dog, Chase, was dead in a back room, where he had been shot from behind as he ran away.

There were perhaps a dozen men in black, just standing around in my living room. I asked for a warrant. They said that they did not have it with them, but [that] one was en route.

When Radley Balko investigated the incident, [his reports](#) were picked up by the national media which followed the case for months afterward. Speaking at a Cato Policy forum in the fall of 2008, Balko reviewed the assumptions that led to this massive use of excessive force in what turned out to be a drug raid on innocents.

The first assumption, said Balko, "is the idea that the government has an obligation to protect us from ourselves." The second is that because there are criminal elements involved in the drug trade, a greater show of force is necessary to quell any potential resistance during an arrest. The third is that those criminals have greater firepower that must be met with sudden, superior, even overwhelming, force. And the fourth assumption that led to this daylight no-knock, no-warrant attack on innocents is that "drug dealers are so violent, and apprehension of drug dealers so necessary [that] we must break down



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doors. If we don't break down doors, these drug dealers will either shoot the police officers trying to apprehend them or they will destroy the evidence."

As the War on Drugs and War on Terror continue to be used as an excuse to arm local police departments with military armament and heavy equipment, Balko expanded his research into a book, [Rise of the Warrior Cop](#). The *Wall Street Journal* published his synopsis of his research last week, which tracked the development of SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams from Los Angeles in the late 1960s to the present. During the 1970s there were very few raids such as that perpetrated against Berwyn Heights' mayor, perhaps just a few hundred in a year. By 2005 — the latest year for which data is available — there were approximately 50,000.

This huge expansion of SWAT teams has largely been funded by federal grants and gifts to local police departments, all in the name of fighting the drug and terror wars. The Department of Homeland Security has handed out more than \$35 billion in the last 10 years, with much of the money going to purchase armored personnel carriers. Balko noted that in 2011 alone, the Pentagon gave local enforcement some \$500 million worth of equipment, slowly turning local law enforcement into a branch of the national military establishment.

This is exactly what is to be expected in a country no longer guided by the Founders' principles and concerns about a military force running rampant through the streets. As Ron Paul expressed it, "Civil libertarians on the left and limited government conservatives on the right should pay especially close attention to Radley Balko's examination of the link between the 'war on drugs' and law enforcement's increased use of police state tactics."

Such a morphing was officially announced by then-Senator Obama in a speech he gave, appropriately enough, at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs on July 2, 2008, just three weeks before the mayor's home was attacked. [Said the senator](#):

We cannot continue to rely only on our military in order to achieve the national security objectives that we've set. We've got to have a civilian national security force that's just as powerful, just as strong, just as well-funded.

Such an "objective" is a long, long way from the limited powers granted the federal government in the Constitution. As Charles Scaliger pointed out in *The New American* in September, 2011, there are only two visions of the police power: One vision is for police to serve and protect the citizens against violent infringements on their sovereign rights, period. Any extension beyond that by a policeman would be subject to punishment, just like any other public servant. The other vision, much more ominous, is where the police power is used to protect the establishment — the powers that be — from its subjects. Wrote Scaliger: The hallmarks of such military police include the surveillance camera, the checkpoint, and the use of ... extreme measures with impunity.

As long as citizens are willing to put up with the continuing extension of brute military force, far in excess of what is needed in the wars on drugs and terrorism, then these raids by local police-turned-military enforcers will continue. As Scaliger concluded:

As long as America remains in thrall of an open-ended "War on Terror [and Drugs]," the temptation will persist to continue federalizing ... our local police. Our once-trusted local police are gradually morphing into a force more to be feared and avoided.

The John Birch Society's program to [Support Your Local Police](#) has always included the addenda: "and keep them independent." If that decades-long program fails, then, as Scaliger predicts:



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We may then anticipate even worse developments, chief among them the creation of a bona fide secret police to secure the interests of a regime altogether hostile to the people it once purported to serve.

Photo of SWAT team in Arizona: AP Images

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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