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Police Militarization 101

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No objective observer of current events would deny that American policing, as an institution, is in crisis. Whether one believes this is a media-manufactured crisis or one brought on by the over 200-year old police institution itself, the police have found themselves once again racked with controversy, calls for accountability, and political demands for major reforms. All institutional crises evolve over a series of real or perceived failings and injustices; events in Ferguson, Missouri, precipitated this crisis in 2014. This article will examine the larger context in which the Ferguson crisis occurred, focusing specifically on the trend documented by the author beginning in 1994—police militarization.

Police studies has for the most part ignored police militarization trends and controversies, despite strong evidence produced in the 1990s that this trend had accelerated significantly and in highly consequential ways (ACLU, 2014; Kraska, 1993, 1994). Two reasons partially account for this neglect: (1) the focus on the growth of "soft" police practices that revolved around surveillance and information-gathering (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997) and, (2) an overall assumption among police scholars that the so-called "community policing revolution" meant that the police were attempting to democratize as opposed to militarize (Kraska, 2007).

Today the phenomenon of "police militarization" (PM), at least among the public and media, has become mainstream knowledge. The media has covered extensively the rise and normalization of SWAT teams and their fallout as part of the war on drugs, along with numerous high-profile police debacles in response to major protests in Seattle (World Trade Organization protests), Ferguson, (protests regarding killing unarmed African-American men) and Standing Rock (protests by Native Americans over environmental/indigenous rights). Both the political left and right recognize PM as a significant issue, and even mainstream politicians have attempted to address the

issue through legislation, congressional hearings, and a high-profile residential reform commission. The U.S. government and police, as per the historical norm, are failing to enact any kind of real response to this crisis—conflicted between simply strengthening the status quo ("doubling-down") versus putting in place piece-meal reforms. Election outcomes affect PM; the 2016 election, for example, pushed the lever toward a militarized police model.

PM Basics: Political and Conceptual Context

Security, both from threats outside and inside national borders, is a central espoused governmental function. The experiences with and the fear of military rule motivated emerging modern democracies such as the United States to clearly demarcate police forces from military forces. In fact, a distinct and bright line separating police responsibility for internal security and military responsibility for external threats to national security is a hallmark feature of the modern nation-state. As Austin Turk (1982) instructs:

> As military dominance and jurisdiction are achieved in emerging governments, authorities consolidate their position by instituting a system in which internal control is accomplished by the process of policing instead of the more costly, more overt, and less efficient one of military control. (p. 21)

Civilian police in a democratic society are meant to keep the domestic peace through protecting and serving local communities and citizens, all the while upholding civil liberties. The military's core function is to protect our national security from foreign enemies using any means necessary within the confines of waging war (Constitution Project, 2016). U.S. General Dunlap (2001), a military analyst deeply concerned about blurring the distinction between the police and military in the United States., explains the differences.

> To put it bluntly, in its most basic iteration, military training is aimed at killing people and breaking things. . . . Police forces take an entirely different approach. They have to exercise the studied restraint that a judicial process requires. Where the military sees enemies of the U.S., a police agency, properly oriented, sees "citizens" suspected of crimes. (p. 35)

We have witnessed a momentous shift in the relationship between the U.S. crime control apparatus and the U.S. military: the traditional delineations between the military, police, and criminal justice system have blurred dramatically. In breaking with a long-standing tenet of democratic governance, the traditional roles of the military (handling threats to our nation's external security through threatening or actually waging war) and the police targeting internal security problems (such as crime, illegal drugs, and terrorism) have become increasingly intermingled. The military/police convergence has a long and complicated history, but its most recent shift began with the U.S. military's heavy involvement in drug law enforcement during the Reagan/Bush drug war (Kraska, 1993); it has broadened and deepened over

the last 35 years. Of course some police analysts, including myself, are aware that the distinction between police and military can be viewed as mere window dressing that operates to veil the underlying essence of state power: violence and the threat thereof (Kraska, 2001). It is within this broader sociopolitical context that we can understand the recent and certain trend toward the militarization of U.S. police.

