
This sad collection of reports must stiffen our spines: we must even more than ever act as though the Constitution and its Bill of Rights are alive, but even more than ever we must work assiduously to ensure they are. Educate political leaders and work for politicians who know what is happening and are trying to defend and restore our liberties. Dick

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President Obama has declared his commitment to creating the most open and accessible administration in American history. That begins with taking comments and questions from you, the public, through our website.

Call the President

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Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure your message gets to the White House as quickly as possible.

1. If possible, email us! This is the fastest way to get your message to President Obama.

2. If you write a letter, please consider typing it on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. If you hand-write your letter, please consider using pen and writing as neatly as possible.

3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

4. And finally, be sure to include the full address of the White House to make sure your message gets to us as quickly and directly as possible:
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:  [http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/](http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/)  For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

**Here is the link to the Index:**  [http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/](http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/)

**STEPS TOWARD DICTATORSHIP AND WHAT’S DRIVING US THERE**

See Index to Newsletters on: assassination, capitalism/market system, control of information, corporations, covert ops, fascism, FBI, fear, Homeland Security, imperialism, militarism, military industrial complex, nationalism, NSA, patriotism, Patriot Act, Pentagon, Pentagon arming police, police Swat teams, right wing, secrecy, surveillance, torture, wars, and many more. Once you begin to read on these subjects you discover how connected they are.

**Contents #1**

Contact the President

Militarization Expanding, Bill of Rights Under Assault, Citizens Resist!

Whitehead, Emerging Police State

Amy Goodman, William Binney, NSA, Surveillance, National Security State

Susan Herman, *Taking Liberties*

Detention List for Martial Law

Hedges, Repression and Rebellion

Militarized Police

Balko, Militarization of Police (essay, book, review)

Finley, Warrior Cops Out of Control

Tomgram and Chace Madar, Criminalization of Everyday Life

Contact Arkansas Congressional Delegation
In *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, John W. Whitehead charts America's transition from a society governed by "we the people" to a police state governed by the strong arm of the law. In such an environment, the law becomes yet another tool to oppress the people. As a constitutional attorney of national prominence, and as president of The Rutherford Institute, an international civil liberties organization, Whitehead has been at the forefront of the fight for civil liberties in this country.

The recurring theme at the heart of *A Government of Wolves* is that the American people are in grave danger of losing their basic freedoms. The simple fact is that the Constitution - and in particular the Bill of Rights - is being undermined on virtually every front. Indeed, everything America was founded upon is in some way being challenged. The openness and freedom that were once the hallmarks of our society are now in peril.

We were once a society that valued individual liberty and privacy. But in recent years we have turned into a culture that has quietly accepted surveillance cameras, police and drug-sniffing dogs in our children's schools, national databases that track our finances and activities, sneak-and-peek searches of our homes without our knowledge or consent, and anti-terrorism laws that turn average Americans into suspects. In short, America has become a lockdown nation, and we are all in danger. *A Government of Wolves* not only explains these acute problems but is a call to action offering timely and practical initiatives for Americans to take charge of present course of history and stop the growing police state. But time is running out. We are at critical juncture and every citizen who values his or her personal freedom needs to pay close attention to the message in this book!

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**US NATIONAL SECURITY STATE**

Timothy Vaslett tvaslett@yahoo.com via uark.edu

4-20-12

Today's *Democracy Now* focuses on the **NSA** with one of the top insider **whistle**
blowers and others who reveal the real goings on with the totalitarian security state.

Democracy Now Stories  April 20, 2012


In his first television interview since he resigned from the National Security Agency over its domestic surveillance program, William Binney discusses the NSA’s massive power to spy. http://www.democracynow.org/

It has become all too clear, especially when you listen to the stories on this program, that it is not and has not been about terrorism. It is about consolidation of power and control over every aspect of our lives and against all dissent against the movement in this direction. It's breathtaking how rapidly the clampdown is moving ahead. Here is the link: http://www.democracynow.org/

SECURING YOURSELF FROM THE NSS

And after you have hopefully become more aware of the danger that is here now and not in some inestimable future then the next immediate step is to try to become more secure from what is ostensibly our security apparatus. Link on some ways to do this are posted here:

https://www.torproject.org/projects/torbrowser.html.en
http://www.hushmail.com/

These are search engines that use the Google engine but are much more secure - at least for now.

http://www.mool.com/
http://duckduckgo.com/privacy.html
https://www.ixquick.com/eng/protect-privacy.html

Because freedom can't protect itself.

