

Friday, January 26, 2007

## Military Gives Police Parkas, Guns, Helicopters ...



### And Armored Vehicles, Hoorah!



That's right, the title to [that article](#) forgot to mention that local cops are also getting armor, and I mean the tracked kind, ala Waco, not just what you wear on your body. As the article itself explains:

Authorities in Bucks County, Pa., just outside Philadelphia, turned to the Pentagon for two hand-me-down armored vehicles to protect officers in hostage standoffs. The total savings to local taxpayers: more than \$70,000 a piece.

Forget about the "peace dividend" from the 1980's and early 90's - that's so passe' - we now have a *war dividend* to look forward to! What a deal for the taxpayers! Now even towns on a tight budget get to have good ol' M113 armored personnel carriers rolling through their neighborhoods with officers looking oh-so-high-speed. All in the name of "officer safety." No doubt more upscale areas will soon have Bradleys or M3A3 Strykers, and all the new police recruits fresh out of the military will already have familiarity with those vehicles, and with the tactics of using them to dominate a populace. We are so fortunate to be able to benefit from this windfall from the war dividend!

The armored vehicles are used in standoffs and hostage situations. "If you're in your office and barricaded, and one of these things pulls up in your front lawn, it's very intimidating," said Lt. Michael Clark of the Northampton Township Police Department in Bucks County.

"If you're in your office and barricaded?" What are they expecting, an insurgency of "Office Space" fans? How many people go into the office, perhaps having stopped at Starbucks on the way in for a Vente Mocha with three shots, and then just decide to barricade themselves? Are these officers really expecting an epidemic of dangerous white-collar criminals making desperate last-stands *at their office*?

The truth is, these guys just want to roll around playing Army and looking cool, as if they were Blackwater mercenaries rolling in Baghdad. When I lived in Mesa, Arizona for a time while I clerked for the Arizona Supreme Court, I saw some of the local cops driving down the street in an armored car, with the side door open, in combat fatigue pants and combat boots, but wearing muscle shirts and sun-glasses, looking real high-speed, for all the world like mercenaries in some third world banana republic or like a seen out of "Dogs of War."

We know why the cops like it, but why does the military give away such goodies to law enforcement? One explanation is that back in the 80s and 90s the military was scrambling for a mission as the Cold War wound down. Thus the Pentagon and its close allies, the defense contractors, turned to the "war on drugs" and "terrorism" as the new cash-crop reason for the bloated Pentagon budget. We even had shrill warnings about the grave dangers of "narco-terrorists" who actually combined those two horrid evils (shudder) and we were told that only the military could stop them! Thus a new


mission was born for the U.S. military which has steadily pushed its way into law enforcement, starting out in support roles, just like in Vietnam, but getting closer and closer to in-your-face and hands-on direct action. There has also been a corresponding and complimentary steady militarization of law enforcement such that the two are now hard to tell apart. Here is how the article cheerfully explains it:

The Defense Department's giveaway program started in 1990 to transfer surplus military parts to police for anti-drug and anti-terrorism work. Its mission was later broadened.

Yes, that mission was broadened. But why? The above noted phenomena of the military needing a new mission back then, and the hype of the drug war, are the more mundane answers. The more sinister answer is that this is being done as part of a relentless, long-term effort to condition us to an increasingly militarized society where we are used to seeing men in military uniforms, with military weapons, in military armored vehicles and helicopters, and even using military training and tactics as they "patrol" and conduct surveillance over us in ways that are beginning to be frighteningly difficult to distinguish from scenes in occupied Iraq or third-world dictatorships. Our police, who look at all of us as "civilians" and as potential criminals, and thus potential "bad-guys, " are becoming like an occupying standing army - like the standing army the Founders of this nation warned was so dangerous to liberty.

And through such federal give-away programs, which are a form of "cop welfare," the police are increasingly looking to Washington, and now directly to the Pentagon, for their financial and material support. Where will their loyalty lie? With you? You know the answer.

Stewart Rhodes

Posted by Stewart Rhodes at 11:58 PM 

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