

May 13, 2021

## **155 organizations endorse “Demilitarizing Local Law Enforcement Act of 2021” to end the 1033 Program**

Dear Honorable Members of the U.S. House of Representatives,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for Rep. Velazquez’s bill, “Demilitarizing Local Law Enforcement Act of 2021” to end the U.S. Department of Defense’s 1033 Program. We ask that you co-sponsor this legislation.

The 1033 Program has contributed to a military-style police culture and has endangered countless lives, particularly in communities of color. Items received through the 1033 Program commonly include equipment such as armored vehicles, rifles, and aircraft.<sup>1</sup> Since its inception in the 1990s, the 1033 Program has facilitated the transfer of more than \$7.4 billion worth of equipment from the U.S. Department of Defense to state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies.<sup>2</sup>

The 1033 Program has caused immeasurable harm in communities across America. Data has shown that the increased transfer of equipment through the 1033 Program increases the number of police killings in communities, particularly in the context of SWAT drug raids.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, studies have shown that militarized police units are more often deployed in Black communities, even after controlling for local crime rates, and this further damages police-community relations.<sup>4</sup> Through the use of hyper-aggressive tools and military strategies facilitated by the 1033 Program, communities of color, which have disproportionately borne the brunt of the war on drugs, face an increased risk of violence from police. It is important to highlight that the U.S. Department of Defense does not provide any training to law enforcement agencies who receive controlled equipment from this program. Instead, it is up to individual law enforcement

---

<sup>1</sup> Drug Policy Alliance, *The 1033 Program, Police Militarization, and the War on Drugs*, March 2021, <https://drugpolicy.org/resource/1033-program-police-militarization-and-war-drugs>.

<sup>2</sup> Defense Logistics Agency, Law Enforcement Support Office, see <https://www.dla.mil/DispositionServices/Offers/Reutilization/LawEnforcement.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> ACLU, *War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing*, 2014, <https://www.aclu.org/report/war-comes-home-excessive-militarization-american-police>.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Mummolo, *Militarization fails to enhance police safety or reduce crime but may harm police reputation*, September 11, 2018, <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/37/9181>.

agencies to create their own training.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, communities have little to no protection from law enforcement's misuse of this equipment.

While militarized police forces grew out of the drug war, militarization is a common staple of policing today. The 1033 Program, specifically, has contributed to the rise of the warrior cop mentality against Black and Brown communities. It has paved the way for militarized police responses to protests against police violence, like we witnessed in the summer of 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri when people protesting the killing of Michael Brown at the hands of a police officer were met with law enforcement equipped with tank-like vehicles and riot gear. This past summer, as mourners and protestors gathered in cities across the country to demand justice for George Floyd and other victims of police violence, at least 17 mine-resistant vehicles (MRAPs) obtained through the 1033 Program were deployed by police departments around the country.<sup>6</sup> In Salt Lake City, an elderly man with a cane was knocked down by a police officer who had emerged from a MRAP, while in Philadelphia, officers in MRAPs threw tear gas at protestors. Disturbingly, about 1,100 MRAPs have been distributed to law enforcement under the 1033 Program.<sup>7</sup>

What's more, the 1033 Program has been notoriously mismanaged through the years.<sup>8</sup> For example, in 2017, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) created a fictitious police department and was able to secure \$1.2 million worth of military equipment through the 1033 Program, including night-vision goggles, simulated rifles, and simulated pipe bombs, which could be modified into potentially lethal items.<sup>9</sup> GAO found a routine lack of identity verification during transfers and that the program was lacking rigorous fraud risk assessments. In other words, there was no centralized system for monitoring where this equipment went and how it was used.

It is our assessment that the 1033 Program is irreparable and should be abolished, especially in light of the fact that past attempts to reform the program were ineffective.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Brian Barret, *The Pentagon's Hand-Me-Downs Helped Militarize Police. Here's How*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.wired.com/story/pentagon-hand-me-downs-militarize-police-1033-program/>.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew W. Lehren, Didi Martinez, Emmanuelle Saliba and Robert Windrem, *Floyd protests renew debate about police use of armored vehicles, other military gear*, NBC News, March 3, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/floyd-protests-renew-debate-about-police-use-armored-vehicles-other-n1231288>.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew W. Lehren, *Floyd protests renew debate about police use of armored vehicles, other military gear*.

<sup>8</sup> Friends Committee on National Legislation, *1033 Program & Policy Militarization*, March 2018, [https://www.fcnl.org/sites/default/files/documents/1033\\_and\\_police\\_militarization\\_fact\\_sheet\\_3\\_23\\_18.pdf](https://www.fcnl.org/sites/default/files/documents/1033_and_police_militarization_fact_sheet_3_23_18.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, "DOD Excess Property: Enhanced Controls Needed for Access to Excess Controlled Property," 2017, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-17-532>.