Before examining the empirical evidence documenting the PM trend, we need to establish some conceptual precision. Despite the pejorative undertones for some, *police militarizatio*n is used in academe as a rigorous organizing concept. Assessing whether the police institution is becoming "militarized" can be accomplished through rigorous social science research protocols. The integrity of this endeavor hinges on the clarity of our concepts.

Militarization's companion concept, *militarism*, is an ideology focused on the best means to solve problems. It is a cultural set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that stress the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate and efficacious means to solve problems. It emphasizes the exercise of military power, hardware, organization, operations, and technology as its primary problem-solving tools. *Militarization* is the implementation of militarism's ideology. It is the process of arming, organizing, planning, training for, threatening, and sometimes implementing violent conflict. To militarize, then, means adopting and applying the central elements of the military model to an organization or particular situation. PM, therefore, is the process whereby civilian police increasingly draw from, and pattern themselves around, the tenets of militarism and the military model.

Figure 1 illustrates the four central dimensions of the military model that constitute tangible indicators of police militarization.

- material—military-grade weaponry, equipment, and advanced technology;
- cultural—martial language, style (appearance), beliefs, values;
- organizational—martial arrangements such as "command and control" centers (e.g., COMPSTAT), or elite squads of officers patterned after military special operations patrolling high-crime areas or conducting routine warrant service work;
- operational—patterns of activity and training modeled after the military, such as in the areas counterterrorism, high-risk situations, or militaristic war/restoration programs such as the U.S. Weed and Seed program.

It should be obvious that the police since their inception have been to some extent "militarized." After all, the foundation of military and police power is the same—the state-sanctioned capacity to use violence to accomplish their respective objectives (external and internal security) (Kraska, 1994). Consequently, all police organizations have been modeled somewhat after the military. The real concern when discerning police militarization, thus, is one of degree—or put differently, the extent to which a civilian police body is militarized.

Police militarization, in all countries and across any time in history, must be conceived of as the degree or extent of militarization. Assessing the extent of militarization among civilian police has to focus on where the civilian police fall on the continuum—culturally, organizationally, operationally, and materially—and in what direction they are currently headed (Kraska, 1999). It is critical to recognize as well that significant movement across any one of

Any analysis of militarization among civilian police has to focus on where the civilian police fall on the continuum and in what direction they are headed. This assessment will vary considerably when viewing not only different police forces around the world but also different police agencies within decentralized police systems.

Low Militarization   **High Militarization**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Material Indicators—Extent of martial weaponry (e.g., automatic weapons, armored personnel carriers) and equipment; use of advanced military technology.

Low Militarization   **High Militarization**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Cultural Indicators—Extent of martial language, military style in appearance (military battle-dress utilities or BDUs); extent of militarism (military beliefs, values).

Low Militarization   **High Militarization**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
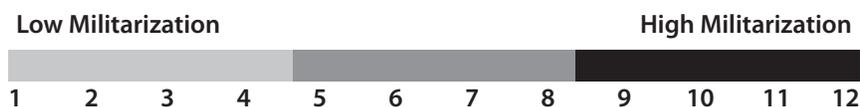
Organizational Indicators—Extent of martial arrangements; "command and control" centers (e.g., COMPSTAT), normalized use of elite squads of officers (SWAT teams) patterned after military special operations (e.g., Navy Seals) teams.

Low Militarization   **High Militarization**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

Operational Indicators—Extent of operational patterns modeled after the military such as in the areas of intelligence gathering, supervision, handling high-risk situations; highly aggressive and punitive operations such as some zero-tolerance initiatives (e.g., SWAT teams used to conduct no-knock drug warrants).

Figure 1

these continua can have a dramatic impact. For example, I have observed closely numerous medium- to small-sized police departments (25–175 uniformed officers) that formed a 12–20 officer "Special Response Team" (technically labeled a "police paramilitary unit") over a 6-month to one-year period. Each agency procured a large cache of heavy weaponry, armored personnel vehicles, and paramilitary garb from the U.S. Military (1033 program) and through Department of Homeland Security grants. Within 2 years of establishing these teams—intended only to be employed for the rare hostage or active-shooter situation—the following changes took place in every agency observed.

