

Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) Reintroduces Bill That Aims to Demilitarize Police

By [Velazquez Press](#)

Global Research, May 14, 2021

Velazquez Press 13 May 2021

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) has reintroduced legislation to eliminate a controversial program that channels military-grade weapons and equipment to local and state police forces around the nation. The “1033” program was created in the early 1990s, and has resulted in a flood of rifles, armored personnel carriers and other instruments of war being shipped to local police departments. President Trump and his Administration fully supported the program, and former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper encouraged governors to “dominate the battlespace” in U.S. cities during ‘Black Lives Matter’ protests.

“When our police forces are equipped like an occupying army, they act like one, treating New Yorkers and the American people as an enemy force,” Velázquez said. “The deadly consequences of this policy disproportionately affect people of color and this initiative should be scrapped, completely.”

Between 2006 and 2014, local law enforcement agencies received an array of military equipment worth over \$1.5 billion. This included more than 6,000 mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles, designed for use in warzones like Iraq and Afghanistan. Two such vehicles were sent to New York City. Nationally, the transferred equipment also encompassed nearly 80,000 assault rifles, 205 grenade launchers, 12,000 bayonets, more than 470 aircraft, camouflage and other equipment.

Studies have repeatedly found that when local police departments receive military equipment, they are much more likely to use force. One study indicated that when a county goes from having no military equipment to receiving \$2.5 million worth of weaponry the following year as one locality did, civilian deaths at the hands of police are likely to double.

“In the past year, we saw footage of these military-grade vehicles being used to confront peaceful protestors who are exercising their first amendment rights to say, ‘Black Lives Matter’ and call for police reform,” Velázquez added. “Not only does deploying this military hardware fail to deescalate tensions, it actually makes the situation far more dangerous and leads to violence.”

A wide range of advocacy groups praised the measure and called for its swift enactment.

“As an international humanitarian agency, Oxfam sees firsthand how the unchecked flow of weapons fuels human rights abuses and suffering around the world,” said **Noah Gottschalk, Global Policy Lead at Oxfam America**. “We’re seeing the same patterns here in the US, where the weapons of war transferred through the 1033 Program have not made people safer, but instead led to increased violence against civilians, particularly Black and historically marginalized communities by increasingly militarized police forces. Oxfam fully supports the Congressional leaders who are demanding the immediate end to the 1033 Program as a key step in the urgent movement to reimagine the future of policing, community safety and justice in the United States.”

“Ensuring that our public safety officers are properly equipped to work with their communities while also taking a demilitarized approach to law enforcement are not mutually exclusive,” said **Chris Purdy Veterans for American Ideals Project Manager at Human Rights First**. “By taking armored vehicles and other weapons of war off our streets, we are empowering our law enforcement agencies to act in the best interests of the people they’re charged to serve and protect.”

“Demilitarizing the police is a crucial step towards the broader goals of ending institutional racism and stopping police brutality,” said **Yasmine Taeb, Human Rights Lawyer and Progressive Strategist**. “Militarized policing supported by weapons of war has terrorized our communities, and in particular, our communities of color. We join millions of Americans across the country calling on Congress to shut down the 1033 Program once and for all.”

“For more than 20 years, the 1033 Program has sustained and promoted a military-like culture in U.S. law enforcement, the brunt of which has been felt in communities of color,” said **Maritza Perez, Director of National Affairs Office at the Drug Policy Alliance**. “We know that the increased transfer of military equipment through the 1033 Program increases the number of police killings, particularly in the context of the drug war and SWAT raids, and that the Program has been grossly mismanaged over the years. To truly achieve public safety and save lives, Congress must abolish 1033.”

“The 1033 Program is one of the most visible emblems of the relationship between a violent domestic and violent foreign policy, normalizing militarized violence as part and parcel of U.S. policing, and deteriorating civil and human rights in the process,” said **Mac Hamilton, Advocacy Director at Women’s Action for New Directions (WAND)**. “The problems facing communities across the U.S.—including hunger, housing insecurity, sexual and gender-based violence, mass incarceration, and healthcare access—will never be solved by violent policing. It’s time to take military-grade weapons off of our streets and invest in systems of care and diplomacy, both at home and abroad. Ending the 1033 Program is a critical first step towards this goal.”