As for non-military equipment that is made available through 1033, such as microwaves and filing cabinets, Congress should consider transferring those items through a new agency and program that makes this equipment available to community organizations and stakeholders beyond law enforcement.

To co-sponsor, please contact Jonathan Martinez (Rep. Velazquez) at [jonathan.martinez@mail.house.gov](mailto:jonathan.martinez@mail.house.gov). If you have any questions or would like to discuss this letter, please reach out to Maritza Perez (Drug Policy Alliance) at [mperez@drugpolicy.org](mailto:mperez@drugpolicy.org), Sakira Cook (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights) at [cook@civilrights.org](mailto:cook@civilrights.org), or Yasmine Taeb at [yasminetaeb@gmail.com](mailto:yasminetaeb@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

18 Million Rising  
About Face: Veterans Against the War  
Action Center on Race & the Economy  
Activated Massachusetts African Community  
Advocacy Without Borders  
The Advocates for Human Rights  
African American Ministers In Action  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Family Voices  
American Friends Service Committee  
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)  
Amnesty International USA  
Arab American Institute  
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)  
Armenian-American Action Network (AAAN)  
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
Beyond the Bomb  
Brennan Center for Justice  
Bridges Faith Initiative  
Campaign for Liberty

---

<sup>10</sup> ACLU, *"It's Past Time to End the Federal Militarization of Police"*, May 12, 2021, <https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/its-past-time-to-end-the-federal-militarization-of-police/>.

Center for American Progress  
Center for Civilians in Conflict  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Center for Disability Rights  
Center for International Policy  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for Victims of Torture  
Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law at New York University School of Law  
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office  
Church World Service  
CODEPINK  
Color Of Change  
Common Defense  
Community Alliance on Prisons  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd  
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
Daily Kos  
The Daniel Initiative  
Defending Rights & Dissent  
Dignity & Power NOW  
Dream Corps JUSTICE  
Drug Policy Alliance  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)  
Equal Justice Society  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Essie Justice Group  
The Feminist Foreign Policy Project  
Foreign Policy for America  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Futures Without Violence  
GLSEN  
Government Information Watch  
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance  
Greenpeace US  
Hispanic Federation  
Historians for Peace and Democracy  
Human Rights Campaign  
Human Rights First  
ICNA Council for Social Justice

Impact Fund  
Indivisible  
Interfaith Action for Human Rights  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jetpac Resource Center, Inc.  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Justice For Muslims Collective  
Justice is Global  
Justice Strategies  
Juvenile Law Center  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
La Union Del Pueblo Entero  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention  
MADRE  
Massachusetts Peace Action  
Media Alliance  
MediaJustice  
Metropolitan Community Churches, Global Justice Institute  
MomsRising  
Mothers Against Police Brutality  
Multicultural AIDS Coalition  
Muslim Justice League  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers  
National Association of Social Workers  
The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls  
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Education Association  
National Homelessness Law Center  
National Immigrant Justice Center  
National Immigration Project (NIP-NLG)  
National Iranian American Council Action (NIAC Action)  
National Network of Arab American Communities (NNAAC)  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies  
Oakland Privacy  
Open Society Policy Center  
Organized Communities Against Deportations  
Our Revolution  
OVEC-Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition  
Oxfam America  
Peace Action  
People's Action  
Poder in Action  
PolicyLink  
Poligon Education Fund  
Presente.org  
Progressive Democrats of America  
Project Blueprint  
Project On Government Oversight  
Project South  
Public Citizen  
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft  
Racial Justice NOW  
Restore The Fourth  
Rethinking Foreign Policy  
Revolutionary Love Project  
Revolving Door Project  
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights  
RootsAction.org  
Secure Families Initiative  
Security Policy Reform Institute (SPRI)  
Sierra Club  
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)  
The Sikh Coalition  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund  
TN State Conference NAACP  
UndocuBlack Network  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries  
United for Peace and Justice  
United We Dream Network  
U.S. Labor Against Racism and War

Veterans for American Ideals  
Voices for Progress  
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.  
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center  
Win Without War  
Women's Action for New Directions  
Women Watch Afrika  
Working Families Party  
World BEYOND War  
World Can't Wait Hawai`i  
World Without Genocide

CC:

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, U.S. House of Representatives  
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, U.S. House of Representatives  
Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, U.S. House of Representatives  
Chairman Adam Smith, House Armed Services Committee