

The Militarization of Police State USA

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You are sleeping in the middle of the night. The next thing you know you are suddenly jarred awake with the loud thud of your front door crashing down from a battering ram. What seems about a dozen or more armed men in full armor suits looking just like soldiers in an Afghanistan raid, all carrying assault weapons are invading your home.

Just roused from a deep sleep, this surrealistic drama unfolding before your sleep-filled, blurry eyes feels like a bad dream, an unreal nightmare that with the blink of your eye should send you back to unconsciousness for refuge. But these nameless, faceless armed invaders rushing through your home with weapons drawn barking out orders are very real. You are neither entering the Twilight Zone nor waking up from a bad dream, you are actually experiencing an all too real home invasion police assault.

If you instinctively, reflexively wish to protect your family, attempting to defend yourself and your loved ones by grabbing your nearest weapon in self-defense, these militarized police state henchmen will kill you in an instant right on the spot no questions asked. You are merely guilty of being an American trying to exercise your Second Amendment right to protect yourself in your own home. But since you have already been deemed an enemy by the state acting as your judge, jury and executioner, you do not have a chance. Within a flash you are suddenly laying dead in your own pool of blood with bullets that have just pierced your chest and brain. You have become another fallen statistic, another tragic fatality in what used to be fondly, nostalgically referred to as the land of the free, now turned land of the enslaved, dead and murdered. You have just become another brutalized now lifeless victim in the war against American civil liberties and freedoms, that since 9/11 have been insidiously stolen from US citizens by a tyrannical government turned militarized police state.

This very scary scenario might well be coming to a neighborhood near you, perhaps yours is next. Our homes are no longer safe, not so much from criminal thugs committing home invasion robberies but our local SWAT team police departments, big brother gone bad. While violent crime has actually gone down in this country, once again while we weren't looking, paying enough attention or were asleep, our communities have become unsafe - not from the street criminals but from the very criminals we entrusted as our police forces that our taxes pay to protect us.

Before concluding this nightmare could never happen to you in your neighborhood or town, consider that it is currently happening in towns and cities across America as you read these very words. This horrific scenario is tragically occurring with increasing frequency with more and more regular, law abiding citizens who have committed no crime, are clearly not enemy combatants or sympathizers or affiliated in any way with terrorist groups, but are simply decent, hardworking Americans who love their country just like you and me. And if it is happening to others so similar to you and me, next time it could just as easily be happening

to you or me. The fact is none of us are safe from our out of control government that since 9/11 has betrayed and turned on all of us citizens with a vengeance. It appears that human history is doomed to repeat itself. Instead of living in the democracy we naively grew up in, today we find ourselves living in conditions not unlike prewar Nazi Germany, or even closer, the Orwellian nightmare that has unfortunately become present day, any place America. The old oligarch strategy of divide and conquer has Americans suspiciously turning on each other rather than recognizing the real culprits who have turned on us.

To bring it closer to home with a face, a name and a real live person who is now dead at the hands of such a militarized police assault, the case of 80-year old retired engineer [Eugene Mallory](#) is presented. Apparently the elderly man never even got out of bed before six bullets entered and riddled his body fired from an angle above him, substantiating his physical location of still laying in bed. For self-defense purposes undoubtedly fearing intruders had entered his home, the octogenarian had a weapon though he never even fired off a single round.

The Los Angeles County Sheriffs SWAT team member carrying a submachine gun who apparently killed the old man laying in bed initially claimed that he had ordered Mr. Mallory to drop his gun before shooting him. But from a taped recording of the incident last summer, the officer actually fired off six rounds killing his victim before saying "drop the gun." The SWAT team was looking for a methamphetamine lab and instead had nothing to show for itself except one innocent dead old man and a small quantity of medically prescribed marijuana belonging to the victim's grandson. The grieving family is presently pursuing a wrongful death lawsuit.

Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams were originally formed in urban areas across America back in the 1970's as first emergency responders to violent civil unrest, hostage, mass shootings or extremely dangerous situations. According to Eastern Kentucky University School of Justice Professor [Peter Kraska](#), SWAT team deployments have proliferated and been used at an exponential rate from just 3,000 in the early 1980's to 50,000 a year now. The current problem is that because those high profile events when SWAT assistance is really needed are so rare in occurrence, deployment of SWAT teams have become standard operating procedure in routine drug busts, high crime neighborhoods and any situation deemed dangerous, which might apply to nearly any and all incoming emergency 911 calls.

In both Baltimore and Dallas they have been misused to break up poker games. In New Haven, Connecticut a SWAT team was sent into a bar suspected of serving underage drinkers. In Orlando, Florida they were used to search barbershops looking for guns and drugs but instead arrested 34 barbers operating without a license. The [case list](#) of misuse and abuse goes on and on throughout this country and growing everyday because SWAT teams are currently used as the prescribed protocol for countless unnecessary minor situations. But in an effort to minimize risk to police, paramilitary operations are being grossly overused in America and many Americans are needlessly and tragically dying from these routine militarized assaults on our private residences throughout the nation. The exact same tactics deployed by US Special Operations military forces in over 134 countries around the globe have come home to roost here in police state America.

