At the end of March we posted on our Ukraine policy. Time to again look at "clueless, hapless, feckless, and hopeless." **Craig Pirrong** is first.

The farce involving Ukraine continues. Today John "Charlie Brown" Kerry and Sergei "Lucy" Lavrov met in Geneva, the scene of many previous Kerry pratfalls, mostly involving Syria. (Yeah, the Euros were there. Like that matters. Well, I guess someone has to make sure the places are set properly, with the forks in the right spot and all that stuff.)

Even after having Lucy pull the ball away time and again, Charlie Brown had another go at "diplomacy," which in Russian means "war continued by other means." In military terms, the Russians treat diplomacy with the US as a delaying action, knowing the US won't do anything meaningful as the "process" is "working." In Syria, Assad has used Russian diplomatic cover to turn the tide of war decisively in his favor.

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... To give you an idea of Putin's mindset, and how little he cares about Obama's incredible threats to push for some measures that could impose some costs at some ill-defined future date, the Russian president used the term Novarossiya (New Russia) to refer to parts of Ukraine. Meaning that his irredentist goals remain, undeterred. (And does anybody else notice that the only thing that Putin criticizes the leaders of the USSR for is their penchant for redrawing borders in ways that put traditional Russian territories outside of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic?)

Russia is weak economically, demographically, and militarily. The US is none of those things. It is weak by choice, and letting Putin proceed in his irredentist and revanchist mission.

We are so screwed.

<u>Spengler</u> says "Putin is not a genius, we are complete idiots".

Vladimir Putin happily allowed the Kiev authorities to <u>shoot a few pro-Russian demonstrators</u> while keeping his military forces on ice across the border. I predicted (and am sticking to my story) that Russia will not seize more territory in Eastern Ukraine—not for the time being, in any case. Russia will stand back and watch Ukraine implode, the way Egypt did during the two years following the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. Before the Maidan coup, Putin was willing to sit on \$15 billion in arrears to Gazprom and put up \$18 billion in new money. Now he wants \$35 billion in back gas bills, on top of Ukraine's \$15 billion a year current account deficit. The IMF wants massive cuts in subsidies, which will make the Kiev government an object of hatred without putting a dent into the problem. Western taxpayers won't cough up \$50 billion for Ukraine, not even a small fraction of it.

Yankee Doodle went to Maidan, stuck a feather in his hat and called it democracy. Our foreign policy ideologues are like UFO cultists who are so convinced that space aliens are invading the earth that they see moon men in every glare of swamp gas. In this case, it isn't moon men, but aspiring republicans. First Tahrir Square, then Maidan, were glorious proof of the Manifest Destiny of Western democracy. ...

Jonah Goldberg says soon we will "let slip the socks of war."

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Obama seems to think that's what he's been doing. He told CBS, "Each time Russia takes these kinds of steps that are designed to destabilize Ukraine and violate their sovereignty, there are going to be consequences."

Unfortunately, the credibility of Obama's "consequences" took a big hit when he was unwilling — or unable — to make good on his vow that the use of chemical weapons in Syria would amount to a "red line" for the U.S.

And then there are the consequences Putin has already faced as a result of his annexation of Crimea. The Obama administration did impose sanctions targeted at a few of Putin's henchmen and cronies. They publicly laughed them off, but it was worth a try.

Beyond that, though, Obama's consequences haven't even been inconsequential; they've had the opposite of their intended effect. Rather than send the Ukrainians weapons or useful intelligence, we sent them a bunch of MREs ("Meals Ready to Eat"). And even that we were unwilling to do in too provocative a way. We didn't use Air Force cargo-planes, but rather sent the snacks in by civilian trucks. Meanwhile, pleas from allies to deploy more assets to Poland and other front-line NATO states were rebuffed by the White House.

On April 12, the Wall Street Journal reported that the White House was still weighing requests from the Ukrainian government for other supplies such as "medical kits, uniforms, boots and military socks." ...

## <u>Michael Barone</u> says the real danger is not in Ukraine.

... The real danger may lie not in Ukraine but farther west. Obama's dismissal of his red line in <u>Syria</u> and his tepid actions on Ukraine may lead Putin to believe he will not back up other commitments.

Putin says he is protecting Russian minorities in Ukraine; what if he does so in the Baltic republics?

The British historian Christopher Clark, author of <u>The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914</u>, warns of "the danger, in trying to avoid conflagration in Ukraine, that Western leaders fail to provide clear signals to Putin."

