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SWAT Lobby To Congress: Hands Off Our Mine-Resistant Vehicles!

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by [Larry Diffey](#) , [November 22, 2014](#)

SWAT MRAP



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by Tim Mak

Congressional lawmakers aren't so hot on the idea of military equipment going to local cops anymore, and that makes national police organizations nervous.

In an attempt to counter widespread concern over "militarized" local police departments, law enforcement groups are pressing Capitol Hill to not cut off the supply of armored vehicles, body armor and other military equipment to the nation's cops.

This week, the National Tactical Officers Association, the lobbying group for 1,600 SWAT teams across the country, emailed all legislative staffers in the House and Senate to express that they shared in "our nation's grief" over the events in Ferguson, Missouri.

But their ultimate message was unmistakable: Don't take away our gear.

"The police have to be one step ahead of the criminal element, have to be prepared for the worst-case scenario. You don't want a community to be taken over by one or many criminals," NTOA Executive Director Mark Lomax explained to The Daily Beast. "We're definitely for equipping our law enforcement officials out there properly, with proper training and proper policies."

So far, most of the conversation in Washington, D.C., has tended in the other direction, and a number of lawmakers say they want to curtail or eliminate the transfer of military equipment to civilian law enforcement.

Republican Sen. Rand Paul's office is considering introducing a bill that would prohibit all transfers of weapons from the military to law enforcement officials, establishing a kind of church-state boundary that couldn't be crossed. Elsewhere in the Capitol, the idea of having House Republicans defund the

Pentagon's weapons transfer program is also being mulled over.

Democrats have also expressed concern over the issue. Rep. Hank Johnson is rallying his colleagues behind a bill that would reform the Pentagon's 1033 program, which facilitates the transfer of equipment to law enforcement, while Sen. Carl Levin said that the Senate Armed Services Committee would reassess it the program.

"Congress established this program out of real concern that local law enforcement agencies were literally outgunned by drug criminals," Levin said in a statement. "We will review this program to determine if equipment provided by the Defense Department is being used as intended."

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