- Key Issues
- Take Action
- Stories
Susan Herman, ACLU President, is the author of Taking Liberties: The War on Terror and the Erosion of American Democracy. In this eye-opening work, Herman takes a hard look at the human and social costs of the War on Terror. A decade after 9/11, it is far from clear that the government's hastily adopted antiterrorist tactics — such as the Patriot Act — are keeping us safe, but it is increasingly clear that these emergency measures in fact have the potential to ravage our lives — and have already done just that to countless Americans.

For example,

- Under the so-called “library provision” of the USA PATRIOT Act, the government can demand that custodians of records — including librarians, schools, social work institutions, and internet service providers (who, in these days of cloud computing, have access to a mind-boggling array of information about us) — turn over those records without having to explain to a court why they want those records, or whether the person
who is the subject of the records has done anything suspicious.

- Under the expanded “National Security Letter,” the FBI and other agencies can demand some records from telecommunications and financial services providers without any court order at all and then gag the recipients.
- Patriot Act amendments let the government spy on Americans using a Cold War era statute designed for tracking the covert activities of Soviet agents.

More about Taking Liberties:
- CNBC.com: ACLU Boss: Government Power Over You Quietly Growing
- KGO: Ronn Owens Show
- Al Jazeera English: US security measures ‘eroding civil rights’
- NY1 Online: ACLU President Discusses New Book, Counterterrorism Tactics
- C-Span: After Words

"Taking Liberties offers a compelling case that the basic constitutional protections most Americans take for granted, including the rights to free speech, a fair trial and due process, as well as freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, were seriously compromised after 9/11 as a result of the government's well-meaning but ill-conceived efforts to safeguard the country against another attack. . . [P]ersuasively fair and reasonable . . . A valuable contribution to the growing body of literature regarding the War on Terror's impact on our constitutional rights." — Kirkus Reviews

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Main Core: A List Of Millions Of Americans That Will Be Subject To Detention During Martial Law By Michael Snyder

from: Intellihub.com

Are you on the list? Are you one of the millions of Americans that have been designated a threat to national security by the U.S. government?

End of the American Dream

June 11, 2013
Will you be subject to detention when martial law is imposed during a major national emergency? As you will see below, there is actually a list that contains the names of at least 8 million Americans known as Main Core that the U.S. intelligence community has been compiling since the 1980s. A recent article on Washington’s Blog quoted a couple of old magazine articles that mentioned this program, and I was intrigued because I didn’t know what it was.

So I decided to look into Main Core, and what I found out was absolutely stunning – especially in light of what Edward Snowden has just revealed to the world. It turns out that the U.S. government is not just gathering information on all of us. The truth is that the U.S. government has used this information to create a list of threats to national security that the government would potentially watch, question or even detain during a national crisis. If you have ever been publicly critical of the government, there is a very good chance that you are on that list.

The following is how Wikipedia describes Main Core...

Main Core is the code name of a database maintained since the 1980s by the federal government of the United States. Main Core contains personal and financial data of millions of U.S. citizens believed to be threats to national security. The data, which comes from the NSA, FBI, CIA, and other sources, is collected and stored without warrants or court orders. The database’s name derives from the fact that it contains “copies of the ‘main core’ or essence of each item of intelligence information on Americans produced by the FBI and the other agencies of the U.S. intelligence community.” ...

REPRESSION AND CALL FOR REBELLION

Rise Up or Die By Chris Hedges,
Joe Sacco and I spent two years reporting from the poorest pockets of the United States for our book "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt." We went into our nation’s impoverished “sacrifice zones”—the first areas forced to kneel before the dictates of the marketplace—to show what happens when unfettered corporate capitalism and ceaseless economic expansion no longer have external impediments. We wanted to illustrate what unrestrained corporate exploitation does to families, communities and the natural world. We wanted to challenge the reigning ideology of globalization and laissez-faire capitalism to illustrate what life becomes when human beings and the ecosystem are ruthlessly turned into commodities to exploit until exhaustion or collapse. And we wanted to expose as impotent the formal liberal and governmental institutions that once made reform possible, institutions no longer equipped with enough authority to check the assault of corporate power.

What has taken place in these sacrifice zones—in postindustrial cities such as Camden, N.J., and Detroit, in coalfields of southern West Virginia where mining companies blast off mountaintops, in Indian reservations where the demented project of limitless economic expansion and exploitation worked some of its earliest evil, and in produce fields where laborers often endure conditions that replicate slavery—is now happening to much of the rest of the country. These sacrifice zones succumbed first. You and I are next.

Corporations write our legislation. They control our systems of information. They manage the political theater of electoral politics and impose our educational curriculum. They have turned the judiciary into one of their wholly owned subsidiaries. They have decimated labor unions and other independent mass organizations, as well as having bought off the Democratic Party, which once defended the rights of workers. With the evisceration of piecemeal and incremental reform—the primary role of liberal, democratic institutions—we are left defenseless against corporate power.

The Department of Justice seize of two months of records of phone calls to and from editors and reporters at The Associated Press is the latest in a series of dramatic assaults against our civil liberties. The DOJ move is part of an effort to hunt down the government official or
officials who leaked information to the AP about the foiling of a plot to blow up a passenger jet. Information concerning phones of Associated Press bureaus in New York, Washington, D.C., and Hartford, Conn., as well as the home and mobile phones of editors and reporters, was secretly confiscated. This, along with measures such as the use of the Espionage Act against whistle-blowers, will put a deep freeze on all independent investigations into abuses of government and corporate power.

Seizing the AP phone logs is part of the corporate state’s broader efforts to silence all voices that defy the official narrative, the state’s Newspeak, and hide from public view the inner workings, lies and crimes of empire. The person or persons who provided the classified information to the AP will, if arrested, mostly likely be prosecuted under the Espionage Act. That law was never intended when it was instituted in 1917 to silence whistle-blowers. And from 1917 until Barack Obama took office in 2009 it was employed against whistle-blowers only three times, the first time against Daniel Ellsberg for leaking the Pentagon Papers in 1971. The Espionage Act has been used six times by the Obama administration against government whistle-blowers, including Thomas Drake.

The government’s fierce persecution of the press—an attack pressed by many of the governmental agencies that are arrayed against WikiLeaks, Bradley Manning, Julian Assange and activists such as Jeremy Hammond—dovetails with the government’s use of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force to carry out the assassination of U.S. citizens; of the FISA Amendments Act, which retroactively makes legal what under our Constitution was once illegal—the warrantless wiretapping and monitoring of tens of millions of U.S. citizens; and of Section 1021 of the National Defense Authorization Act, which permits the government to have the military seize U.S. citizens, strip them of due process and hold them in indefinite detention. These measures, taken together, mean there are almost no civil liberties left.

A handful of corporate oligarchs around the globe have everything—wealth, power and privilege—and the rest of us struggle as part of a vast underclass, increasingly impoverished and ruthlessly repressed. There is one set of laws and regulations for us; there is another set of laws and regulations for a power elite that functions as a global mafia.

We stand helpless before the corporate onslaught. There is no way to vote against corporate power. Citizens have no way to bring about the prosecution of Wall Street bankers and financiers for fraud, military and intelligence officials for torture and war crimes, or security and surveillance officers for human rights abuses. The Federal Reserve is reduced to printing money for banks and financiers and lending it to them at almost zero percent interest; corporate officers then lend it to us at usurious rates as high as 30 percent. I do not know what to call this system. It is certainly not capitalism. Extortion might be a better word. The fossil fuel industry, meanwhile, relentlessly trashes the ecosystem for profit. The melting of 40 percent of the summer Arctic sea ice is, to corporations, a business opportunity. Companies rush to the Arctic and extract the last vestiges of oil, natural gas, minerals and fish stocks, indifferent to the death pangs of the planet. The same corporate forces that give us endless soap operas that pass for news, from the latest court proceedings surrounding O.J. Simpson to the tawdry details of the Jodi Arias murder trial, also give us atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide that surpass 400 parts per million. They entrance us with their electronic hallucinations as we waiver, as paralyzed with fear as Odysseus’ sailors, between Scylla and Charybdis.

There is nothing in 5,000 years of economic history to justify the belief that human societies should structure their behavior around the demands of the marketplace. This is an absurd, utopian ideology. The airy promises of the market economy have, by now, all been exposed as lies. The ability of corporations to migrate overseas has decimated our manufacturing base. It has driven down wages, impoverishing our working class and ravaging our middle
class. It has forced huge segments of the population—including those burdened by student loans—into decades of debt peonage. It has also opened the way to massive tax shelters that allow companies such as General Electric to pay no income tax. Corporations employ virtual slave labor in Bangladesh and China, making obscene profits. As corporations suck the last resources from communities and the natural world, they leave behind, as Joe Sacco and I saw in the sacrifice zones we wrote about, horrific human suffering and dead landscapes. The greater the destruction, the greater the apparatus crushes dissent.

More than 100 million Americans—one-third of the population—live in poverty or a category called “near poverty.” Yet the stories of the poor and the near poor, the hardships they endure, are rarely told by a media that is owned by a handful of corporations—Viacom, General Electric, Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp., Clear Channel and Disney. The suffering of the underclass, like the crimes of the power elite, has been rendered invisible.

In the Lakota Indian reservation at Pine Ridge, S.D., in the United States’ second poorest county, the average life expectancy for a male is 48. This is the lowest in the Western Hemisphere outside of Haiti. About 60 percent of the Pine Ridge dwellings, many of which are sod huts, lack electricity, running water, adequate insulation or sewage systems. In the old coal camps of southern West Virginia, amid poisoned air, soil and water, cancer is an epidemic. There are few jobs. And the Appalachian Mountains, which provide the headwaters for much of the Eastern Seaboard, are dotted with enormous impoundment ponds filled with heavy metals and toxic sludge. In order to breathe, children go to school in southern West Virginia clutching inhalers. Residents trapped in the internal colonies of our blighted cities endure levels of poverty and violence, as well as mass incarceration, that leave them psychologically and emotionally shattered. And the nation’s agricultural workers, denied legal protection, are often forced to labor in conditions of unpaid bondage. This is the terrible algebra of corporate domination. This is where we are all headed. And in this accelerated race to the bottom we will end up as serfs or slaves.

Rebel. Even if you fail, even if we all fail, we will have asserted against the corporate forces of exploitation and death our ultimate dignity as human beings. We will have defended what is sacred. Rebellion means steadfast defiance. It means resisting just as have Bradley Manning and Julian Assange, just as has Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical journalist whom Cornel West, James Cone and I visited in prison last week in Frackville, Pa. It means refusing to succumb to fear. It means refusing to surrender, even if you find yourself, like Manning and Abu-Jamal, caged like an animal. It means saying no. To remain safe, to remain “innocent” in the eyes of the law in this moment in history is to be complicit in a monstrous evil. In his poem of resistance, “If We Must Die,” Claude McKay knew that the odds were stacked against African-Americans who resisted white supremacy. But he also knew that resistance to tyranny saves our souls. McKay wrote:

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an ignoble spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

It is time to build radical mass movements that defy all formal centers of power and make concessions to none. It is time to employ the harsh language of open rebellion and class warfare. It is time to march to the beat of our own drum. The law historically has been a very imperfect tool for justice, as African-Americans know, but now it is exclusively the handmaiden of our corporate oppressors; now it is a mechanism of injustice. It was our corporate overlords who launched this war. Not us. Revolt will see us branded as criminals. Revolt will push us into the shadows. And yet, if we do not revolt we can no longer use the word “hope.”

Herman Melville’s “Moby-Dick” grasps the dark soul of global capitalism. We are all aboard the doomed ship Pequod, a name connected to an Indian tribe eradicated by genocide, and Ahab is in charge. “All my means are sane,” Ahab says, “my motive and my object mad.” We are sailing on a maniacal voyage of self-destruction, and no one in a position of authority, even if he or she sees what lies ahead, is willing or able to stop it. Those on the Pequod who had a conscience, including Starbuck, did not have the courage to defy Ahab. The ship and its crew were doomed by habit, cowardice and hubris. Melville’s warning must become ours. Rise up or die.

Also by Hedges: The World As It Is: Dispatches on the Myth of Human Progress A collection of Truthdig Columns by Chris Hedges. Keep up with Chris Hedges’ latest columns, interviews, tour dates and more at www.truthdig.com/chris_hed [Forwarded by David Druding—D]

MILITARIZED POLICE

RADLEY BALKO, RISE OF THE WARRIOR COP: THE MILITARIZATION OF AMERICA’S POLICE FORCE


snip-

Police departments across the country now sport armored personnel carriers designed for use on a battlefield. Some have helicopters, tanks and Humvees. They carry military-grade weapons. Most of this equipment comes from the military itself. Many SWAT teams today are trained by current and former personnel from special forces units like the Navy SEALs or Army Rangers.

Article is here.

BALKO’S NEW BOOK
Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces  
by Radley Balko. 2013.

The last days of colonialism taught America’s revolutionaries that soldiers in the streets bring conflict and tyranny. As a result, our country has generally worked to keep the military out of law enforcement. But according to investigative reporter Radley Balko, over the last several decades, America’s cops have increasingly come to resemble ground troops. The consequences have been dire: the home is no longer a place of sanctuary, the Fourth Amendment has been gutted, and police today have been conditioned to see the citizens they serve as an other—an enemy.

Today’s armored-up policemen are a far cry from the constables of early America. The unrest of the 1960s brought about the invention of the SWAT unit—which in turn led to the debut of military tactics in the ranks of police officers. Nixon’s War on Drugs, Reagan’s War on Poverty, Clinton’s COPS program, the post–9/11 security state under Bush and Obama: by degrees, each of these innovations expanded and empowered police forces, always at the expense of civil liberties. And these are just four among a slew of reckless programs.