- Significant cultural changes evidenced by a change in uniforms (BDUs), language, hair style ("high and tight" U.S. Marine look), and a high value placed on hypermasculinity.

- Significant organizational changes evidenced by the officers pushing for two police paramilitary units—one for drug raids and another for proactive patrol work.

- Significant operational and tactical changes evidenced by the rest of the department being trained in "police survival" seminars, which led to all officers patrolling in a more tactical (paramilitary) manner. (One of the more popular is offered by Calibre Press, labeled "Killology." See Balko (2017) for a good exposé on the hazards of this type of training).

The point here is that each of these dimensions of police militarization depend on and are impacted by the others. As discussed below, the PM trend has accelerated dramatically over the last 35 years with each of these PM features mutually reinforcing one another.

The Rise of Police Militarization

I've conducted research into the PM phenomenon from the late 1980s until today. Fortunately, a large number of academics, nonprofit organizations, and investigative journalists have followed up on this line of inquiry and have provided a rich body of work. This research has documented not only significant movement along the militarization continuum but also a number of troubling consequences of this militarization.

My research began in the early 1990s, documented in an ethnography (Kraska, 1998). It involved being embedded for two years in police agencies that were deeply involved with developing regional SWAT teams (Special Weapons and Tactics)—and then normalizing these SWAT teams into the everyday functions of their police departments. These police units, referred to most often as SWAT teams or special response teams, are tailored after military special operations groups such as the Navy Seals. Members of the team are distinguished from patrol officers by their appearance, their heavy weaponry, and their operations. For a more exact identification, we must clarify the term *police paramilitary unit.* We must distinguish between indications that are *necessary* in applying the PPU label and those which would only *contribute* to

labeling these units and their activities as paramilitaristic. First among the necessary factors, the unit must train and function as a military special operations team with a a strict military command structure and discipline (or the pretense thereof). . . . Second, the unit must have at the forefront of their function to threaten or use force collectively, and not always as an option of last resort (e.g., in conducting a no-knock raid). Operationally, PPUs are deployed to deal with situations that require a team of police officers specifically trained to be use-of-force specialists. . . . Contributing indicators include the hardware they employ and their garb. These teams generally outfit themselves with black or urban camouflage BDUs (battle dress uniforms), lace-up combat boots, full-body armor, Kevlar helmets, and ninja-style hoods. PPUs' weapons and hardware include submachine guns, tactical shotguns, sniper rifles, percussion grenades, CS and OC gas (tear and pepper gas), surveillance equipment, and fortified personnel carriers (Kraska and Cubellis, 1997, pp. 610–611).

I learned a great deal about police militarization at the ground level—and especially about police paramilitary culture. I first learned that these paramilitary teams derive their appearance, tactics, operations, weaponry, and culture to a significant extent from elite military special operations units (e.g., Navy Seals). With battle-dress utilities, heavy weaponry, training in hostage rescue, dynamic entries into fortified buildings, and some of the latest military technology, it became clear that these squads of officers were on the high militarization side of the PM continuums. I also learned that the paramilitary culture associated with SWAT teams is highly appealing to a *large segment* of civilian police (certainly not all civilian police).

I then tested the extent to which my micro-level findings might have been indicative of a larger trend. Two national-level surveys were sent out to both large and small police agencies yielding definitive data documenting significant movement across the militarization continuums (Booth 1997; Kraska and Cubellis, 1997; Kraska and Kappeler, 1997). Not only had the number of paramilitary officers and teams increased dramatically, there had been more than a 1,300 percent increase in the total number of deployments of these paramilitary teams between 1980 and the year 2000. Based on follow up research conducted in 2011, there were an estimated 60,000 SWAT team deployments a year conducted among those departments surveyed. In the early 1980s, there was an average of about 3,000 (Kraska, 2007).

