

Militarized Police

"There's a reason you separate military and the police. One fights the enemies of the state, the other serves and protects the people. When the military becomes both, then the enemies of the state tend to become the people."

—Commander William Adama, *Battlestar Galactica*

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. How is the role of a soldier different from the role of a police officer?
2. How can a police department build a trusting relationship with local citizens?
3. What happens when civilians fear the police?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. surplus | a) to look like |
| _____ 2. ammunition | b) camouflage clothing worn by soldiers |
| _____ 3. resemble | c) related to strategic plans and actions used against the enemy |
| _____ 4. army fatigues | d) to not be a priority in comparison to something else |
| _____ 5. confrontation | e) a tank or other vehicle equipped with weaponry |
| _____ 6. armored vehicle | f) a constitutional right (US) to freedom of speech and assembly |
| _____ 7. tactical | g) more than necessary |
| _____ 8. take a backseat | h) a specified time that people need to be back inside their homes |
| _____ 9. blur the lines | i) objects used in weapons, such as bullets and missiles |
| _____ 10. First Amendment | j) a clash between two people or groups |
| _____ 11. civilian | k) an everyday person, not a member of the military or police force |
| _____ 12. curfew | l) to mix or confuse concepts or boundaries that should be distinct |

Reading

MILITARIZED POLICE

Have the lines become blurred?

1. What should a government do with **surplus** military equipment? This is a question the US government has tackled in recent decades. Since the early 1990s, the US secretary of defense has been transferring military-grade supplies to federal and state law-enforcement agencies. Millions of dollars worth of US military vehicles, supplies, and **ammunition** are transferred to police forces across America each year.
2. What happens when police officers begin to **resemble** armed soldiers? Many citizens feel that the militarization of police invites **confrontation**, transforming everyday neighborhoods into war zones. As history has shown, peaceful protests turn into violent riots when police officers arrive in **army fatigues**. Heightened racial tensions between police and **civilians** in America appear to be linked to the militarization of law enforcement. Many black and Latino youths in particular feel as though they are treated as the enemy.
3. Civilians aren't the only ones who disagree with the militarization of police. Many military personnel feel that local police officers aren't properly trained to use military-grade equipment. They note that police shouldn't ride on top of **armored vehicles** or aim their assault weapons at unarmed protesters. Retired police officers have a different concern, however. They fear that officers are receiving too much **tactical** training. Since 9/11, the notion of serving and protecting has **taken a backseat** in many police training programs.
4. The saying "desperate times call for desperate measures" is often used to defend the militarization of police. However you look at it, the war on drugs and the threat of homeland security have changed the role of the police officer in America. President Obama, however, has expressed concern about police officers **blurring the lines**. In 2014, after a white police officer shot and killed an unarmed black youth in Ferguson, Missouri, protesters filled the streets. Obama criticized law enforcers for their aggressive response. He said peaceful protesters must be allowed to lawfully exercise their **First Amendment** rights.
5. In 2015, protesters took to the streets in Baltimore after a black man died suspiciously while in police custody. This time, the police stayed back and allowed the protesters to fill the streets. When citizens began setting cars and buildings on fire, people criticized the mayor for not issuing a **curfew**. Everyone wanted to know why the mayor waited for things to get out of control before she called in extra law enforcement.

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. Why is military-grade equipment given to local law-enforcement agencies in the US?
2. According to the reading, how do many black and Latino youths feel about the police?
3. What concern do military personnel have about police forces in America?
4. What common saying is often used to defend the notion of police showing up in riot gear?
5. Why was the mayor of Baltimore criticized in 2015?

Vocabulary Review

Which word or phrase from page 1 do you think of when you read each sentence?
 More than one option may be possible.

1. _____ He is supposed to be tutoring my daughter,
but he took her out for dinner and a movie.
2. _____ The uniforms of our police department have changed.
These days, they wear bulletproof vests and camouflage.
3. _____ The constitution gives me the right to speak my mind in public.
4. _____ These days, the coaches are more concerned with winning than having fun.
5. _____ The police used tear gas, rubber bullets,
and even grenades to disperse the crowd.
6. _____ The young officers learned shooting positions for fighting from a vehicle.
7. _____ When the police department rolled up in tanks, the crowd got angrier.
8. _____ The police officer on guard at our mall looks like a combat soldier.
9. _____ Regular people became so angry that they
started attacking police cars with rocks.
10. _____ What will be done with all of the unused ammunition after the war?

Discussion Questions

1. Name some "high-risk" situations or crimes that deserve an aggressive response from a SWAT* team. Name some "low-risk" situations that do not require a tactical response.
2. Should confiscated** drug money be used to buy ammunition for police departments?
3. How does the right to bear arms contribute to the problem of militarized police?
4. Can you think of any countries where police don't carry guns?
5. Should young people have a curfew?

*Special Weapons and Tactics

**something that is collected from criminals by the authorities

Critical Thinking

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

With the rise of social media, protests have become an effective way of bringing about reform. While police departments are meant to be public servants, they quickly become the enemy in riot situations.

During the 2015 protests in Baltimore, mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake described the situation as a "delicate balancing act." She did not want the protests to be a repeat of what happened in Ferguson. However, she was criticized for being too slow to issue a curfew and call in extra police.

How do peaceful protests turn into riots, and what can be done to prevent this from happening?

Grammar Review

HOWEVER

There are a few different ways to use the word “however” in a sentence. Depending on its usage, this word can be placed in a variety of different positions in a sentence. In the following examples, notice the punctuation as well as the placement in the sentence.

A. Use 1

to connect two main clauses / to show contrast

The word “however” is commonly used as an adverb to show contrast with a previous statement. The most common position of “however” is between two sentences, either set between a period and a comma or a semicolon and a comma.

- *The police are hired as public servants to serve and protect the community. **However**, many residents claim to fear the police.*
- *The police are hired as public servants to serve and protect the community; **however**, many residents claim to fear the police.*

“However” can also be used after the subject of the second sentence, set between commas, or at the end of the second sentence after a comma. These positions indicate that “however” is not as essential to the meaning of the sentence.

- *The police are hired as public servants to serve and protect the community. Many residents, **however**, claim to fear the police.*
- *The police are hired as public servants to serve and protect the community. Many residents claim to fear the police, **however**.*

B. Use 2

an adverb meaning “in whatever manner or means” or “no matter how”

- ***However** you look at it, the man who was shot was unarmed.*
- *The suspect was unarmed **however** you look at it.*

Work together to write a few sentences of your own using different forms of “however.” Experiment with sentence structure and punctuation. Can you use some of the vocabulary words from page 1 in your sentences?

Listening – Gap Fill

(Audio: <http://blog.esllibrary.com/2014/08/26/podcast-militarized-police/>)

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

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ANSWERS

1. decades, worth
2. war zones, in particular
3. personnel, notion
4. unarmed, exercise
5. on fire