

August 31, 2021

Dear Members of the House Armed Services Committee,

The undersigned organizations from across the political spectrum urge you to support the amendment offered by Rep. Veronica Escobar (TX-16) and Rep. Ro Khanna (CA-17) to the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to rein in the Pentagon's military surplus equipment transfer program, known as the 1033 Program. This amendment would end the indiscriminate transfers of military-grade weapons from the Pentagon to federal, state, and local Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs). The proposed language has passed three times in the House, twice through the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and once in the Defense Appropriations bill.

Since its inception in the 1990s in response to the "War on Drugs," the 1033 Program has resulted in the transfer of more than \$7.4 billion in equipment to more than 8,000 federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies across the country.¹ Items received through the 1033 Program include armored vehicles, rifles, and aircraft.

Numerous research studies have indicated that not only is the 1033 Program ineffective, as it fails to reduce crime or improve police safety, but it is also unsafe, and associated with more civilian deaths.² Military equipment is disproportionately deployed in communities of color.³ As recognized by former President Obama, decades of police militarization has led to LEAs appearing more like an occupying military force than community members working to protect and serve their neighbors.

In recent years, the 1033 Program has expanded as part of the militarization of our southern border as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have also received enormous amounts of excess military equipment.

In June 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, Data for Progress polled voters regarding their opinions about police, police violence, and proposed reforms.⁴ This poll found that there is strong bipartisan support for banning the transfer of military equipment to civilian police. Overall, Republican and Democratic voters support ending the transfer of military equipment and weapons to law enforcement by a margin of 18 percentage points.⁵

¹ Briant Barrett, "The Pentagon's Hand-Me-Downs Helped Militarize Police. Here's How," Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/pentagon-hand-me-downs-militarize-police-1033-program/>.

² Jonathan Mummolo, "Militarization fails to enhance police safety or reduce crime but may harm police reputation," PNAS. <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/37/9181>

³ Briant Barrett, "The Pentagon's Hand-Me-Downs Helped Militarize Police. Here's How," Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/pentagon-hand-me-downs-militarize-police-1033-program/>.

⁴<https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2020/7/1/voters-dont-want-police-departments-to-have-military-equipment>

⁵<https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2020/7/1/voters-dont-want-police-departments-to-have-military-equipment>

On April 6, 2021, twenty-nine Members of Congress sent a letter to President Biden calling on him to issue an Executive Order on the 1033 Program consistent with the legislative language of this amendment, calling it “a reasonable step towards demilitarizing our police forces while preserving the safety of our communities.”⁶ A month later, more than 150 national organizations, from across the political spectrum, representing tens of millions of their members, wrote to Members of Congress in support of ending the Pentagon’s 1033 Program all together.⁷

This commonsense amendment which has bipartisan support in Congress, would make our communities safer by getting weapons of war and military equipment off of our streets and out of our communities.⁸

Accordingly, we urge you to use the opportunity of the full committee markup of the FY2022 National Defense Authorization Act to vote in favor of this amendment.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Yasmine Taeb at yasminetaeb@gmail.com and Noah Gottschalk at Noah.Gottschalk@oxfam.org.

Sincerely,

About Face: Veterans Against the War
ACCESS of WNY
Action Center on Race & the Economy
Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
American Friends Service Committee
American Humanist Association
American Muslim Bar Association (AMBA)
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Beyond the Bomb
Borderlands for Equity
Bridges Faith Initiative
Center for American Progress
Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Church World Service
CODEPINK

⁶<https://hankjohnson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-johnson-urges-president-biden-issue-eo-police-militarization>

⁷ <https://drugpolicy.org/sites/default/files/end-1033-sign-on-letter.pdf>

⁸<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1694/cosponsors?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22stop+militarizing+law+enforcement+act%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1>

Common Defense
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Daily Kos
Defending Rights & Dissent
Due Process Institute
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Faith in Public Life
Freedom Network USA
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Government Information Watch
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
Historians for Peace and Democracy
Human Rights First
ICNA Council for Social Justice (ICNA CSJ)
Japanese American Citizens League
Jetpac Resource Center, Inc.
Just Futures Law
Justice For Muslims Collective
Keystone Progress
Labor Against Racism and War
La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Massachusetts Peace Action
MoveOn
Muslim Justice League
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)
National Education Association
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Iranian American Council Action
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
Our Revolution
Oxfam America
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Poligon Education Fund
Presente.org
Progressive Democrats of America
Project Blueprint
Project On Government Oversight

Public Citizen
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
R Street Institute
Restore The Fourth
Rethinking Foreign Policy
Revolutionary Love Project
RootsAction.org
Secure Families Initiative
Sierra Club
Sikh Coalition
Southern Anti-Racism Network
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Sunrise Movement
The Advocates for Human Rights
Tunisian United Network
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR)
US Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO)
Veterans for American Ideals
Veterans For Peace
Washington Against Nuclear Weapons
Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
Win Without War
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Women for Weapons Trade Transparency
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
World BEYOND War
X-Lab
Yemeni Alliance Committee
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation