



Dallas Under Surveillance; DHS Takeover of Law Enforcement Marches On

Another week and another volume of stories in local newspapers reporting on another local police department receiving millions in grant money from the Department of Homeland Security.

From coast to coast, cash-strapped local law-enforcement agencies are taking possession of military-grade weapons, ammunition, and vehicles as part of a DHS program that provides such materiel in return for partnership with the federal government. Technologically advanced surveillance equipment is usually included in the deal, as well.



There are myriad problems with this relationship. First, there is not a syllable of the Constitution granting the federal government authority to provide financial aid to towns or states. Second, history proves that officers will use the combat-capable gear bought for them if they have the chance. Third, and most troubling is the fact that a quasi-military arm of the federal government is using what amounts to little more than bribes to convert local law enforcement into branches of DHS. Police, then, are obliged to heed their federal master's voice, rather than to protect and serve their fellow citizens.

From pieces culled from local newspapers around the country, the sinister story unfolds:

From [Yuma County, Arizona](#):

Yuma County will be receiving almost \$1 million in funds from the Arizona Department of Homeland Security.

AZDOHS awarded the sheriff's office \$757,748 in overtime and mileage funding for ongoing border activities as part of the Operation Stonegarden Grant Program.

The funds include \$676,561 for overtime and \$81,187 for mileage costs.

In addition, the sheriff's office will receive another \$169,375 from AZDOHS to cover radio user fees, radio and computer equipment, also as part of Operation Stonegarden.

Then, from Livingston County, New York, the *Livingston County News* [reports](#) that their county's law enforcement will receive millions from Homeland Security for a seemingly innocuous purpose: upgraded communication equipment. The problem is that such a program is unconstitutional and undoubtedly comes with strings attaching Livingston County to DHS headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Livingston County will receive nearly \$6 million in grant funding to upgrade the county's 911 emergency communications system.

The grant, for \$5,994,854, includes state and federal funds distributed through the Statewide Interoperable Communications Grant administered by the state Division of Homeland Security and



Emergency Services.

The project will improve communications capability of law enforcement, increase the interoperability of fire and medical agencies, address known coverage gaps and deficiencies, and develop a strategy to replace old and obsolete equipment, according to Sheriff John York.

The money will allow the county to upgrade to a new high-frequency radio system that will allow all first responders to be on the same digital frequency and communicate with each other. Without the upgrade, different frequencies sometimes require agencies to communicate through emergency dispatchers. With everyone on the same frequency, the new system will “increase the ability and ease for all,” said Undersheriff James M. Szczesniak.

In Montana, DHS money is paying to upgrade equipment and facilities, including a building that will be turned “into an emergency operations center where responders from different agencies can meet to coordinate in emergencies. Another area will be converted “into a joint information center able to serve as a hub for media briefing in crisis situations.” The planned purpose for the buildings sounds substantially similar to the description of fusion centers provided by the DHS.

The following information is taken from a fact sheet on fusion centers [posted on the DHS website](#): “A fusion center is a collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise and information to the center with the goal of maximizing their ability to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity.”

The DHS website provides an overview of the functioning of these incubators for the forthcoming federal police force:

State and major urban area fusion centers (fusion centers) serve as primary focal points within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information among federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners.... Fusion centers conduct analysis and facilitate information sharing, assisting law enforcement and homeland security partners in preventing, protecting against, and responding to crime and terrorism.

The literature promoting the acceptance of fusion centers lists several ways the new federal agency will impose its will on the formerly autonomous and accountable police chief or county sheriff.

Last year, *The New American* described the likely procedure:

First, the feds will decide where and when to deploy local police department personnel. The chief, if he still exists, will be no more than a functionary required to make sure that the orders of the federal government are carried out. More likely than not, these new missions, in addition to preventing crime in the city or county, will engage in the collection of information about and apprehension of those local citizens identified by a committee in Washington as posing a threat to national security. Consider the revelation in 2009 that Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis released a document entitled “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalism and Recruitment,” which listed war veterans, anti-abortion activists, small-government advocates, and those concerned about immigration as terrorist risks.

Second, DHS (or whichever one of the federal agencies eventually takes over law-enforcement duties) will train new recruits. Policies, procedures, and purposes will not reflect traditional (and constitutional) goals of law enforcement, but will be tailored to training officers to perform those



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duties associated with the new, national emphasis of the force, with a slant toward federalism.

Again, it is critical to remember that funds for this conversion from local police department to outpost of the federal law-enforcement agency will be provided by the bureaucrats on Capitol Hill. This carrot will be tied to the stick of federal fealty.

Finally, the Dallas News (an online product of the *Dallas Morning News*) [chronicles developments in Big D](#) that are of concern to residents and to all Americans wary and weary of the seemingly never-ending expansion of the federal government's surveillance web. As reported on December 11:

The city's nine highest-crime areas now have some additional crime-fighting help: surveillance cameras and automatic license plate readers.

This year, the Dallas Police Department installed 76 new surveillance cameras and 28 plate readers in high-crime areas.

Officials see the technology, which was already being used in other areas of the city, as a key to reducing and preventing crime while also toeing the line between privacy and security concerns.

Police officials say they have already had some positive early results from the technology, but say it's too early to know what effect, if any, the cameras will have on reducing crime rates.

Dallas now joins [Seattle](#), [Las Vegas](#), [Baltimore](#), New York City, [New Jersey](#), and as many as 60 other locations which have taken DHS grant money in exchange for installing cameras, microphones, and other surveillance equipment.

In Dallas, license plate readers are included in the inventory of new federally funded surveillance gear. It's simple to see why cash-strapped cities would welcome federal largesse, but what's in it for Homeland Security?

DHS is proud of the success of its program to use federal funds to save struggling police departments and sheriff's offices, converting them into "partners" with the massive and unconstitutional federal agency. "We have brought resources and expertise to our law enforcement partners and built new mechanisms to share information. This includes investments in training for local law enforcement and first responders of all types in order to increase expertise and capacity at the local level," DHS states on its website.

These "new mechanisms" include powerful surveillance cameras and network towers that trace cellphones and computers.

In the Dallas News story, local law-enforcement officials brag that these new eyes in the sky "feed to City Hall and police headquarters and are monitored to give real-time information to officers." Deputy Chief Catrina Shead also said "she hopes the cameras eventually will link directly to patrol substations." Given the source of the money, it isn't difficult to determine who else requires real-time access to the new surveillance system's video feed.

Sadly, the police force trend of turning to the DHS for money is allowing Homeland Security to use that money to stretch the federal surveillance net.

So far, the DHS has marked 1,849 locations scattered throughout the 50 states that will serve as regional surveillance collection centers. As part of the department's 2010 budget, \$48 million was spent establishing the centers.



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There is a major constitutional obstacle to such constant monitoring of citizens: the Fourth Amendment. The [Fourth Amendment guarantees that](#):

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Such sweeping surveillance technology does not conform to the constitutional requirement that all searches be reasonable and be conducted with warrants based on probable cause.

Given the power of the tools being brought by DHS into cities and towns as they take effective control of local law enforcement, it is difficult to determine who is being watched, why they are being watched, and who is doing the watching.

Citizens and tourists should be aware of the newly installed equipment and of the undeniable fact that their own tax dollars are being used to build the federal surveillance hubs in their hometowns.

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