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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

August 21, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you and the world now knows, on August 9, 2014, Michael Brown, an eighteen-year-old African-American was shot six times by a police officer and fell dead in the middle of a main thoroughfare of Ferguson, Missouri, a working-class town of 21,000 residents.

Because of a series of unconscionable missteps by the Ferguson Police Department, including what many citizens of that community believed to have been a flagrant misuse of authority by the police, demonstrations have taken place each day and night since the shooting. Tragically, the police response to the shooting was an overwhelming and sometime, taunting show of military might.

The Police Department of Ferguson, without appropriate training, rolled through the streets with armored vehicles used to patrol the streets of Fallujah during the Iraq War. Additionally, police officers held M4 Carbine Assault Rifles and M16 Rifles used during the Vietnam conflict. In fact, Mr. Secretary, as we stood along the street with ministers and other upstanding citizens, we got the sense that we were in a bad military movie. Some of the Ferguson police force wore military camouflage combat uniforms similar to those worn by the U.S. Marine Corps.

The police, equipped with sophisticated military equipment, demonstrated in the streets that they are untrained in how to properly use the weapons with which they were armed with by the Department of Defense. The 1033 program that was created in 1996 in response to the war on drugs, was left unaltered through the last two major wars and the type of equipment available for distribution since the drawdown of those wars became drastically different then when the program was first formed.

Law enforcement officials responding to the protests in Ferguson were outfitted through this program, but not required to complete certifications to prove competency in the usage of the equipment like we require of our soldiers before using it on the battlefield. We need to re-

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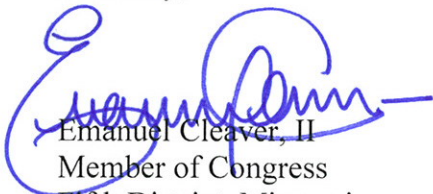
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evaluate distributing this kind of war equipment to municipalities, and if we're going to do it, we must at least have other requirements, including something as simple as training.

Mr. Secretary, we propose that only cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, DC, which are likely targets for terrorist attacks, receive this level of war machinery. Much of the 1033 program equipment is simply too much for small towns. We believe that you can design a program that will address the real threats while avoiding the militarization of police in small towns.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress
Fifth District, Missouri



Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress
First District, Missouri