The rise in police paramilitary deployments was primarily due to no-knock and quick-knock raids on private residences searching for drugs, guns, and cash. However, some of the increase was also accounted for by the police normalizing their paramilitary teams to conduct routine patrol, to incorporate paramilitary gear and tactics into community policing efforts, and to define "crisis situations" more liberally—allowing for the increased deployment of police paramilitary teams. In other words, the U.S. police institution's increasing militarization via SWAT teams resulted in a dispersion effect—where the forces of militarization took hold, often unexpectedly, in other aspects of U.S. policing.

More than 80 percent of these deployments, and hence 80 percent of the growth of activity, were for proactive drug raids, specifically no-knock and quick-knock dynamic entries into private residences searching for contraband (drugs, guns, and money). The ACLU (2014) came to a similar statistical conclusion in their more recent study. They also found that nearly 50 percent of these raids were conducted against African Americans. This pattern of SWAT teams primarily engaged in surprise night-time contraband raids in private residences holds true for the largest as well as the smallest communities. PPUs have changed from being a periphery and strictly reactive component of police departments to a proactive force actively engaged in "fighting the drug war." Another important finding sheds additional light on the expanding role of these units. Nearly 40 percent of departments use their unit at least periodically, and in some cases routinely, as a patrol force in high crime areas—or what some academics have labeled "hot spots" (Sherman and Weisburd, 1995). One SWAT commander described this approach.

> We're into saturation patrols in hot spots. We do a lot of our work with the SWAT unit because we have bigger guns. We send out two, two-to-four men cars, we look for minor violations and do jump-outs, either on people on the street or automobiles. After we jump-out the second car provides periphery cover with an ostentatious display of weaponry. (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997, p. 10).

It is worth mentioning a few factors driving this phenomenon—based on previous research and scholarship. A central factor was the late 1980s and 1990s war on drugs. Police departments, partially due to political/cultural pressure, decided to intensify the "drug war" by deploying their PPUs using the Navy Seal tactic of "dynamic entries" into private residences. Not only does conducting 50–500 of these home raids per year have a great deal of cultural appeal to PPU officers but this tactic was also motivated by the property and cash confiscated. In fact, after I testified about this trend to the U.S. Senate, a high-ranking member of the National Tactical Officer's Association (a 65,000 SWAT team member nonprofit organization) pulled me to the side and said the following: "You know why SWAT took off don't you? It's because of civil asset forfeiture. We were generating a ton of new revenue for our departments" (Kraska, 2014).

Problematic Consequences of Police Militarization

The central critique of the police militarization trend lies in its consequences. The academic literature usually frames these types of analyses as intended and unintended consequences. Intended consequences are found in mainstream narratives justifying PM as necessary due to changes in threats to the police and to the public. These threats include domestic terrorism, a citizen population with greater access to heavy weaponry, an increase in active-shooter situations, and a heightened sensibility among the police and public

about the importance of police officer safety. The intended, or hoped for, consequences are rooted primarily in late-modern safety logic that sees increased militarization enhancing officer and public safety. An unintended consequence (or negative consequence) might be that PM actually decreases officer and public safety due to its aggressive nature.

Critiquing PM, however, by focusing on the *intentions* of public policy fails to account for the extreme difficulty in deciphering what is intentional and what isn't. A more fruitful analytic relies on the idea of problematic consequences. In this way we can assess whether PM ultimately does more harm than good without attributing ill-intent of those involved. The following includes just a sample of problematic consequences.

