

There Are Now More Bureaucrats With Guns Than U.S. Marines

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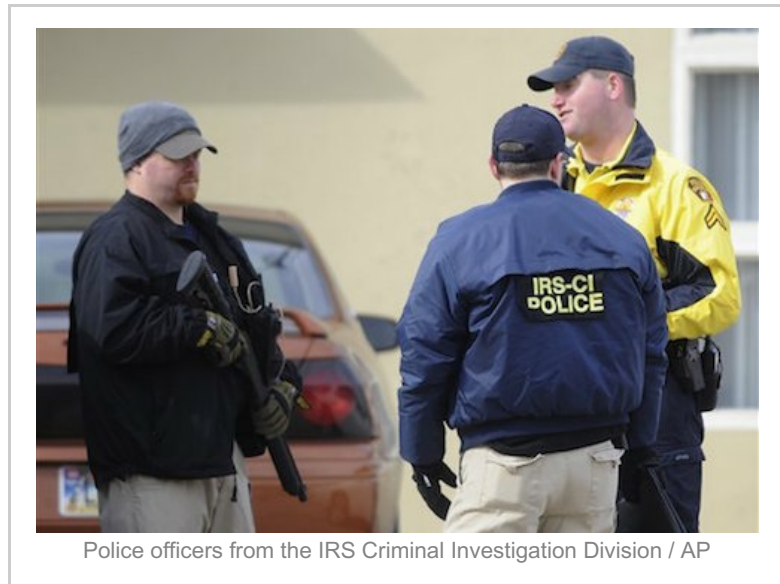
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BY: [Elizabeth Harrington](#) [Follow @LizWFB](#)

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There are now more non-military government employees who carry guns than there are U.S. Marines, according to a new report.

Open the Books, a taxpayer watchdog group, released a study Wednesday that finds domestic government agencies continue to grow their stockpiles of military-style weapons, as Democrats [sat on the House floor](#) calling for more restrictions on what guns American citizens can buy.



Police officers from the IRS Criminal Investigation Division / AP

The "[Militarization of America](#)" report found civilian agencies spent \$1.48 billion on guns, ammunition, and military-style equipment between 2006 and 2014. Examples include IRS agents with AR-15s, and EPA bureaucrats wearing camouflage.

"Regulatory enforcement within administrative agencies now carries the might of military-style equipment and weapons," Open the Books said. "For example, the Food and Drug Administration includes 183 armed 'special agents,' a 50 percent increase over the ten years from 1998-2008. At Health and Human Services (HHS), 'Special Office of Inspector General Agents' are now trained with sophisticated weaponry by the same contractors who train our military special forces troops."

Open the Books found there are now over 200,000 non-military federal officers with arrest and firearm authority, surpassing the 182,100 personnel who are [actively serving in the U.S. Marines Corps](#).

The IRS spent nearly \$11 million on guns, ammunition, and military-style equipment for its 2,316 special agents. The tax collecting agency has billed taxpayers for pump-action and semi-automatic shotguns, semi-automatic Smith & Wesson M&P15s, and Heckler & Koch H&K 416 rifles, which can be loaded with [30-round magazines](#).

The EPA spent \$3.1 million on guns, ammo, and equipment, including drones, night vision, "camouflage and other deceptive equipment," and body armor.

When asked about the spending, an EPA spokesman said the report "cherry picks information and falsely misrepresents the work of two administrations whose job is to protect public health."

"Many purchases were mischaracterized or blown out of proportion in the report," said spokesman Nick Conger. "EPA's criminal enforcement program has not purchased unmanned aircraft, and the assertions that military-grade weapons are part of its work are false."

"EPA's criminal enforcement program investigates and prosecutes the most egregious violators of our nation's environmental laws, and EPA criminal enforcement agents are law enforcement professionals who have undergone the same rigorous training as other federal agents," Conger continued.

Other administration agencies that have purchased guns and ammo include the Small Business Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Education, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The report also highlighted that the Department of Health and Human Services has "special agents" with "sophisticated military-style weapons." Open the Books also found \$42 million in gun and ammunition purchases that were incorrectly coded.

"Some purchases were actually for ping-pong balls, gym equipment, bread, copiers, cotton balls, or cable television including a line item from the Coast Guard entered as 'Cable Dude,'" the report said.

Open the Books appealed to both liberals like Bernie Sanders—who has called for demilitarizing local police departments—and conservatives in its report.

"Conservatives argue that it is hypocritical for political leaders to undermine the Second Amendment while simultaneously equipping non-military agencies with hollow-point bullets and military style equipment," Open the Books said. "One could argue the federal government itself has become a gun show that never adjourns with dozens of agencies continually shopping for new firearms."

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Update June 23, 10:15 a.m.: Following publication of this article, Adam Andrzejewski, the CEO of Open the Books who wrote the report, pushed back against the EPA's statement, and provided contract data to back up his claims.

"How can the EPA spokesperson deny hard facts from their own checkbook?" he said. "Alongside our oversight report, OpenTheBooks.com also released a PDF of all raw data. This line-by-line transactional record from the EPA's own checkbook on page 113 clearly shows

that in 2013 and 2014 the EPA purchased tens of thousands of dollars of 'Unmanned Aircraft' from Bergen RC Helicopters Inc which on a net basis amounted to approximately \$34,000."

"All of the assertions in our oversight report are the quantification of actual spending records produced and reported to us by the federal agencies themselves," Andrzejewski said.