In *Rise of the Warrior Cop*, Balko shows how politicians’ ill-considered policies and relentless declarations of war against vague enemies like crime, drugs, and terror have blurred the distinction between cop and soldier. His fascinating, frightening narrative shows how over a generation, a creeping battlefield mentality has isolated and alienated American police officers and put them on a collision course with the values of a free society.

Book Review: Rise of the Warrior Cop

July 24, 2013 8:48 pm  
by Hal_10000

*I’m kicking off a new feature in my blogging: reviews of books or movies I think are relevant to current issues and events. I’ve made occasional oblique references to books like Three Felonies a Day or Declaration of Independents. But this will be a little more in depth. Not anticipating this will happen often.*

On this blog, I regularly link to the work done by Radley Balko so it won’t surprise anyone that I just read his new book *Rise of the Warrior Cop* and have a high opinion of it. But I thought it was worth a post to spell out just why I think this is an important book. It’s not for the reasons that you think.

Balko’s blog has become one-stop-shopping on law enforcement abuses. From the misguided and tragic raid on Corey Maye to the killing of Kathryn Johnston, he’s documented hundreds of wrong-door raids, overamped raids and militaristic excesses that have trashed civil liberties and all too often left the bodies of innocent people and police on the ground.

But the book is very different from his blog. While the blog tends to focus on specific incidents
of abuse, the book takes a step back to break down how we’ve gotten here: how all of our civil liberties have slowly been chipped away by the legislatures and the courts through hysteria over crime, drugs and terrorism. It chronicles how our approach to law enforcement has changed from colonial times (when we didn’t have professional law forces) to today, with a heavy focus on the last forty years.

The thing about wrong door raids or the shooting of innocent people by police is that focusing on particular horrifying incidents gives one the impression that are isolated or very rare events. Balko shows that they are not that rare. Ray Kelly admitted that at least 10% of the hundreds of raids launched in NYC every month hit innocent people. Others estimate the problem is much larger. Hard numbers are difficult to get because there is very little documentation of what goes on in police raids and legislators and law enforcement have resisted efforts to document it.

**But wrong door raids are only the tip of a much larger and much scarier iceberg. The militarization of law enforcement** is deeply problematic even when it doesn’t result in harm to innocent people. Over 50,000 armed raids are launched every year in this country and something like 90+% of armed raids are for consensual non-violent crimes (drugs, principally). The problem isn’t just innocent people getting hurt: _it’s about the guilty people too_. How did it become reasonable to routinely send armed tactical squads for drug busts? If someone has some pot, why should cops bang on the door at 4 am, wait 15 seconds, crash it down, throw everyone to the floor and point guns at their head while screaming profanities? Before you answer, remember that guns of any kind are only recovered in a tiny fraction of these raids. Before you answer, remember that armed resistance to cops has been _rare_ even when crime reached its awful peak in the early 90′s (assaults on police are at an all-time low). Before you answer, remember that these tactics, with court approval, have been used to bust up small-time gambling “rings”, people selling raw milk, guitar manufacturers using illegal wood and even barbers practicing without a license. Raids have been launched against legal pot shops in California. These are licensed pot dealers — business people — who are treated like murderous meth kingpins. Raids have been launched against practicing physicians that the Feds decide are prescribing too much pain medicine. In many cases, they admit that the tactics are used not because of any danger but to “send a message”.

A man’s home is his castle, even if he _is_ breaking the law. The Constitution applies to all of use, lawmakers and lawbreakers. Our Founding Fathers rebelled for far less than this. They thought daytime searches were out of line.

These tactics have only ramped up and expanded as the crime rate has fallen. Supporters like to say that the militarization of police is the reason crime has fallen. But they have a problem: cities that have eschewed such tactics, like San Diego, have seen sharper drops in crime and crime started dropping there _before_ crime began to drop everywhere else. No matter what you might think of these tactics, there’s little evidence that they are actually working to reduce crime.

*Rise of the Warrior Cop* is definitively _not_ anti-cop. I would say that at least 60% and probably more of the interviewees are in law enforcement. Some of the most telling passages in the book are from the 1970’s when police officers _resisted_ the militarization of policing precisely
because they feared what eventually happened: the creation of groups of armed officers with little connection to the community busting down doors in the process of ordinary law enforcement; communities that see cops as dangerous rather than helpful; the majority of good decent community-oriented cops being eclipsed by gung-ho warriors.