The West, he says, must show "firmness and clarity in defending the real red lines established by NATO." That means more U.S. and NATO military forces in the Baltics and Poland. And beefing up U.S. and NATO militaries.

Putin's goal may be to dismantle NATO as he believes NATO dismantled the Soviet Union — the greatest geopolitical tragedy of 21st century. Obama must not allow that to happen.

What are we to make of a government that is so weak abroad, but flexes SWAT muscles intimidating ordinary citizens? **John Fund** writes on the SWAT troopers deployed by ordinary public safety goobers.

Regardless of how people feel about Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy's standoff with the federal Bureau of Land Management over his cattle's grazing rights, a lot of Americans were surprised to see TV images of an armed-to-the-teeth paramilitary wing of the BLM deployed around Bundy's ranch.

They shouldn't have been. Dozens of federal agencies now have Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams to further an expanding definition of their missions. It's not controversial that the Secret Service and the Bureau of Prisons have them. But what about the Department of Agriculture, the Railroad Retirement Board, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Office of Personnel Management, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? All of these have their own SWAT units and are part of a worrying trend towards the militarization of federal agencies — not to mention local police forces.

"Law-enforcement agencies across the U.S., at every level of government, have been blurring the line between police officer and soldier," journalist Radley Balko writes in his 2013 book <u>Rise of the Warrior Cop</u>. "The war on drugs and, more recently, post-9/11 antiterrorism efforts have created a new figure on the U.S. scene: the warrior cop — armed to the teeth, ready to deal harshly with targeted wrongdoers, and a growing threat to familiar American liberties."

The proliferation of paramilitary federal SWAT teams inevitably brings abuses that have nothing to do with either drugs or terrorism. Many of the raids they conduct are against harmless, often innocent, Americans who typically are accused of non-violent civil or administrative violations. ...

#### **Streetwise Professor**

<u>Ukraine Update: Charlie Brown, Lucy, the Organ Grinder and His Monkey</u> by Craig Pirrong

The farce involving Ukraine continues. Today John "Charlie Brown" Kerry and Sergei "Lucy" Lavrov met in Geneva, the scene of many previous Kerry pratfalls, mostly involving Syria. (Yeah, the Euros were there. Like that matters. Well, I guess someone has to make sure the places are set properly, with the forks in the right spot and all that stuff.)

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Kerry and Obama have apparently never heard Einstein's definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results. Maybe Kerry should hop the train to Bern and visit the Einstein museum. Maybe he'll collect a clue.

This time around, Putin and the Russians are using the diplomatic pause to delay the implementation of meaningful sanctions. UST (Treasury, I guess) is continuing the FUD game, holding meetings with hedge funds and money managers to inquire about their Russian investments, knowing that the inquiries would be leaked, and perhaps spook the markets. But truly throttling sanctions will remain in abeyance as long as the jaw jaw continues. Putin is also using the diplomatic pause to continue infiltration and subversion in Ukraine. The Ukrainians are constrained by their own divisions, and incompetence, but the US is also restraining them while talks continue.

The meetings produced this paean to the passive voice:

All illegal armed groups must be disarmed; all illegally seized buildings must be returned to legitimate owners; all illegally occupied streets, squares and other public places in Ukrainian cities and towns must be vacated.

Who is going to do the disarming? The returning? The vacating? The GRU and the 45th Airborne and the locals are just going to say "my bad" and walk away? Really? I see objects here, but no subjects.

This hardly inspires confidence:

It was agreed [more passivity!] that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission should play a leading role in assisting Ukrainian authorities and local communities in the immediate implementation of these deescalation measures wherever they are needed most, beginning in the coming days.

The OSCE? You mean the guys who were prevented from entering Crimea? My confidence is not inspired! (Damn, this passive voice thing is contagious!)

The Russians deny anyone in eastern Ukraine is theirs, so they can disclaim any responsibility. The Ukrainian military is too intimidated to take them on. The OSCE has no army to back it up. So I doubt much disarming, vacating, etc. will actually, you know, be happening.

But I forgot. "Local communities" are going to do it! This is a job for Community Organizer Man! Obama can follow his true calling!

Just one problem. Those "local communities" in large part support the "Pro-Russian" (or "pro-federalist") forces, to the point of surrounding Ukrainian APCs so that the "local militias" could seize six of them. (As an aside, let's give the "pro-Russian" bullshit a rest. It is more accurate to say "Russian pros.") (Actually, the active supporters are few, but characteristic Russian apathy in the vast majority means that a few can achieve their objectives.)

