

# REPS. LABRADOR AND JOHNSON INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN BILL TO DEMILITARIZE POLICE

## Member of Congress move to reform program that gives military-grade weapons to local law enforcement departments

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Reps. Raul Labrador (R-ID) and Hank Johnson (D-GA) introduced the bipartisan [Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act of 2014](#), H.R. 5478, which would place restrictions and transparency measures on the Department of Defense program that transfers surplus military equipment to state and local law enforcement agencies.

“Our nation was founded on the principle of a clear line between the military and civilian policing,” Labrador said. “The Pentagon’s current surplus property program blurs that line by introducing a military model of overwhelming force in our cities and towns. Our bill would restore the focus of local law enforcement on protecting citizens and providing due process for the accused.”

Under the Pentagon’s “1033” program, the Department of Defense has provided \$4.2 billion in surplus military equipment – often from warzones in Iraq and Afghanistan – to state and local law enforcement agencies without charge. Recently, a large number of small towns have been given tank-like Mine Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicles (MRAPs). Many others have received grenade launchers and high-caliber assault rifles. Even college campus police are receiving advanced equipment and weaponry. While vital in war, much of this equipment is not suited for civilian law enforcement.

“Militarizing America’s main streets won’t make us any safer, just more fearful and more reticent,” Johnson said. “Before another small town’s police force gets a \$700,000 gift from the Defense Department that it can’t maintain or manage, it behooves us to press pause on the Pentagon’s 1033 program and revisit the merits of a militarized America.”

The Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act would:

- Prevent transfers of equipment inappropriate for local policing, such as high-caliber weapons, long-range acoustic devices, grenade launchers, weaponized drones, armored vehicles, and grenades or similar explosives.
- End incentives to use equipment in circumstances when the use is unnecessary. Under the 1033 program, local police are required to use the equipment within a year, incentivizing towns to use it in inappropriate circumstances.
- Require that recipients certify that they can account for all equipment. In 2012, the weapons portion of the 1033 program was temporarily suspended after DOD found that a local sheriff had gifted out army-surplus Humvees and other supplies. This bill would prohibit re-gifting and require recipients to account for all equipment received from DOD.

The bill adds requirements to enforce tracking mechanisms that keep up with and control transfers of the equipment, implement policies ensuring that police agencies can't surplus the equipment for resale and define drones more clearly.

Original co-sponsors are: Reps. Justin Amash (R-MI), Tom McClintock (R-CA), John Conyers (D-MI), and Jim Moran (D-VA).

*Dan Popkey*