



# **ACLU of Arkansas joins Launch of Nationwide Investigation into Police Use of Military Technology & Tactics**

## **Militarization of Local Law Enforcement Erodes Civil Liberties, Encourages Overly Aggressive Policing**

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March 12, 2013– American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas has joined ACLU affiliates in other states today and filed public records requests to determine the extent to which local police departments are using federally subsidized military technology and tactics that are traditionally used overseas.

“Equipping state and local law enforcement with military weapons and vehicles, military tactical training, and actual military assistance to conduct traditional law enforcement erodes civil liberties and encourages increasingly aggressive policing, particularly in poor neighborhoods and communities of color,” said Kara Dansky, senior counsel for ACLU’s Center for Justice. “We’ve seen examples of this in several localities, but we don’t know the dimensions of the problem.”

The Arkansas ACLU made public records requests with some law enforcement agencies in Arkansas, seeking information on the use of:

- SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) Teams, including:
  - Number and purpose of deployments
  - Types of weapons used during deployments
  - Injuries sustained by civilians during deployments
  - Training materials
  - Funding sources
  
- Cutting edge weapons and technologies, including:
  - GPS tracking devices
  - Unmanned aerial vehicles (“drones”)
  - Augmented detainee restraint (“shock-cuffs”)
  - Military weaponry, equipment, and vehicles obtained from or funded by federal agencies such as the Departments of Defense and/or Homeland Security

Another request, sent to the Arkansas National Guard, seeks information regarding:

- Cooperative agreements between local police departments and the National Guard counter-drug program, and
- Incidents of National Guard contact with civilians

The ACLU of Arkansas also filed requests seeking information about the Fusion Center in Arkansas. The ostensible purpose of fusion centers, improving the sharing of anti-terrorism intelligence among different levels and arms of government, is legitimate and important. However, taken as a whole, fusion centers raise serious questions about privacy and effectiveness, including the blurring of lines of authority which can lead to evasion of accountability and oversight, cooperation with the private sector and military to create wholesale catalogs of information about the public, regardless of whether they are suspected of any criminal activity. The request seeks information about the types of information stored in these databases as well as who has access to the databases.

"The American people deserve to know how much our local police are using military weapons and tactics for everyday policing," said Allie Bohm, ACLU advocacy and policy strategist, "The militarization of local police is a threat to Americans' right to live without fear of military-style intervention in their daily lives, and we need to make sure these resources and tactics are deployed only with rigorous oversight and strong legal protections."

Affiliates from across the country have filed public records requests. Once the information has been collected and analyzed, if needed, the ACLU will use the results to recommend changes in law and policy governing the use of military tactics and technology in local law enforcement.

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