



# CITY OF IOWA CITY MEMORANDUM

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Date: September 10, 2020  
To: City Council  
From: Geoff Fruin, City Manager  
Re: Resolution 20-159: Military Grade Equipment

## **Background**

The City Council adopted Resolution 20-159, which included the following action:

*“Send the letter attached as Exhibit “A” to the Johnson County Sheriff supporting divestment of the MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle and obtain a report from city staff on the military grade equipment in the ICPD’s inventory and the federal contracts that provide support to the police department.” (Res. 20-159, p. 2, #10)*

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Mayor Teague submitted a letter to the Johnson County Sheriff supporting the divestment of the MRAP vehicle. On August 20<sup>th</sup>, City staff issued a memo to the City Council outlining all federal contracts from 2017 to the present, that provide support to the Iowa City Police Department. The following memo completes this action by outlining all military grade equipment in the City’s inventory.

## **Federal Government Law Enforcement Support Office / 1033 Program**

The federal Defense Logistics Agency’s Law Enforcement Support Office coordinates the 1033 program, which allows for federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to acquire obsolete or excess property from the U.S. military for bona fide law enforcement purposes. According to the Defense Logistics Agency website, about 8,200 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies are participating in the program. Available property ranges from demilitarized vehicles and small arms/personal weapons to office equipment, computers and other general property.

The Iowa City Police Department has not acquired any equipment from the 1033 program, or any other similar program, since the late 1990s. Furthermore, the department does not monitor the availability of inventory from the U.S. military and has no intention of participating in the 1033 program in the future.

## **Iowa City’s Recent Experience with Serious Violent Crime**

In 2019, the Iowa City Police Department handled over 77,000 incidents, up more than 7,000 from the previous year. Some of those situations posed significant danger to both the public and responding officers. Response to domestic disturbances, assaults, fights in progress, 911 hang ups, suicidal individuals, robberies, burglary alarms and weapons offenses, accounted for over 7,600 of these calls in 2019. In the vast majority of these situations, officers are able to successfully resolve incidents with de-escalation tactics and standard patrol issued equipment.

The recent increase in crimes involving firearms in Iowa City has been very concerning. In 2018, 35 weapons law violations were reported, compared to 63 violations in 2019. This represents an 80% increase in just one year. Of even greater concern is the spike in calls for service where a firearm was discharged as evidenced by gunshot victims, credible witnesses and/or shell casings and bullet holes found at the scene. In 2019, the community experienced 15 documented shots fired calls, resulting in 56 total rounds fired and 5 people shot. By

comparison, in just over the first 8 months of 2020, Iowa City has already had 38 documented shots fired calls, resulting in 206 total rounds fired and 10 people shot. In the last three weeks alone, Iowa City has had 5 separate shots fired incidents. During the latest shooting on September 4th, officers collected 24 shell casings and determined that there were at least 4 different shooters. Although no persons are believed to have been struck, several houses and vehicles in the area were hit by gunfire.

As a part of its response to serious violent crime, the Department maintains a team of officers who are specially trained to handle more complex tactical situations. Officers assigned to the team have other full-time assignments throughout the Department. This team trains regularly for situations where suspects are likely armed. Deployment of the team is based on several factors, including the suspects' criminal history, recent use or association with weapons, and the severity of offense. The team is also utilized for crowd control, VIP protection, search and rescue, and other large-scale assignments and events. The team was utilized three times in 2018, five times in 2019, and ten times thus far in 2020.