The Dispersion Effect

A reoccurring theme with police militarization is that once military gear and tactics take hold, they tend to disperse (or slide down a slippery slope) to other areas of policing, resulting in a normalization of PM. A grounded example might help. I've witnessed numerous police departments obtain an armored personnel carrier (APC) or fund a fully operational SWAT team—and then struggle to find a use for it. Eventually an officer suggests using the APC at a basketball game where there are racial tensions or as an essential presence during a civil protest. Similarly, SWAT teams were originally established to handle the very rare emergency situation. The difficulty was that even larger departments would not experience this type of emergency except for 1–3 times a year—and smaller agencies might experience such an incident every 50 years. Given their expense, the aforementioned allure of paramilitary culture, and political pressure to wage a more aggressive war on crime/ drugs/terrorism—most police departments began using their police paramilitary units for routine police work. Several of the larger police departments I surveyed and interviewed deployed their police paramilitary unit more than 500 times a year. Even in smaller jurisdictions, police agencies managed to deploy their units 50–75 times a year. Most of these deployments were for no-knock and quick-knock drug raids (ACLU, 2014; Kraska, 2007).

The way in which police are defining a greater range of situations requiring a militarized response is also problematic. As the police become more risk-aversive due to a heightened sense of danger, they tend to define a broader range of situations that constitute a serious lethal threat—thereby necessitating a more militaristic response. To make matters worse, there is also a massive for-profit training industry in the United States that generates and exploits this police fear of victimization. The central solution is for officers to always be on guard, to discharge their weapons much earlier in a situation than was previously done, and to unload their clips (Apuzzo, 2015; Balko, 2017).

Negative Impact on Police Culture

Police analysts cite changing police culture as the most evident and troublesome unintended consequence of PM (Stamper, 2016). Military special

operations training, martial language, an emphasis on being a "warrior," and being outfitted with military weaponry and garb all contribute to a militarized occupational culture. This culture tends to view the public as a threat, keeps officers on high alert (i.e., an overblown concern for personal safety), promotes a preoccupation with heavy weaponry and paramilitary culture, cultivates hypermasculinity, and sees any community policing reforms as a "weak" approach (Kraska, 2001). A recent ACLU (2014) study concludes: "Militarization of policing encourages officers to adopt a 'warrior' mentality and think of people they are supposed to serve as enemies" (p. 3). This mindset makes it more probable that physical force, even lethal force, becomes an acceptable and readily implemented option—particularly against those minority groups who are already viewed as a "threat."

In 2016 the U.S. police killed between 963–1,153 U.S. citizens, nearly half were African Americans and 15 percent of those victims were unarmed (ACLU, 2014; Campbell, Nix, and McGuire, 2017). PM no doubt plays a significant role. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has recently acknowledged that PM has shifted the mindset of many police officers from a public guardianship role to a warrior role (also referred to as "survival" training) (Meares, 2017). DOJ's solution is to attempt, through a host of progressive training programs and a ratcheting back of military hardware, to replace the warrior subculture with one that values citizen interaction and approaches police work as "guardians of democracy."

Even the DOJ admits, however, that reversing the PM trend is unlikely—a safe prediction given the failure of nearly 25 years of community policing reforms. Militarized police culture has a tightening grip on a large segment of U.S. contemporary policing. "The military special operations' culture—characterized by a distinct techno-warrior garb, heavy weaponry, sophisticated technology, hypermasculinity, and dangerous function—was nothing less than intoxicating for its participants" (Kraska, 2007, p. 6).

A Hindrance to Community Policing

Even the U.S. Department of Justice cites police militarization as a leading cause of the failure of community policing reforms (Bickel, 2013). Few police academics acknowledge, though, that police militarization expanded during the so-called "community policing revolution." These two trends—one representing militarization and the other democratization—seemed to contradict one another (Garland, 2001). While plausible, this assumption did not hold up to research evidence (Kraska, 2007). Survey research and in-depth interviews with U.S. police administrators revealed little incoherence in the field between the expanding PM and community policing reform efforts. When asked about the relationship, the following comment from a SWAT commander was typical.