The problem is not that cops are bad; the problem is that cops are human. And because of panic-mongering over the War on Drugs and the War on Terror, we have given these humans military weapons, enormous discretionary power and little accountability. Cops in the book talk about the adrenaline rush that comes with a no-knock raid, the sense of power that guns, body armor and tanks give them. It’s a testament to the basic goodness of most of our cops that there aren’t more abuses.

Balko is clear in his closing argument: we do not live in a police state. Only a small minority of Americans are being impacted by this. But I would say that the mechanism of a police state has been slowly worked into our society thanks to the War on Drugs and the War on Terror. Think about 2016. In 2016 we will get a new President. Here are just some of the powers that this new President will have:

• The power to surveil any overseas communication of any type through a secret court and the infrastructure to surveil any electronic communications, period.

• The power to collect meta-data on all Americans, which includes their location, who they call and where they go.

• A surveillance state that is governed by secret laws that no citizen can see.

• The power to kill American citizens overseas based on secret internal evaluations.

• The power to indefinitely detain terror suspects, including American citizens.

• A post office that routinely photographs our mail.

• Armed paramilitary SWAT teams in almost every city with a population of more than 25,000. Some cities of just a few thousand have them. Many now have armored vehicles and military grade weapons. Some even have massive .50 machine guns. That’s in addition to 73 different federal agencies that have tactical squads and employ tens of thousands of armed agents who are authorized for raids.

• A judiciary that thinks the exclusionary rules is old-fashioned, that warrants should almost always be granted and that police always act “in good faith”. A judiciary that thinks, if you’re arrested for so much as a bogus parking ticket, the police should be to take your DNA and see what else you might have been up to. A judiciary that thinks the smell of pot justifies a warrantless search and that your silence can incriminate you.

Maybe you think some of those policies above are reasonable. The problem is that this is not multiple choice. The President and the state now have all of those powers and privileges. And that list will only grow if left unchecked. One of the things we’ve seen is that the powers bequeathed by one President to the next only get extended further. As Alex has said many times, Obama has engaged in War on Terror policies far in excess of what Bush did. What might the next President do? Are you willing to trust anyone with that kind of power?

This isn’t about party. Republicans have played their role in chipping away at our civil liberties (Nixon especially). But one of the biggest enablers of law enforcement militarization has been Joe Biden, a liberal Democrat. When Obama took office, he massively increased the amount
of money going into grants and giveaways to provide military-grade equipment to cops in even the tiniest safest cities. Under Obama, raids on legal pot growers have increased. Surveillance has increased. Civil liberties have decreased. And the only problems the Democrats have had with even the most invasive anti-crime legislation is it not going far enough. This is a bipartisan problem.

A lot of people talk about the Second Amendment and its critical role in protecting us from tyranny. I agree on the importance of the Second Amendment. But where are these people when the actual pieces are put in place that could, under the right man, enable tyranny? Where are they as the Third, Fourth and Fifth Amendments are effectively gutted? Even the First Amendment is in danger. It is now routine for teams of cops to show up to protests in full riot gear and arrest peaceful protesters who won’t disperse. Medical marijuana activists have been specifically targeted for raids.

If you really care about liberty, you should not respond to violent raids on non-violent drug dealers with “that’s what they get for dealing drugs.” If you really care about liberty, you shouldn’t dismiss concerns over Waco and Ruby Ridge because those people were crazy. If you really care about liberty, you shouldn’t think that it’s reasonable for cops to respond to peaceful protests with tear gas guns (response to violent protests is different). If you really care about liberty, you shouldn’t dismiss IRS profiling because it only hurt a bunch of Tea Partiers. If you really care about liberty, you shouldn’t cheer the DHS when they call for extra scrutiny of Right Wing groups even as all political terrorism is in decline.

We see blazing hypocrisy on this issue all the time. Conservatives who rightfully screamed bloody murder over the Elian Gonzalez raid were almost gleeful when cops beat and pepper-sprayed Occupy protesters. Liberals who howled when Occupy protesters were beaten broke out the pompoms when it was the ATF (Rachel Maddow specifically said the nature of the opposition justified the tactics). Liberals who objected to profiling of Muslims thought it was just fine when the DHS did it with Right Wing groups.

It is precisely that kind of partisanship and division which has enabled this. People looking the other way as the War on Drugs raged out of control because it was only hurting dirty hippies and poor black people. People looking the other way at ATF raids because it was only hurting gun nuts. People biting their tongues on War on Terror excesses because they’re not Muslim. People dismissing IRS abuses because the Tea Party deserved it.

We have to get this through our heads: civil liberties belong to all of us. If anyone’s civil liberties are under attack, then all of our civil liberties are under attack.

