



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 29, 2017

Trump Reauthorizes Military Equipment for Police

By [executive order](#) issued under “the authority vested in [him] by the Constitution,” Donald Trump restored the federal program whereby local and state law enforcement can apply to receive surplus military equipment from the U.S. Department of Defense.

In a speech delivered Monday, August 28 at the national convention of the Fraternal Order of Police being held in Nashville, Tennessee, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions revealed the president’s plan “to a cheering crowd,” according to the *Washington Post*’s report on the attorney general’s announcement.



The pipeline of materiel from Pentagon to police precinct is known as Department of Defense Program 1033, and it has been a fruitful bough from which local law enforcement has eaten eagerly.

Robots, facial recognition, and drones: These are the technologically advanced tools that used to belong to the military, but are now commonplace in local police departments thanks to grants authorized decades ago by the Defense Department’s 1033 program and now reauthorized by President Trump’s latest executive order.

The current president had to use his pen to power up the program after the previous president used his to curtail it after the protests following the events in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2015.

Why did President Trump find it necessary to open what President Obama had closed? There was no official declaration from the White House, unless one counts the title of the executive order: “Presidential Executive Order on Restoring State, Tribal, and Local Law Enforcement’s Access to Life-Saving Equipment and Resources.”

A local Nashville television station, however, reported [a partial transcript](#) of Attorney General Sessions’ remarks, and they cast further light on the likely reasons for the restoration:

Helping law enforcement do their jobs, helping the police get better, and celebrating the noble, honorable, essential and challenging work of our law enforcement communities will always be a top priority of President Trump and this Department of Justice. We will always seek to affirm the critical role of police officers in our society and we will not participate in anything that would give comfort to radicals who promote agendas that preach hostility rather than respect for police.

President Trump is serious about this mission. He is doing all he can to restore law and order and support our police across America. And that is why, today, I am here to announce that President Trump is issuing an executive order that will make it easier to protect yourselves and your communities. He is rescinding restrictions from the prior administration that limited your agencies’ ability to get equipment through federal programs, including life saving gear like Kevlar vests and helmets and first responder and rescue equipment like what they’re using in Texas right now.



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Some of these programs, like the Department of Defense's 1033 program that Congress signed into law more than 25 years ago, have recycled more than \$5.4 billion in used gear and equipment that taxpayers had already purchased, and made it available for your agencies to repurpose it in the fight against terrorism, crime, and disaster relief. Equipment like helicopters and armored vehicles are also vitally important to emergency and disaster response efforts.

One sheriff told me earlier this year about how, due to the prior administration's restrictions, the federal government made his department return an armored vehicle that can change the dynamics of an active shooter situation. These are the types of helmets and gear that stopped a bullet and saved the life of an officer during the Orlando nightclub shooting. This is the type of equipment officers needed when they pursued and ultimately killed terrorists in San Bernardino. Studies have shown this equipment reduces crime rates, reduces the number of assaults against police officers, and reduces the number of complaints against police officers.

Those restrictions went too far. We will not put superficial concerns above public safety. All you need to do is turn on a TV right now to see that for Houstonians this isn't about appearances, its about getting the job done and getting everyone to safety.

There it is in the words of the attorney general. The reasons local law enforcement needs leftover military war fighting equipment is to keep you safe. Safety.

The arguably oldest exchange ever conducted between the governed and the governors: The latter promise safety if the former will purchase it with liberty.

One federal lawmaker mentioned that dangerous and often deadly deal (liberty for safety) in a statement issued just minutes after AG Sessions revealed the restoration of the 1033 program.

In a press release announcing legislation aimed in limiting the scope of the Pentagon-to-police distribution deal, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) said:

Americans must never sacrifice their liberty for an illusive and dangerous —or false — security. I disagree with Attorney General Sessions on the Department of Defense's 1033 program. The militarization of our law enforcement is due to an unprecedented expansion of government power in this realm.

It is one thing for federal officials to work with local authorities to reduce or solve crime, but it is another for them to subsidize militarization.

I will oppose this move by the Attorney General and the administration, and I will continue to fight for civil liberties and criminal justice reform, which will all be major issues this fall.

Defense Department grants of military materiel to police departments are the opposite of the movement sponsored for decades now by The John Birch Society to "Support Your Local Police." Police who receive vehicles, surveillance equipment, weapons, training, and tear gas from the Pentagon are hardly local, and when there is a conflict of interest between those being served (the community) and those providing the powerful weapons, the people are all too likely to be ignored in favor of the givers of the free stuff: the federal government.

Jim Fitzgerald worked for eight years as a vice and narcotics squad detective in Newark, New Jersey, before joining the staff of The John Birch Society, and he is currently the point man for the organization's "Support Your Local Police" initiative.

In an interview with *The New American* conducted in 2014, Fitzgerald said of the military-grade



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equipment being bought by local law enforcement with DHS grant money, “The only reason to have this equipment is to use it,” and it is likely it would be used against local citizens who have risen up and created some sort of civil disorder.

Paradoxically, the police’s push to be prepared and trained to quell civil unrest is fomenting the feelings that could create such an uprising. Americans are tired of reading reports of law enforcement behaving less like the police and more like the gestapo, less like servants of the law and more like servants of the state, deployed with the training, technology, tactics, and weapons capable of enforcing the increasingly unconstitutional edicts of the ruling regime.

On January 20, 2017, Donald J. Trump placed his hand on a Bible and swore to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” Where in that document is the president granted — as he claims he is in the first sentence of his executive order — the power to, as Sessions worded it, “restore law and order and support police across America”?



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