> We conduct a lot of saturation patrol. We do terry stops and aggressive
> field interviews. These tactics are successful as long as the pressure stays

on relentlessly. The key to our success is that we're an elite crime fighting team that's not bogged down in the regular bureaucracy. We focus on quality of life issues like illegal parking, loud music, bums, troubles. We have the freedom to stay in a hot area and clean it up—particularly gangs. Our tactical team works nicely with our department's emphasis on community policing. (p. 9)

In short, police militarization strengthened and grew during the so-called community policing (CP) era by coopting the vague logic and rhetoric employed by mainstream police academics. Likewise, the presence and normalized deployment of military-grade arms, appearance, and operations undermined reform efforts to accomplish key tenets of the CP mission: break down the we/they mindset, cultivate the community's trust, empower the community to police themselves, maintain cultural proximity with the public, and develop a high level of meaningful communication with the public (democratic approach). Of course some police analysts knew all along, based on their reading of police history, that CP efforts were likely doomed from the start.

Militarized Policing and Civil Protest

A controversial police killing of an unarmed African-American man by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked massive civil protests in Ferguson and in other U.S. cities. The Ferguson police department, along with other police departments in Missouri, responded to these peaceful demonstrations with a heavily militarized presence. Images of police paramilitary officers armed with military-grade weapons sitting on Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) aiming at peaceful demonstrators were broadcast nationwide. The use of tactical vehicles with gun turrets sparked a new round of public debate in the media about the appropriateness of a militarized policing approach to civil disturbances (Bouie, 2014). The previous controversy occurred during the Occupy Movement protests.

The events in Ferguson happened within a context of a large segment of the American public—on the political left and right—seriously questioning the legitimacy of the police due to numerous high-profile PM incidents. The state rapidly and with little reflection resorting to an explicit militarized response to situations like Standing Rock or Ferguson reminds police scholars that for all the advancements in technology and surveillance it is still the raw use of force that forms the foundation of state/police power.

Mining the Poor: PM as a Tool of Resource Extraction

The 2014 events in Ferguson, Missouri, demonstrate another important unintended consequence—the police employing PM as a tool of revenue generation. Seven months after public protests, the U.S. Justice Department's investigation about the Ferguson debacle surprisingly did not focus on police militarization. It instead concluded: "Ferguson's law enforcement practices are shaped by the City's focus on *revenue* rather than by public safety needs" (Investigation of Ferguson, 2015, p. 7). Politicians and the media fixated only

on police militarization and therefore overlooked the clear symbiotic relationship between police militarization and revenue generation for the city's coffers (Williams, 2017).

One observer provided a scathing critique of this practice.

> The town of Ferguson, while tiny in scale, is an Orwellian monstrosity. Its racially biased Police Department is the enforcement wing of a predatory system of government. . . . The city's white-dominated council governs a mostly black city, and its oppressive, biased justice system is an instrument of fiscal (in addition to social) domination. Court fines account for a fifth of the city's revenue. The city issues three warrants per household, and its draconian justice system appears designed to bleed its victims. (Chait, 2014, p. 2)

Police militarization played a critical role in this dynamic. When the citizens of Ferguson united in their protest against police oppression, numerous local police agencies converged on Ferguson and immediately threatened its citizens with a highly militarized police presence, as described earlier. Moreover, the Ferguson PD was engaged in an aggressive campaign of resource extraction under the auspices of the "stop-and-frisk" police model (Investigation of Ferguson, 2015).

Moreover, we have to reckon with the fact that "mining the poor" would not be possible without recent police reform efforts. A host of federally-funded and sometimes academically-inspired efforts at enhancing police efficacy have included broken-windows policing, hot-spots policing, Weed and Seed, community policing, order-maintenance policing, zero-tolerance policing, intelligence-led policing, COMPSTAT, stop-and-frisk policing, and saturation patrol. Mainstream police analysts might protest that all of these are quite different programs; however, they share a central theme: the police infiltrating in a proactive and assertive manner certain communities for the purpose of crime suppression, intelligence gathering, citizen pacification, and enforcement of a state-defined law and order.