### Iowa City Police Department Inventory

The following inventory of equipment that could be considered 'military-grade':

<b>Protective Gear</b>	
Riot Control Gear	Eighty sets of gear are available to protect officers from various thrown objects or weapons. This gear does not provide ballistic protection. The gear includes a helmet, chest protector, shoulder/arm guards, and leg/foot guards. Twenty-two shields are also available and similarly do not provide ballistic protection.
Gas Masks	The department has ninety-five gas masks available to filter chemical agents and other substances from the air.
Ballistic Gear	The department has nineteen ballistic vests and eighteen ballistic helmets with communication headsets for use in high-risk operations. Two ballistic blankets and two ballistic shields are also available for use in protecting officers or others during high-risk operations.
<b>Weaponry</b>	
Riot Baton	The department has eighty 36-inch polycarbonate batons available for use if needed in riot situations. The department has not utilized riot batons in a use of force situation since they were obtained in 2012.
Tactical Rifle	The department has ten of these rifles that are only available for law enforcement agencies or individuals with a Federal Firearms License (FFL). The rifles have fully-automatic and semi-automatic capability. The department has not fired this type of weapon in a use of force incident since they were added to our inventory in approximately 2006.
Tactical Shotgun	The department has three of these shotguns, which are semi-automatic, 12 gauges with a 12-inch barrel. They are legal to be owned by the general public. The department has not fired this type of weapon in a use of force incident since they were added to our inventory in approximately 1998.
Marksman Rifle	The department has four marksman rifles, which deliver highly accurate shot placement to resolve life threatening situations. The department has not fired this type of weapon in a use of force incident since they were added to our inventory in approximately 1998.

Breaching Shotgun	The department has one standard shotgun which is modified to shoot frangible rounds. These rounds are designed to facilitate entry into barricaded or secured areas through the destruction of locking mechanisms and/or hinges on doors
PepperBall System	The PepperBall system is used as a less lethal direct impact munition and chemical agent delivery system.
Grenade with Rubber Pellets (Chemical: CS)	The department has eight of these less lethal impact devices that include CS laden powder. CS is a chemical irritant.
Grenade with Rubber Pellets (Chemical: OC)	The department has two of these less lethal impact devices that include OC laden powder. OC is an inflammatory chemical.
<b>Munitions</b>	
Noise Flash Distraction Device	Otherwise known as a "flashbang", this non-explosive device emits a bright light, loud sound and dark smoke, and is used to temporarily disorient people and/or clear an area. The department has fifty of these devices.
OC Chemicals	OC is used in a variety of tactical environments. OC is classified as an inflammatory. All officers carry 1.47 ounce spray cannisters. The department also has fifty-one higher capacity containers for use in high-risk situations.
CS Chemicals	CS is used in a variety of tactical environments. CS is classified as an irritant. The department has 47 containers of CS.
CS/OC Combination	The department has eighteen combination devices that can be used in high-risk tactical situations.
SAF-Smoke	The department has one container of this non-toxic chemical. It is used for many different purposes including concealment, distraction, signaling and chemical agent magnification.

With the exception of the 1.47 ounce OC chemical spray noted above, the gear, weapons and munitions in this inventory are not carried by officers on routine patrol. Rather, these tools are available in high-risk situations. Most commonly they will be carried and deployed if needed while serving high-risk warrants. A high-risk warrant typically involves a known suspect that has a history of violence and is known or believed to be armed.

Not noted on this list is the MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle, which is owned by the Johnson County Sheriff's Office. This non-offensive vehicle (i.e. it does not contain any weaponry) is purely a defensive, rescue vehicle. It provides ballistic protection in high-risk situations and can be used to safely escort officers and the public from an active shooter scene. The department has utilized the vehicle while serving extremely high-risk warrants and with barricaded subject calls. It typically remains on standby and is brought in if needed as the scene unfolds. The MRAP can also be used as a contingency in rescue situations, such as high-water incidents.

## Conclusion

The Iowa City Police Department responds to numerous high-risk incidents every year. The vast majority are resolved with de-escalation tactics and standard patrol resources. However, many situations call for a higher level of preparation. The department maintains a highly trained team of individual officers to work in these environments. The department deploys the team judiciously, often just a few times per year.

Similarly, the use of the above inventories is very infrequent, but critical for officer safety and to eliminate or minimize threats to the general public who may be proximate to dangerous or volatile situations.