Twitter Thread by Cory Doctorow #BLM

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@doctorow

In 1997, the Clinton administration created the "1033" program, whereby the Pentagon gave away its "surplus" equipment to local law enforcement agencies, leading to the nationwide militarization of America's cops.

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In the decades since, 1033 became a $5B industry: beltway bandits lobby their pals in the DoD to place massive orders for weapons and materiel which are immediately declared "surplus" and transfered to undertrained cops nationwide.

https://t.co/vHlrkJ48W2

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Opponents of this program hypothesized that it would obey Checkhov's Law: "A machine-gun in the police armory in Act One will go off by Act Three. And then again, and again, and again."

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They were right.

Empirical studies show that cops who get milspec penis surrogates through 1033 murder the fuck out of the people who pay their salaries.

https://t.co/ntFwCaJ3Ie

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But 1033's defenders insisted (without any evidence) that turning Deputy Dawg into a USMC Fallujah Street Patrol Cosplayer seriously improved the quality of US policing.

They were wrong.

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The Pentagon Inspector General's September 30, 2020 report on the program is definitive: "firearms and tools ... were not supporting law enforcement activities."

https://t.co/tIVXJ2mpmr

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What's more, they have a pretty good idea why these "tools" weren't helping law enforcement: they were handed out like candy without regard to need, without training, without supervision, and without accountability.

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They gave out a LOT of stuff. Snow camouflage pants. Grenades. MRAPs. Assault rifles. And they gave 'em to everyone: local cops. Park rangers. Campus police.

https://t.co/dqazZvWysT

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Here's some specifics of the giveaways:

* 391 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters

* 2,885 Humvees

* 1,105 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles

* More than 75,000 firearms

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There's a lot of subtext in the IG's report, as @thomdunn points out on @boingboing: for example, they lavish a lot of attention on the Selmer, TN police department, which filed 1912 requests for military gear.

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All in all, the Selmer PD received:

* 77 pr cold weather boots

* 58 digital cameras

* 115 hammers

* 154 screwdrivers

* 106 tape measures

* 15 aircraft maintenance tool kits

* 38 laptops

* 4 dump trucks

Number of officers employed by the Selmer Police Department: 18.

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Why did Selmer need one dump truck for every 4.5 officers? It didn't. "The official requested extra LESO property and stored it in case of a future need because it was free."

But even that didn't work out.

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"Selmer PD requested and obtained 30 generators between 2013 and 2017 for use in the event of a disaster, but the generators are no longer available for use. The LEA official stated that some generators were not maintained and their condition deteriorated over time."

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Selmer's cops said yes to whatever was on offer. Other PDs got seriously strapped:

* Alpena County MI Sheriff: 30 M16 rifles for 16 officers

* Meigs County TN, Sheriff: 25 M16 rifles for 18 officers

* Massillon OH PD: 49 M16 rifles and 49 M1911 pistols for 44 officers

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1033 came to nationwide attention during the Ferguson uprising, when the country boggled at the cops' bizarre, militarized presence in the streets. In the years since, attention has waxed and waned.

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But police militarization demands sustained attention. The cops didn't get full battle-rattle by accident. It was a deliberate strategy, with a name and an office...and a business model. It's time to end it.

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