

# The U.S. Police State's Answer to Free Speech. Tear Gas, Guns and Riot Squads...

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*Forget everything you've ever been taught about free speech in America. It's all a lie. There can be no free speech for the citizenry when the government speaks in a language of force. What is this language of force?*

*Militarized police. Riot squads. Camouflage gear. Black uniforms. Armored vehicles. Mass arrests. Pepper spray. Tear gas. Batons. Strip searches. Surveillance cameras. [Kevlar vests](#). Drones. [Lethal weapons](#). [Less-than-lethal weapons unleashed with deadly force](#). Rubber bullets. Water cannons. Stun grenades. Arrests of journalists. [Crowd control tactics](#). Intimidation tactics. Brutality.*

This is not the language of freedom. This is not even the language of law and order.

Unfortunately, this is how the government at all levels—federal, state and local—now responds to those who choose to exercise their First Amendment right to peacefully assemble in public and challenge the status quo.

Recently, this [militarized exercise in intimidation](#) reared its ugly head in the college town of Charlottesville, Va., where protesters who took to the streets to peacefully express their disapproval of a [planned KKK rally](#) were held at bay by implacable lines of gun-wielding riot police. Only after a motley crew of Klansmen had been safely escorted to and from the rally by black-garbed police did the assembled army of city, county and state police declare the public gathering unlawful and proceed to unleash canisters of tear gas on the few remaining protesters to force them to disperse.

To be clear, this is the treatment being meted out to protesters [across the political spectrum](#).

The police state does not discriminate.

As a USA Today article notes, "People demanding justice, demanding accountability or demanding basic human rights without resorting to violence, should not be greeted with machine guns and tanks. Peaceful protest is democracy in action. It is a forum for those who feel disempowered or disenfranchised. Protesters should not have to face [intimidation by weapons of war](#)."

A militarized police response to protesters poses a danger to all those involved, protesters and police alike. In fact, [militarization makes police more likely to turn to violence to solve](#)

[problems.](#)

You want to turn a peaceful protest into a riot?

Bring in the militarized police with their guns and black uniforms and warzone tactics and “comply or die” mindset. Ratchet up the tension across the board. Take what should be a healthy exercise in constitutional principles (free speech, assembly and protest) and turn it into a lesson in authoritarianism.

Frankly, any police officer who tells you that he needs tanks, SWAT teams, and pepper spray to do his job shouldn't be a police officer in a constitutional republic.

All that stuff in the First Amendment sounds great in theory. However, it amounts to little more than a hill of beans if you have to exercise those freedoms while facing down an army of police equipped with deadly weapons.

It doesn't have to be this way. There are other, far better models to follow.

For instance, back in 2011, the St. Louis police opted to employ a passive response to Occupy St. Louis activists. First, police gave the protesters nearly 36 hours' notice to clear the area, as opposed to the 20 to 60 minutes' notice other cities gave. Then, as journalist Brad Hicks [reports](#), when the police finally showed up:

They didn't show up in riot gear and helmets, they showed up in shirt sleeves with their faces showing. They not only didn't show up with SWAT gear, they showed up with no unusual weapons at all, and what weapons they had all securely holstered. They politely woke everybody up. They politely helped everybody who was willing to remove their property from the park to do so. They then asked, out of the 75 to 100 people down there, how many people were volunteering for being-arrested duty? Given 33 hours to think about it, and 10 hours to sweat it over, only 27 volunteered ... and were escorted away by a handful of cops. The rest were advised to please continue to protest, over there on the sidewalk ... and what happened next was the most absolutely brilliant piece of crowd control policing I have heard of in my entire lifetime. All of the cops who weren't busy transporting and processing the voluntary arrestees lined up, blocking the stairs down into the plaza. They stood shoulder to shoulder. They kept calm and silent. They positioned the weapons on their belts out of sight. They crossed their hands low in front of them, in exactly the least provocative posture known to man. And [they peacefully, silently, respectfully occupied the plaza, using exactly the same non-violent resistance techniques that the protesters themselves had been trained in.](#)

As *Forbes* concluded,

“This is a more humane, less costly, and ultimately more productive way to handle a protest. This is great proof that [police can do it the old fashioned way](#) - using their brains and common sense instead of tanks, SWAT teams, and pepper spray - and have better results.”

It can be done.

Police will not voluntarily give up their gadgets and war toys and combat tactics, however. Their training and inclination towards authoritarianism has become too ingrained.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), if we are to have any hope of dismantling the police state, change must start locally, community by community. Citizens will have to demand that police de-escalate and de-militarize. And if the police don't listen, contact your city councils and put the pressure on them.

Remember, they work for us. They might not like hearing it—they certainly won't like being reminded of it—but we pay their salaries.

We must adopt a different mindset and follow a different path if we are to alter the outcome of these interactions with police.

The American dream was built on the idea that no one is above the law, that our rights are inalienable and cannot be taken away, and that our government and its appointed agents exist to serve us.

It may be that things are too far gone to save, but still we must try.

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