Balko seems a bit optimistic that we will reach a tipping point on this. I’m not so sure. I thought the Columbia raid, in which video captured the killing of two dogs and the terrorizing of a child over a minor drug bust, would have changed things, but it didn’t. I fear that, if things don’t change soon, it will take something truly horrible to wake the American people up.

50,000 raids a year may not sound like a lot in a country of 300 million. The vast majority of Americans will never have to worry about this. But the potential danger lurks out there. Anyone in this country — anyone who isn’t a Congressman at least — is a vague pile of evidence away from having their door knocked down, their house searched and any
complaint being dismissed depending on which group our government decides is dangerous. This week, it's legal pot dealers in California. Next week, it's gun owners. After that, it's IMF protesters. After that, it's Right Wing "hate" groups.

Is that they kind of country we want to live in? That's the question the book asks.

I've only talked about a tiny fraction of what's in *Rise of the Warrior Cop*. It's a quick read but packed with facts that are alternatively enraging, alarming and, on occasion, darkly hilarious. But if you care about this issue — either because you agree with me that this is alarming or because you think I'm a hysterical nut — you should take a look.

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**The New “Warrior Cop” is Out of Control**
by Klint Finley  **JULY 10, 2013**

*The iconic Occupy Portland photograph by The Oregonian’s Randy L. Rasmussen*

You may have seen this article already, but it's worth a read if you haven't. Over the years I've linked to a lot of Radley Balko’s coverage of the over the top use of SWAT teams in the U.S., including his excellent paper *Overkill: The Rise of Paramilitary Police Raids in America.*
But things have progressively gotten worse. Now he has a book out on the subject. Here’s an excerpt about police killing dogs:

Toward the end of the 2000s there were hints that the public was beginning to want a change, though that desire could manifest in unexpected ways. A former colleague at the Cato Institute, Tim Lynch, has told me that when he gives talks about the Waco raid, he finds that people are somewhat sympathetic to the argument that the government overreacted, but that they still can’t get past the weirdness of the Branch Davidians themselves—their stockpile of weapons and the claims of sexual abuse and drug distribution in the community. Even the children who died are sometimes dismissed with guilt by association. But when he mentions that the ATF agents killed the Davidians’ dogs, Lynch tells me, people become visibly angry. I have found the same thing to be true in my reporting on drug raids.

At first, that may seem to indicate that people callously value the lives of pets more than the lives of people. But the fact that killing the dog during these raids has become nearly routine in many police agencies demonstrates just how casually those agencies have come to accept drug war collateral damage. When I started logging cop-shoots-dog incidents on my blog (under the probably sensational term “puppycide”), people began sending me new stories as they happened. Cops are now shooting dogs at the slightest provocation. As of this writing, I’m sent accounts of a few incidents each week.

It’s difficult to say if this is happening more frequently. There are no national figures, and estimates are all over the map. One dog handler recently hired to train a police department in Texas estimates there are up to 250,000 cop-shoots-dog cases each year. That seems high. In 2009 Randal Lockwood of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) told the Las Vegas Review-Journal that he sees 250 to 300 incidents per year in media reports, and he estimates that another 1,000 aren’t reported. The Indianapolis Star reported that between 2000 and 2002 police in that city shot 44 dogs. A recent lawsuit filed by the Milwaukee owner of a dog killed by cops found that police in that city killed 434 dogs over a nine-year period, or about one every seven and a half days. But those figures aren’t all that helpful. They don’t say how many of those dogs were actually vicious, how many were strays, or how many were injured and perhaps killed as an act of mercy versus how many were unjustified killings of pets.

Full Story: Salon: “Why did you shoot me? I was reading a book”: The new warrior cop is out of control

See also: Former Police Chief: Riot Cops Make Things Worse

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December 8, 2013

Tomgram: Chase Madar, The Criminalization of Everyday Life

Sometimes a single story has a way of standing in for everything you need to know. In the case of the up-arming, up-armoring, and militarization of police forces across the country, there is such a story. Not the police, mind you, but the campus cops at Ohio State University now possess an MRAP; that is, a $500,000, 18-ton, mine-resistant, ambush-protected armored vehicle of a sort used in the Afghan War and, as Hunter Stuart of the Huffington Post reported, built to withstand "ballistic arms fire, mine fields, IEDs, and nuclear, biological, and chemical environments." Sounds like just the thing for bouts of binge drinking and post-football-game shenanigans.

