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Police Expert: War On Terror Has Turned Our Cops Into Occupying Armies — And We’re The Enemy

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by [Larry Diffey](#) , [November 16, 2014](#)

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Oath Keepers has been warning about the militarization of police departments for quite a while. It’s nice that others are seeing the problem, too. – Shorty Dawkins, Associate Editor

[This article comes from rawstory.com](#)

by Travis Gettys

The war on terror has essentially turned police into occupying armies in some American communities, said a police and criminology expert.

Thomas Nolan, an associate professor of criminology at Merrimack College and former senior policy analyst with the Department of Homeland Security, said the focus of police work had shifted greatly since he was a Boston police officer in the 1980s and 1990s.

“I remember it being drilled into me as a police officer, as a sergeant and then as a lieutenant: partnership, problem-solving, and prevention – the three Ps,” [Nolan said Wednesday during a panel](#) sponsored by the American Constitution Society.

He said police were heavily trained to form alliances to help them to better serve and protect communities, and he said those relationships clearly don’t exist in Ferguson, Missouri.

While the war on drugs is frequently cited as a major factor in the breakdown of civil liberties and police-community relations, Nolan said a more recent shift was largely to blame.

“In the early 2000s, particularly after 9/11, we saw a paradigm shift from community policing and problem-oriented principles to the war on terror, and we became Homeland Security police,” said Nolan, who has worked in the federal agency’s Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

He said this shift toward “homeland security” had quickly destroyed the relationships police had worked

nearly two decades to build.

“I think what has happened as a direct result of that, is that those relationships that we forged, and worked so hard to attain and to maintain in the late 1980s and early 1990s, began to erode because the police were seen, particularly in communities of color, as an army of occupation,” Nolan said.

“If you dress police officers up as soldiers and you put them in military vehicles and you give them military weapons, they adopt a warrior mentality,” he continued. “We fight wars against enemies, and the enemies are the people who live in our cities – particularly in communities of color.”

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<httpv://youtu.be/ijdMvM8FwXY>

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[Read more here.](#)

NOTE FROM STEWART:

The one thing I really disagree with Officer Nolan on is this:

“We fight wars against enemies, and the enemies are the people who live in our cities – particularly in communities of color.”

The perception of the people as “the enemy” in a “war on terrorism” and a “war on drugs” is not just in cities, nor is it just applied to “communities of color.” That perception is applied in small town America as well as in cities, and to ALL Americans, of every race, creed, and color. It is not a “black” problem. It is not a “brown” problem. It is an *American* problem. Any American, anywhere, at any time, can be subjected to the same military tactics and mindset, whether during a raid on their home, during a traffic stop, or any other encounter with police. Sniper rifles were pointed in at protesting Americans at Bundy Ranch in Nevada just as much as in Ferguson, Missouri. And likewise for the response to the Boston bombing in the search of Watertown, MA, where weapons were pointed in at entire families as they were ordered from their homes. And any American can suffer the fate of [Jose Guerena](#) (Marine Iraq veteran killed in SWAT raid), [Bounkham Phonesavah](#) (a one year old baby burned with a flash-bang), or any of the many other Americans caught up in the overuse and abuses of SWAT teams seen here:

<http://www.cato.org/raidmap>

And any American can end up like [John T. Williams](#) (deaf woodcarver shot by Seattle cop while whittling a stick), or [David Eckert](#) (repeatedly cavity searched and subjected to forced enemas and colonoscopy), or like [these two women](#) cavity searched on the side of the road. What does race have to do with it? Not much.

[This](#), [this](#), [this](#), or [this](#), can happen to any American, of any race, in any community, at any time.

As retired Pennsylvania police officer Larry Hohol put it, when referring to that last link (the Robert Leone beating): “But for the grace of God, this could have been your child or family member that these horrific acts happened to.” Watch his video analysis of that incident [here](#). That had nothing to do with race, but everything to do with abuse of power.

American police have a problem, and this problem is now endemic, and reaches into every community. As former NYPD Detective Frank Serpico [recently said](#):

Today the combination of an excess of deadly force and near-total lack of accountability is more dangerous than ever: Most cops today can pull out their weapons and fire without fear that anything will happen to them, even if they shoot someone wrongfully. All a police officer has to say is that he believes his life was in danger, and he’s typically absolved. What do you think that does to their psychology as they patrol the streets—this sense of invulnerability?

The famous old saying still applies: Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

And it is a problem that the good police have a DUTY to stop. You officers who are the “good cops” out there must police your own and put a stop to the abuse by the bad cops, and that includes all the overuse and abuse of SWAT teams, all of the violations of rights perpetrated in the name of the “war on drugs” and all of the excessive force and violations of rights that occur all over this nation, every day.

You are *all* rapidly losing the hearts and minds of the American people – losing their trust and support – because they increasingly see you as a threat to their lives and liberty, rather than as an ally in keeping their community safe. A growing majority of the American people of all backgrounds no longer see you as the “officer friendly” they were taught to trust and respect as children, but instead see you as an occupying army – as unaccountable, unrestrained, militarized, armed “law enforcers” who can literally get away with murder. They fear you. And many of them now hate you.

Routinely, “officer safety” is put forth as the great excuse to justify all the militarization, including the increasingly militarized rules of engagement that in turn serve to cover and excuse even the most glaring cases of excessive force and abuse of power. But in the end, there are not enough MRAPS, not enough body armor, not enough .50 cal, select-fire M4s, sub-machine guns, sniper rifles, flash-bangs, or enough military trained SWAT teams to keep you safe once you lose the hearts and minds of the people and they turn against you en-mass. The only thing that will truly keep you safe is the trust, respect, and support of the people in your community.

And the only way you can restore that trust, respect, and support is by obeying your oath, by personally holding the bad cops among you accountable to YOU. You must defend the Constitution by enforcing the Constitution in a very direct way, on the scene, and in your department. As Frank Serpico [put it](#):

Law enforcement agencies need to eliminate those who use and abuse the power of the law as they see fit. As I said to the Knapp Commission 43 years ago, **we must create an atmosphere where the crooked cop fears the honest cop, and not the other way around.** **An honest cop should be able to speak out against unjust or illegal behavior by fellow officers without fear of ridicule or reprisals. Those that speak out should be rewarded and respected by their superiors, not punished.**

We’re not there yet.

Indeed, we are not “there” yet, and the honest cops, the ones who still take their oaths seriously, must take the lead in getting us “there.” And that takes courage and resolve to do what is right, on the spot, at all times, even at personal risk. It is what *must* be done to fix this problem. And in the long run, those good cops really have nothing to lose by doing what’s right, because, unless they step up and lead by example, they will lose everything once they lose the people.

For the Republic,

Stewart Rhodes

Founder and President of Oath Keepers

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About Author



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