Organizations endorsing the bill include:

About Face: 18 Million Rising,

About Face: Veterans Against the War,

Action Center on Race & the Economy,

Activated Massachusetts African Community,
Advocacy Without Borders,
The Advocates for Human Rights,
African American Ministers In Action,
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC),
American Civil Liberties Union,
American Family Voices,
American Friends Service Committee,
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN),
Amnesty International USA,
Arab American Institute,
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC),
Armenian-American Action Network (AAAN),
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence,
Autistic Self Advocacy Network,
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action,
Beyond the Bomb,
Brennan Center for Justice,
Bridges Faith Initiative,
Campaign for Liberty Center for American Progress,
Center for Civilians in Conflict,
Center for Constitutional Rights,
Center for Disability Rights,
Center for International Policy,
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP),
Center for Victims of Torture,
Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law at New York University School of Law,

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office,
Church World Service,
CODEPINK,
Color Of Change,
Common Defense,
Community Alliance on Prisons,
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd,
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR),
Daily Kos,
The Daniel Initiative,
Defending Rights & Dissent,
Dignity & Power NOW,
Dream Corps JUSTICE,
Drug Policy Alliance,
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC),
Equal Justice Society,
Equal Rights Advocates,
Essie Justice Group,
The Feminist Foreign Policy Project,
Foreign Policy for America,
Franciscan Action Network,
Friends Committee on National Legislation,
Futures Without Violence,
GLSEN,
Government Information Watch,
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance,
Greenpeace US,

Hispanic Federation,
Historians for Peace and Democracy,
Human Rights Campaign,
Human Rights First,
ICNA Council for Social Justice Impact Fund,
Indivisible,
Interfaith Action for Human Rights,
Japanese American Citizens League,
Jetpac Resource Center, Inc.,
Jewish Council for Public Affairs,
Justice For Muslims Collective,
Justice is Global,
Justice Strategies,
Juvenile Law Center,
LatinoJustice PRLDEF,
La Union Del Pueblo Entero,
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights,
Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention,
MADRE,
Massachusetts Peace Action,
Media Alliance,
MediaJustice,
Metropolitan Community Churches,
Global Justice Institute,
MomsRising,
Mothers Against Police Brutality,
Multicultural AIDS Coalition,

Muslim Justice League,
NARAL Pro-Choice America,
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd,
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers,
National Association of Social Workers,
The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls,
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC),
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN),
National Education Association,
National Homelessness Law Center,
National Immigrant Justice Center,
National Immigration Project (NIP-NLG),
National Iranian American Council Action (NIAC Action),
National Network of Arab American Communities (NNAAC),
National Organization for Women,
National Partnership for Women & Families,
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies,
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies,
Oakland Privacy,
Open Society Policy Center,
Organized Communities Against Deportations,
Our Revolution,
OVEC-Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition,
Oxfam America,
Peace Action,
People's Action,
Poder in Action,

PolicyLink,
Poligon Education Fund,
Presente.org,
Progressive Democrats of America,
Project Blueprint,
Project On Government Oversight,
Project South,
Public Citizen,
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft,
Racial Justice NOW,
Restore The Fourth,
Rethinking Foreign Policy,
Revolutionary Love Project,
Revolving Door Project,
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights,
RootsAction.org,
Secure Families Initiative,
Security Policy Reform Institute (SPRI),
Sierra Club,
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF),
The Sikh Coalition,
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT),
Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund,
TN State Conference NAACP,
UndocuBlack Network,
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee,
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries,

United for Peace and Justice,
United We Dream Network,
U.S. Labor Against Racism and War Veterans for American Ideals,
Voices for Progress,
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs,
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.,
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center,
Win Without War,
Women's Action for New Directions,
Women Watch Afrika,
Working Families Party,
World BEYOND War,
World Can't Wait Hawai'i,
World Without Genocide

In addition to Velázquez, the bill is cosponsored by

Chellie Pingree,
Eleanor Holmes Norton,
Ayanna Pressley,
Mark Pocan,
Ro Khanna, Kathy Castor,
Yvette D. Clarke,
Adriano Espaillat,
Barbara Lee,
Carolyn Maloney,
James P. McGovern,
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,
Ilhan Omar,

Rashida Tlaib,

Jan Schakowsky,

Cori Bush,

Don Beyer.

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