That MRAP came, like so much other equipment police departments are stocking up on -- from tactical military vests, assault rifles, and grenade launchers to actual tanks and helicopters -- as a freebie via a Pentagon-organized surplus military equipment program. As it happens, police departments across the country are getting MRAPs like OSU’s, including the Dakota County Sheriff's Office in Minnesota. It’s received one of 18 such decommissioned military vehicles already being distributed around that state. So has Warren County which, like a number of counties in New York state, some quite rural, is now deploying Afghan War-grade vehicles. (Nationwide, rural counties have received a disproportionate percentage of the billions of dollars worth of surplus military equipment that has gone to the police in these years.)

When questioned on the utility of its new MRAP, Warren County Sheriff Bud York suggested, according to the Post-Star, the local newspaper, that “in an era of terrorist attacks on U.S. soil and mass killings in schools, police agencies need to be ready for whatever comes their way... The vehicle will also serve as a deterrent to drug dealers or others who might be contemplating a show of force.” So, breathe a sigh of relief, Warren County is ready for the next al-Qaeda-style show of force and, for those fretting about how to deal with such things, there are now 165 18-ton “deterrents” in the hands of local law enforcement around the country, with hundreds of requests still pending.

You can imagine just how useful an MRAP is likely to be if the next Adam Lanza busts into a school in Warren County, assault rifle in hand, or takes over a building at Ohio State University. But keep in mind that we all love bargains and that Warren County vehicle cost the department less than $10. (Yes, you read that right!) A cornucopia of such Pentagon “bargains” has, in the post-9/11 years, played its part in transforming the way the police imagine their jobs and in militarizing the very idea of policing in this country.

Just thinking about that MRAP at OSU makes me feel like I grew up in Neolithic America. After all, when I went to college in the early 1960s, campus cops were mooks in suits. Gun-less, they were there...
Just thinking about that MRAP at OSU makes me feel like I grew up in Neolithic America. After all, when I went to college in the early 1960s, campus cops were mooks in suits. Gun-less, they were there to enforce such crucial matters as “parietal hours.” (If you’re too young to know what they were, look it up.) At their worst, they faced what in those still civilianized (and sexist) days were called “panty raids,” but today would undoubtedly be seen as potential manifestations of a terrorist mentality. Now, if there is a sit-in or sit-down on campus, as infamously at the University of California, Davis, during the Occupy movement, expect that the demonstrators will be treated like enemies of the state and pepper-sprayed or perhaps Tased. And if there’s a bona fide student riot in town, the cops will now roll out an armored vehicle (as they did recently in Seattle).

By the way, don’t think it’s just the weaponry that’s militarizing the police. It’s a mentality as well that, like those weapons, is migrating home from our distant wars. It’s a sense that the U.S., too, is a “battlefield” and that, for instance, those highly militarized SWAT teams spreading to just about any community you want to mention are made up of “operators” (a “term of art” from the special operations community) ready to deal with threats to American life.

Embedding itself chillingly in our civilian world, that battlefield is proving mobile indeed. As Chase Madar wrote for TomDispatch the last time around, it leads now to the repeated handcuffing of six- and seven-year-olds in our schools as mini-criminals for offenses that once would have been dealt with by a teacher or principal, not a cop, and at school, not in jail or court. Today, Madar returns to explain just how this particular nightmare is spreading into every crevice of American life. Tom
The Over-Policing of America
Police Overkill Has Entered the DNA of Social Policy
By Chase Madar

If all you’ve got is a hammer, then everything starts to look like a nail. And if police and prosecutors are your only tool, sooner or later everything and everyone will be treated as criminal. This is increasingly the American way of life, a path that involves “solving” social problems (and even some non-problems) by throwing cops at them, with generally disastrous results. Wall-to-wall criminal law encroaches ever more on everyday life as police power is applied in ways that would have been unthinkable just a generation ago.

By now, the militarization of the police has advanced to the point where “the War on Crime” and “the War on Drugs” are no longer metaphors but bland understatements. There is the proliferation of heavily armed SWAT teams, even in small towns; the use of shock-and-awe tactics to bust small-time bookies; the no-knock raids to recover trace amounts of drugs that often result in the killing of family dogs, if not family members; and in communities where drug treatment programs once were key, the waging of a drug version of counterinsurgency war. (All of this is ably reported on journalist Radley Balko’s blog and in his book, The Rise of the Warrior Cop.) But American over-policing involves far more than the widely reported up-armoring of your local precinct. It’s also the way police power has entered the DNA of social policy, turning just about every sphere of American life into a police matter.

Click here to read more of this dispatch.
Arkansas is represented in Congress by two senators and four representatives. Here is how to reach them. None of the senators or representatives publishes his e-mail address, but each can be contacted by filling in forms offered through his website.

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