Consider as an example the generously funded "broken windows" community policing approach. While the espoused goals of this effort are community safety, developing trust in the police, and crime reductions, most credible police analysts would concede that this 40-year project has resulted in numerous counterproductive and outright destructive outcomes for the communities targeted and for the police themselves. All of these proactive police reform models have enabled and perpetuated police resource extraction and police militarization. The police and local governments, even with good intentions, have capitalized on these new techniques of "community engagement" for financial gain. Every stop-and-frisk, clearing of a hot spot, weeding a neighborhood, enforcing a police-defined order, or fixing a broken window granted the police and local governments an opportunity to extract resources. If the original intent was to control crime and enhance public safety, those ends seem to be replaced by the bureaucratic quest for enhanced growth and power.

The events in Ferguson point to a yet to be reckoned with trend in criminal justice functioning: extracting revenue directly from the poor and racial minorities for the sole benefit of the criminal justice system itself (usually prosecutors' offices and police departments). In political terms, the State has fabricated on its left hand a matrix of laws, bureaucratic rules, fines, tactics of dispossession (e.g., civil asset forfeiture), private-public partnerships, processing fees, surveillance systems, payment plan fees, assistance fees, and elaborate systems of debt and interest penalties. On its right hand is police militarization.

Atkinson (2016) sums up the nuts-and-bolts of how this works.

> These fines and fees, often termed legal financial obligations or economic sanctions, arose as a way to shift the costs of criminal adjudication to those charged with criminal activity. But many jurisdictions are now using jail time to coerce poor, mostly minority violators of minor infractions, such as truancy, driving offenses, littering, and jaywalking, into paying fees they cannot afford. These fines are only the beginning, as municipalities tack on court fees, payment plan charges, other costs, and interest. Small debts spiral into enormous ones, and nonpayment can result in incarceration. Collection of these debts is often outsourced to private debt collectors, who use aggressive tactics and charge collection fees, creating a never-ending cycle of debt and incarceration. (p. 189)

A significant academic and journalistic literature is emerging that documents and illuminates the gravity of this new American extractive industry (see for example, Atkinson, 2015; Dolan and Carr, 2015; Edleman, 2017; Jerjian, 2017).

Conclusion

I've documented over 300 SWAT-involved tragedies over the last 20 years. Two stand out. In September of 2000, federal law enforcement conducted a joint drug investigation with the Modesto, California, municipal police department. Employing the Military Special Operations model, the Modesto P.D.'s SWAT team conducted a predawn dynamic entry into the Sepulveda's family home—suspecting the father, it turned out incorrectly, of being involved in low level drug dealing. Their intelligence failed to note that the Sepulveda family had three young children in the house. Deploying percussion grenades, they stormed the house and rousted the children out of bed onto the floor. One of the children—Alberto—was 11 eleven years old and complied with all of the officers' screams to get in the prone position on his bedroom floor. A SWAT officer—standing over him with a 12-gauge shotgun—accidentally discharged his weapon into Alberto's back—killing him. This incident devastated the Modesto Police Department, and obviously the surviving members in Alberto's family. The $3-million judgment paid by the local municipality and the federal government was one of the largest awards given for a botched SWAT Raid.

Now move forward to May of 2014. A small Georgia police department's SWAT team conducted a no-knock drug raid on a family's home—again on suspicion of low level drug dealing. The officers threw a percussion grenade into the home. The device landed in an infant's crib next to his face and then detonated. The officers did not allow the mother to touch or console the wounded infant, so it laid by itself in its crib bleeding while the police waited for the paramedics to arrive. Despite being comatose for 2 weeks—and receiving severe lacerations and burns—he did survive. The family was not involved in drug dealing. Legal judgement against the police department: $3.6 million.

These two cases are anecdotes. However, they occurred within the well-documented trend outlined in this article. An intense movement of U.S. police across the militarization continuum has been one of contemporary policing's most important and consequential developments over the last 100 years. Community policing reform efforts, which occurred simultaneously during the same time period of PM's growth, do not appear to have resulted in a more responsive, effective, or democratic policing form. Instead, reforms such as hot-spots policing, broken windows, community-oriented policing, or Weed and Seed programs have played an important causal role in perpetuating police militarization and the current crisis in which contemporary policing finds itself.

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