Or take the case that has gotten global attention this last month having gone [viral](#) of the mentally ill camper minding his own business in the hills outside Albuquerque, New Mexico

on March 16th. A camera was mounted on one of the SWAT team member's helmets that captured the entire two hour standoff between the 38-year old homeless man James Boyd and the armed assault team. The police noticed James holding a pocket knife that obviously posed no threat to the armed killers. The more than half dozen storm troopers posing as the Albuquerque police force dressed in full combat gear with police dogs in tow opened fire instantly killing the man in cold blood. The video shows the officers shooting the mentally ill man in the back many times all because the confused, frightened man failed to lay down as ordered.

This horror caught on video for the world to see became the rallying flag for throngs of outraged demonstrators converging onto the streets of Albuquerque in recent weeks to loudly protest the grotesque injustice of the city police force that already had a notorious reputation for its "shoot first, ask questions" later policy. Then to add insult to injury, another man who was unarmed was shot dead a few days later. Subsequently such high profile cases have now drawn attention from both the FBI and the State Department, each launching its own separate investigation of the incidents and the lethal force continually deployed in 25 killings in as many months by the Albuquerque Police Department. An estimated 75% of the 37 individuals shot by the Albuquerque police since 2010 have been mentally ill. Another exacerbating factor to enflaming protestors to even more outrage was the newly appointed city police chief's premature calling of his police force conduct in the homeless man's shooting within proper police protocol.

To further add to this growing menace sweeping our communities is the petty competitive drive to keep up with other neighboring police forces in small cities and towns across this land. The bigger is better syndrome has hit police chiefs across the country. And to keep up with the Joneses, leftover [military equipment](#) and weapons from multiple warfronts are being given away by the US military to every city and town police force that requests them at bargain basement prices. Thus, military tanks, helicopters, Armored Personnel Carrier vehicles (APCs) , Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles (MRAPs) are exchanging hands, most or all of which are not needed, much less properly used and maintained at costs most cities cannot even afford, yet they are falling into the wrong hands of both small and large cities all over this country at an unprecedented, never before seen rate with no oversight or accountability.

In the nine years from 2002 to 2011 the Department of Homeland Security issued grants to state and local police amounting to [\\$35 billion](#), all of course under the guise of "the war on terror." This gave police department plenty of bucks to buy the military weapons of mass destruction to be used on its own citizens. Another easy revenue for raising police money comes from selling off assets seized in the other disastrous war on drugs. So as the more than half of all US citizens' tax dollars go for making Empire wars around the world (in the form of over half the annual defense budget), lots more go toward militarizing police departments making war on its own citizens.

The Pentagon, the US government and federal, state and local law enforcement agencies have collectively made a calculated decision to militarize as many police forces in the US as possible. Police force tactics attacking peaceful protestors has become another disturbing criminal trend in this police state. When the Occupy Wall Street movement several years ago swept across the nation highlighting the growing disparity of inequality between the 1% superrich and the 99% of the rest of us, a nationalized mobilization of militarized police forces began bashing heads using tear gas (ruled a violation of international law) on its own population in places like Oakland. Police brutality was rampantly observed throughout the

country in a centralized and concentrated wave of aggression orchestrated by the federal government as a crackdown on political activism. And unfortunately it was effective in crushing the Occupy movement.

The same human rights violations were observed at the 2008 Democratic party convention in Denver and the 1999 World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle. This increasing show of militarized force over time is but a statement of what becomes of those brave enough to assert their First Amendment rights in this so called democratic nation of ours.

It is not any stretch of imagination to speculate how police state tactics might be utilized in the near future in America. Under a false flag pretense or an economic collapse, or any natural disaster that presents a convenient excuse to declare martial law, it would in turn mobilize a massive campaign by both military and police forces to quell civil disobedience and unrest, or round up dissidents on growing NSA-government watch lists into waiting FEMA camps to finally fill all those countless refurbished empty prisons.

The two cases of gross injustice presented in this article happened to involve two Caucasian Americans, one a mentally ill homeless man and the other an elderly family man. Suffice it to say that cops are far more trigger happy killing younger men of color than whites in this nation where nearly half the prison population is black and over one fifth Hispanic. Police state tactics in the ghettos, barrios and inner cities of this country have long been a living, everyday nightmare and reality. It is a sad commentary that only after defenseless whites are brutally murdered that the public indignantly takes such fervent notice calling for radical change to police state USA.

As much as any single case, last month's incident caught on tape in New Mexico illustrates what has gone so horribly wrong in America's militarized security state where its citizens desperately need protection from their so called protectors. It has brought much needed public debate and awareness as well as issued a demand for justice and fundamental change in the way law enforcement operates. The people in Albuquerque have become social and political activists committed to working tirelessly for a national call to stop the needless tragic violence and an end to the militarization of America's police forces and their police state warfare used on its own citizenry.

Moreover, they are acting as catalysts signaling to other communities, cities and towns across America to follow suit in solidarity. We citizens in our own communities need to mount our own pressing, long overdue campaign to reassess police forces across North America and the globe to facilitate necessary changes that will bring about different, more just and humane methods of police interfacing with the mentally ill, the homeless and all people everywhere. New standard policies of engagement with the public promoting safety for both the police and the citizens they serve, urgently need to be implemented that will restore our precious civil liberties and constitutional rights that bring justice for us all.

Joachim Hagopian is a West Point graduate and former Army officer.

His written manuscript based on his military experience can be consulted at <http://www.redredsea.net/westpointhagopian/>.

After the military Joachim earned a masters degree in psychology and eventually became a licensed therapist working in the mental health field for more than a quarter century.

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