

June 30, 2020

Dear House Armed Services Committee Members:

The undersigned civil, human rights, faith, and government accountability organizations, representing millions of our members across the country, write in support of ending the Department of Defense's 1033 Program and associated transfers of all military equipment and vehicles to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.¹

The military surplus equipment transfer program, known as the 1033 Program, was formally established in the 1997 FY National Defense Authorization Act.² Since its inception, more than \$7.4 billion in surplus military equipment and goods, including armored vehicles, rifles, and aircraft, have been transferred to more than 8,000 law enforcement agencies.³ The program came to national attention in the aftermath of the killing of Michael Brown in 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. Since then, Congressional leaders have tried to reform or end this program that has caused an increase in militarized policing particularly in communities of color.⁴

Research studies indicate that the 1033 Program is not only unsafe but ineffective as it fails to reduce crime or improve police safety.⁵ In 2015, President Obama issued Executive Order 13688 that provided necessary oversight of the program.⁶ The Executive Order has since been rescinded, which only underscores that legislative action -- not executive orders -- is critical to address the concerns with this program.

¹ LESO Property Transferred to Participating Agencies. Defense Logistics Agency. <https://www.dla.mil/DispositionServices/Offers/Reutilization/LawEnforcement/PublicInformation/>.

² Daniel Else, "The '1033 Program', Department of Defense Support to Law Enforcement," CRS. <https://fas.org/sqp/crs/natsec/R43701.pdf>.

³ Briant Barrett, "The Pentagon's Hand-Me-Downs Helped Militarize Police. Here's How," Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/pentagon-hand-me-downs-militarize-police-1033-program/>.

⁴ Taylor Wofford, "How America's Police Became an Army: The 1033 Program," Newsweek. 13 Aug. 2014. <https://www.newsweek.com/how-americas-police-became-army-1033-program-264537>.

⁵ Jonathan Mummolo, "Militarization fails to enhance police safety or reduce crime but may harm police reputation," PNAS. <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/37/9181>.

⁶ Federal Register, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2015-01-22/pdf/2015-01255.pdf>.

In the aftermath of Ferguson, law enforcement agencies across the country have continued to receive military equipment and weapons of war, including “494 mine-resistant vehicles, at least 800 pieces of body armor, more than 6,500 rifles, and at least 76 aircraft.”⁷

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have also received enormous amounts of excess military equipment as part of the militarization of our border.⁸ This is particularly concerning at a time when ICE and CBP units are being deployed in response to peaceful protests⁹ and for interior law enforcement programs.¹⁰

In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder in Minneapolis, millions have demonstrated globally against police brutality and systemic racism. In cities across our country, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators called for justice and accountability for George Floyd and the countless unarmed Black people that have been killed by law enforcement.

In response to the national outrage, armored vehicles, assault weapons, and military gear once again filled our streets and communities, turning them into war zones. Weapons of war have absolutely no place in our communities. What’s more, evidence has shown that law enforcement agencies that obtain military equipment are more prone to violence.¹¹

There are sincere and aggressive efforts in the House¹² and Senate¹³ to severely curtail or end the Department of Defense 1033 Program. Millions of Americans have been calling for the 1033

⁷ John Templeton, “Police Departments Have Received Hundreds Of Millions Of Dollars In Military Equipment Since Ferguson,” BuzzFeed News. 4 June 2020.
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/johntemplon/police-departments-military-gear-1033-program>.

⁸ Tori Bateman, “How the U.S. Southern Border Became a Militarized Zone,”
<https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2020/04/13/us-southern-border-militarized/>.

⁹ Spencer Ackerman, “ICE, Border Patrol Say Some ‘Secret’ Police Leaving D.C.” Daily Beast.
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/ice-border-patrol-say-some-secret-police-leaving-dc>.

¹⁰ Caitlin Dickerson, “Border Patrol Will Deploy Elite Tactical Agents to Sanctuary Cities,” New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/us/Border-Patrol-ICE-Sanctuary-Cities.html>.

¹¹ Ryan Welch and Jack Mewhirter. “Does military equipment lead police officers to be more violent? We did the research.” Washington Post. June 30 2017.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/30/does-military-equipment-lead-police-officers-to-be-more-violent-we-did-the-research/>.

¹² Rep. Velázquez, introduces Demilitarizing Local Law Enforcement Act of 2020 to repeal the 1033 Program,
<https://velazquez.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/velazquez-bill-would-demilitarize-police>.

¹³ Sen. Schatz, introduces Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act,
<https://www.schatz.senate.gov/press-releases/schatz-reintroduces-bipartisan-legislation-to-stop-police-militarization>.

Program to be shut down, with legislation introduced in both chambers to address these concerns.¹⁴

Accordingly, we urge you to use the opportunity of the full committee markup of the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act to support and include language to end the Department of Defense's 1033 Program.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Yasmine Taeb at yasmine@demandprogress.org.

Sincerely,

Action Corps
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
American Friends Service Committee
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)
America's Voice
Amnesty International USA
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Arms Control Association
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Beyond the Bomb
Bridges Faith Initiative
Center for Civilians in Conflict
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for International Policy
Center for Victims of Torture
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
CODEPINK
Common Defense

¹⁴ The Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights, "400+ Civil Rights Organizations Urge Congressional Action on Police Violence," June 2, 2020, <https://civilrights.org/2020/06/01/400-civil-rights-organizations-urge-congressional-action-on-police-violence/>.

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
Drug Policy Alliance
Farmworker Association of Florida
The Feminist Foreign Policy Project
Foreign Policy for America
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Historians for Peace and Democracy
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
Islamophobia Studies Center
Jetpac
Jewish Voice for Peace Action
Just Foreign Policy
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
March For Our Lives
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Justice League
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Council of Churches
National Disability Rights Network
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Iranian American Council Action
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New York Immigration Coalition
Open Society Policy Center
Our Revolution
Oxfam America
Peace Action
People For the American Way
Platform

Poligon Education Fund
Project Blueprint
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
ReThinking Foreign Policy
Restore The Fourth
RootsAction.org
Security Policy Reform Institute (SPRI)
SEIU
September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Sierra Club
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southern Border Communities Coalition
SPLC Action Fund
Stand Up America
Texas Civil Rights Project
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
US Labor Against the War
Veterans for American Ideals
Win Without War
Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS)
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
World BEYOND War
Yemeni Alliance Committee
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation