

Police State USA: Justice for Mike Brown and an End to Extrajudicial Killings

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“Groups on the ground in St. Louis are calling for [nationwide solidarity actions](#) in support of Justice for Mike Brown and the end of police and extrajudicial killings everywhere.”

As they should. And we should [all join in](#).

But “nationwide” and “everywhere” are odd terms to equate when discussing police militarization. Are we against extrajudicial killings (otherwise known as murder) by U.S. government employees and U.S. weapons in Pakistan? Yemen? Iraq? Gaza? And literally *everywhere* they occur? The militarization of local police in the United States is related to the militarization of U.S. foreign policy, which has now reached the point that bombing and “doing nothing” are generally [conceived](#) as the only two choices available. Local police are being militarized as a result of these factors:

- A culture glorifying militarization and justifying it as global policing.
- A federal government that directs roughly \$1 trillion every year into the U.S. military, depriving virtually everything else of needed resources.
- A federal government that still manages to find resources to offer free military weapons to local police in the U.S. and elsewhere.
- Weapons profiteers that eat up local subsidies as well as federal contracts while funding election campaigns, threatening job elimination in Congressional districts, and pushing for the unloading of weapons by the U.S. military on local police as one means of creating the demand for more.
- The use of permanent wartime fears to justify the removal of citizens’ rights, gradually allowing local police to begin viewing the people they were supposed to protect as low-level threats, potential terrorists, and enemies of law and order in particular when they exercise their former rights to speech and assembly. Police “excesses” like war “excesses” are not apologized for, as one does not apologize to an enemy.
- The further funding of abusive policing through asset forfeitures and SWAT raids.
- The further conflation of military and police through the militarization of borders, especially the Mexican border, the combined efforts of federal and local forces in fusion centers, the military’s engagement in “exercises” in the U.S., and the growth of the drone industry with the military, among others, flying drones in U.S. skies and piloting drones abroad from U.S. land.
- The growth of the profit-driven prison industry and mass incarceration, which dehumanize people in the minds of participants just as boot camp and the nightly news do to war targets.
- Economically driven disproportionate participation in, and therefore identification

with, the military by the very communities most suffering from its destruction of resources, rights, and lives.

But policing is not the only thing militarized by what President Eisenhower called the “total influence — economic, political, even spiritual” of the military industrial complex. Our morality is militarized, our entertainment is militarized, our natural world is militarized, and our education system is militarized. “Unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex” is not easily opposed while maintaining the military industrial complex. When Congress Members lend their support to a new war in Iraq while proposing that the U.S. Post Office and a dozen other decent things not be defunded, they are speaking out of both sides of their mouths. The United States cannot live like other wealthy nations while dumping \$1 trillion a year into a killing machine.

The way out of this cycle of madness in which we spend more just on *recruiting* someone into the military or on *locking them up* behind bars than we spend on educating them is to confront in a unified and coherent manner what Martin Luther King Jr. called the evils of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism. Not racism, extreme materialism, and what the military does to the local police. Not racism, extreme materialism, and what the military does to weapons testing sites. Not racism, extreme materialism, and what the military does to the people of Honduras causing them to flee to a land that then welcomes them with an attitude of militarism. Not any of these partial steps alone, but the whole package of interlocking evils of attitude and mindset.

There is a [no-fly-zone](#) over Ferguson, Missouri, because people in the U.S. government view the people of the United States increasingly as they view the people of other countries: as best controlled from the air. Notes the [War Resister League](#),

“Vigils and protests in Ferguson – a community facing persistent [racist profiling](#) and police brutality – have been attacked by tear gas, rubber bullets, police in fully-armored SWAT gear, and tank-like personnel carriers. This underscores not only the dangers of being [young, Black, and male in the US](#), but also the fear of mobilization and rebellion from within racialized communities facing the violence of austerity and criminalization.

“The parallels between the Israeli Defense Forces in Palestine, the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro, the Indian police in Kashmir, the array of oppressive armed forces in Iraq, and the LAPD in Skid Row could not be any clearer. . . .

“This is not happening by accident. What is growing the capacity of local police agencies to exercise this force are police militarization programs explicitly designed to do so. As St. Louis writer Jamala Rogers wrote in an article on the militarization of St. Louis Police [this past April](#), ‘It became clear that SWAT was designed as a response to the social unrest of the 1960s, particularly the anti-war and black liberation movements.’ Federal programs such as DoD 1033 and 1122, and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), in which [St. Louis Police are active participants](#), provide weapons and training to police departments across the country, directly from the Pentagon. Commenting on the ominous growth of the phenomenon, Rogers continues: ‘and now, Police Chief [of St. Louis Police] Sam Dotson wants to add drones to his arsenal.’

“The events in Ferguson over these last few days demonstrate that the violence of policing and militarism are inextricably bound. To realize justice and freedom as a condition for peace, we must work together to end police

militarization and violence.”

The War Resisters League is [organizing](#) against Urban Shield, an expo of military weapons for police and training event planned for Oakland, Calif., this September 4-8. The Week of Education and Action will take place in Oakland from August 30-September 5. [Read all about it here.](#)

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