

Miami police expand their use of military-grade vehicles and equipment

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An investigative report appearing in a Miami newspaper, the *New Times*, provides details about the Miami-Dade Police Department's expanded use of military-grade equipment vehicles on an everyday basis. The MDPD announced Monday that they will begin "randomly" sending out their "rapid deployment force" to various county buildings, as well as public transit stops.

In Monday's press release, MDPD stated, "In keeping with our ongoing homeland security initiatives, the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) today begins its Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) as an enhanced security presence to deter threats to critical infrastructure sites and soft target locations throughout Miami-Dade County, such as government buildings and the Metrorail system."

The release specifies that the RDF will be deployed to deal with "terrorism and counter-terrorism response operations, Weapons of Mass Destruction and Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear and Explosives response operations, natural and man-made disasters, post-blast Explosive Ordnance Disposal support, civil disturbances, protests, riots, and humanitarian aid."

The MDPD has provided videos of their training exercises on their Twitter account, which can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#).

The press release continues: "Members of the community should not be alarmed and/or assume that any credible threat to Miami-Dade has been received. These random deployments will be ongoing and complement our efforts to thwart those that wish to do us harm by showcasing our readiness and ability to respond and protect our county."

In a tweet that same day, *Miami Herald* reporter Doug Hanks provided photographs of a military-style

truck that was parked outside the county hall during a special county commission meeting on Venezuela. There were no protests or apparent threats of any kind surrounding the meeting.

The *New Times* investigation emphasizes that police officers have had to repeatedly warn residents "not to be alarmed" and frequently explain that there is "no heightened state of emergency." Considering this *New Times* journalist Jerry Iannelli noted, "If local police need to repeatedly tell people not to be scared by what they're doing, their actions deserve public scrutiny."

The investigative report also shows that the acquisition of increasing numbers of military-grade equipment and vehicles have come in a dubious manner. The county commission is supposed to monitor these purchases by the MDPD, but has up until this point in time made no checks or limitations.

Earlier this summer, for instance, MDPD applied for Department of Justice funding in order to acquire spy planes to record movements on the ground but did so without consulting the commission. They then had County Mayor Carlos Gimenez sign off on the plan and asked the commission to retroactively approve the purchase. The purchase was only canceled when the *New Times* exposed the plan to both the public and to members of local civil-rights organizations.

In addition to spy planes, MDPD has made several other requests over the last 12 months, including for upgrades to tactical gear, rifles, and ammunition. Iannelli comments that "Local street cops can't wear that stuff on regular patrols, but now [with the RDF] MDPD has devised a fun new way to make sure all that equipment gets used."

The *New Times* emphasizes that all of these events are happening as Miami is seeing historically low levels of crime. Florida Department of Law

Enforcement data shows that crime levels in Miami are at their lowest since the 1960s, which was before the cocaine-boom era of the 1970s.

Despite this, MDPD has the nation's eighth-largest police force and continues to collect larger and larger stores of weaponry and equipment without opposition from elected leaders. Iannelli stated, "It sucks up tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer money in order to buy gunshot-detectors that probably don't work and untold caches of rifles, money that could easily be spent to help subsidize affordable housing in the city or help needy parents feed their children."

Out of all the threats addressed in the MDPD press release, the only one that appears to be a major concern in recent years are protests.

The *New Times* reported an incident during the 2016 election where a group of elderly residents peacefully protesting inside county hall drew the attention of the police department, who sent an officer to patrol the crowd armed with a semi-automatic weapon. Protestors reported then that they felt like cops were treating them like "enemy combatants in a war zone."

Where the *New Times* investigation falls short is in fingering the forces that benefit from this increased use of military equipment and scare tactics on the civilian population—the members of the city elites whose interests are represented by the county commission itself.

The showcasing of the vehicle outside the county commission meeting this past Monday as well as the effort to retroactively approve the purchase of spy planes and intimidation of protestors inside the county hall last year should ring alarm bells. The scaffolding of a police state is on full display. When the MDPD speaks of an "enhanced security presence" it is aimed ultimately at suppressing any sign of opposition or dissent from working class residents.



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