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**From:**

**Sent:** Monday, May 2, 2022 8:47 AM

**To:** citycouncil

**Subject:** Item 7-6

Dear City Council,

I write in regard to Item 7-6 on the Police Department's policy on military equipment, in keeping with the reporting requirements of AB481. The range of equipment that departments can receive is enormous and some of those donations are surely unobjectionable and represent savings to the taxpayers of Albany, Ca. But there are 3 issues worth keeping in mind in administering this program:

1) Repeated studies have shown no relationship between accepting military equipment and either reducing crime or increasing officer safety. While benefits are claimed for the program of military equipment donation, scholars have studied the issue repeatedly and found zero evidence that it is effective.

Two peer-reviewed, recent articles in Nature of Human Behavior examined this issue:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-00995-5>

Anna Gunderson et al, "Counterevidence of crime-reduction effects from federal grants of military equipment to local police" (2020)

and

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-00986-6>

Kenneth Lowande, "Police demilitarization and violent crime" (2021)

Thus it is imperative that departments and the public not assume donations will lead to positive impacts on crime or on officer safety. There may, of course, be other reasons to accept equipment.

2) Deleterious impact of military equipment on police-public relations. At least one peer-reviewed study has found that access to militarized weapons increases violence by police against the public. Additionally there is much anecdotal evidence that military equipment fosters division and mistrust.

Casey Delehanty et al, "Militarization and police violence: The case of the 1033 program," *Research and Politics* (June 2017)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2053168017712885>

Therefore I urge the department to consider potential adverse consequences when assessing potential donations and consider additional trainings for officers to ensure that the equipment does not change their behavior. This may mean that donations actually increase our budget. If the benefit of the donation is significant, that may be worthwhile, but the cost of training should be factored in to the decision.

3) Use of military equipment on protests. Surveys, not to my knowledge yet peer-reviewed, have suggested that departments with high levels of military equipment donations were more likely to use that equipment against public demonstrations and protests. This is a significant and worrisome development. Thankfully this has not happened in Albany, but the department should consider the downside costs of donations in this respect and the training required to ensure that officers with access to military equipment do not utilize it except for the specific and narrow uses for which it is intended and accepted.

These issues can be resolved with review of policing policies to ensure that the whole equation of cost and benefit is considered.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,  
Greg Downs

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<https://uncpress.org/book/9781469652733/the-second-american-revolution/>  
<http://www.mappingoccupation.org/> (with Scott Nesbit)  
<http://history.ucdavis.edu/people/gdowns>

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