



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

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March 16, 2020

The Honorable Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr.
Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee
1020 N. Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 481 (Chiu) – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Jones-Sawyer, Sr.:

Youth ALIVE! is pleased to support AB 481, which would regulate the use of military equipment by local law enforcement by requiring agencies to get approval from their local governing body prior to applying for and using such equipment, and to provide a public impact statement that outlines the intended use and cost of such equipment.

Youth ALIVE! is a nationally recognized community-based organization known for initiating an alliance to treat violence as a public health crisis and developing young leaders in the process. Tasked as Oakland’s anchor organization for violence prevention, intervention, and healing, Youth ALIVE! has maintained a successful track record of implementing evidence-based violence intervention and prevention services. Our efforts to demilitarize the Oakland Police Department by increasing accountability and transparency informs our support of Assembly Bill 481.

Regulating police acquisition of military equipment is critical because the police militarization leads to increased civilian deaths, and militarized policing teams are more often deployed in communities of color.¹ Police militarization also fails to keep officers safe or prevent violence or harm in communities.² When police forces are militarized, they are seen as an occupying force rather than a public safety service.³ The lack of a public forum to discuss the acquisition of military equipment further strains the relationship police have with the community. This bill would provide crucial public oversight, and allow communities to have a voice in determining the military grade weapons and equipment that are brought into their communities.

State and local law enforcement agencies in California may acquire military equipment from two sources: the federal government and private companies. Through the 1033 Program, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) allows direct transfer of surplus U.S. military equipment to police departments, free of charge. Over 8,000 federal and state law enforcement agencies from all 50 states and the U.S.

¹ [Delehanty et al., 2017](#)

² [Lowande, 2020](#)

³ [Mummolo, 2018](#)

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territories currently participate in the program.⁴ Police agencies may also purchase military equipment from private companies using the federal discount via the 1122 Program, or using federal dollars through grant programs such as the State Homeland Security Program and the Urban Areas Security Initiative.^{5,6}

In recent decades, as the acquisition of military equipment by law enforcement agencies has become more common, local government officials and the public have little to no information about such acquisitions. For example, in 2014, the Los Angeles Unified School District received sixty one M16 assault rifles, three M79 grenade launchers, and one mine-resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicle through the 1033 Program.⁷ San Diego local law enforcement agencies have spent over \$200 million on tactical equipment in violation of public disclosure laws. San Diego County law enforcement agencies have also purchased at least ten armored vehicles since 2003 using federal grant funding, without public discussion.⁸ Over \$11 million worth of military equipment is currently in the hands of local police forces across the Bay Area, including Armored Rescue Vehicles (ARVs) acquired by the Petaluma Police Department and MRAPs by the Antioch police, which require regular maintenance fees which cost the city thousands of dollars.⁹

Recent events have raised questions about when and how police choose to deploy military equipment. In 2020, peaceful protests in California and across the country were met with increasingly militarized responses by local law enforcement. This past year, law enforcement in Walnut Creek, CA and Orange, CA used military vehicles including Lenco BearCats to disperse peaceful protestors.¹⁰ The decision of how and when to deploy the vehicles was left up to the individual officers at the scene, with no uniform protocol. In Sacramento, CA last summer, police donned riot helmets, and aimed assault rifles from armored vehicles at peaceful demonstrators to clear an assembled crowd.

This legislation is necessary to begin the process of holding law enforcement agencies accountable through increased oversight and transparency of military equipment acquisition. For these reasons, Youth ALIVE! respectfully requests your support of AB 481 (Chiu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Marks".

Anne Marks
Executive Director

⁴ [Law Enforcement Support Office - Public Information](#)

⁵ [General Services Administration - 1122 Program Information](#)

⁶ [FEMA - Homeland Security Grant Program](#)

⁷ [California School Cops Received Military Rifles, Grenade Launchers, Armored Vehicles](#)

⁸ [Local Law Enforcement Agencies Have Spent Over \\$200 Million on Tactical Equipment In Violation of Public Disclosure Laws](#)

⁹ [Petaluma police receive more than \\$1.3 million in military surplus equipment over past decade](#)

¹⁰ [Floyd protests renew debate about police use of armored vehicles, other military gear](#)



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