All meaning that this plan will work out about as swell as the plan to eliminate Assad's chemical weapons that Lucy used to entice Charlie into taking a big kick at the Syrian football, winding up flat on his back as always.

But as hard as it is to believe, the comedy in Geneva pales in comparison to the total farce in Moscow, where Putin held one of his call in shows. The whole thing was a carnival of mendacity, all too familiar to discuss in detail. But the banal absurdity of a VVP presser was excelled by a new high (or is it low) in farcicality: Snowden (in another Wizard of Oz appearance on a large screen)

asked Putin whether Russia, that paragon of privacy and individual liberty, engaged in mass surveillance against its citizens. "Nous? Nous? Jamais!" responded Vladimir Vladimirovich. Even worse, Putin answered only after acknowledging Snowden as a fellow Chekist, and hence a man he could understand and respect. The pair posed for a photo after the event (Eddie is on the left):



There may be some uncertainty as to whether Snowden was Putin's monkey before he decamped to Sheremetyovo, but there is no doubt now. Eddie is now totally owned and operated by Putin and the FSB.

But despite all this Obama and Kerry think that Putin and Lavrov are legitimate interlocutors, interested in reaching mutually beneficial deals.

<u>David Ignatius had a column in the WaPo yesterday describing the administration as being "flummoxed" by Putin's refusal to see reality the same way Obama does.</u> Believe me, "flummoxed" is never a good thing.

I swear to God, mirror imaging is going to be the death of the west. Distressingly, good little mouthpiece that he is, Ignatius reports that Obama's strategy is "to make Putin pay for his adventurism, *long term*. Unless the Russian leader moves quickly to de-escalate the crisis, the United States will push for measures that could make Russia significantly weaker over the next few years."

Excuse me while I go bang my forehead on the corner of my desk. In the long term we are all dead. At least a lot of Ukrainians may be.

And the point of this is what, exactly? Just how will this deter Putin? And note that the administration will just be "push[ing] for measures that could make" Russia weaker. Not implementing. Pushing for: what happened to Mr. Executive Order? (Sounds like more community organizing is involved.) Not measures that will make Russia weaker, but "could." And Putin cares about tomorrow. The long term-whatever.

To give you an idea of Putin's mindset, and how little he cares about Obama's incredible threats to push for some measures that could impose some costs at some ill-defined future date, the Russian president used the term Novarossiya to refer to parts of Ukraine. Meaning that his irredentist goals remain, undeterred. (And does anybody else notice that the only thing that Putin criticizes the leaders of the USSR for is their penchant for redrawing borders in ways that put traditional Russian territories outside of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic?)

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## **Spengler**

## Putin Isn't a Genius — We Are Complete Idiots

by David Goldman

Vladimir Putin happily allowed the Kiev authorities to shoot a few pro-Russian demonstrators while keeping his military forces on ice across the border. I predicted (and am sticking to my story) that Russia will not seize more territory in Eastern Ukraine—not for the time being, in any case. Russia will stand back and watch Ukraine implode, the way Egypt did during the two years following the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. Before the Maidan coup, Putin was willing to sit on \$15 billion in arrears to Gazprom and put up \$18 billion in new money. Now he wants \$35 billion in back gas bills, on top of Ukraine's \$15 billion a year current account deficit. The IMF wants massive cuts in subsidies, which will make the Kiev government an object of hatred without putting a dent into the problem. Western taxpayers won't cough up \$50 billion for Ukraine, not even a small fraction of it.

Yankee Doodle went to Maidan, stuck a feather in his hat and called it democracy. Our foreign policy ideologues are like UFO cultists who are so convinced that space aliens are invading the earth that they see moon men in every glare of swamp gas. In this case, it isn't moon men, but aspiring republicans. First Tahrir Square, then Maidan, were glorious proof of the Manifest Destiny of Western democracy.

A Google search with the terms "Putin" and "genius" yields over 10 million hits. If I hear another pundit's panegyric to Putin's great intellect, I'll lose my lunch. Putin is not that smart; the trouble is that we are complete idiots. When Ukraine imploded, our leaders—from <u>Victoria Nuland</u> at the State Department to the neo-conservatives—rather assumed that we would reverse Ukraine's polarity to the West, and humiliate Russia with the loss of Crimea. Putin called our bluff, and we had no viable military options.

Putin doesn't need to send the Red Army into Ukraine. Every Ukrainian officer above the rank of major came up through the ranks in the Red Army. Ukrainian commanders won't fight the Russians. They *are* the Russians. Yesterday we watched <u>Ukrainian paratroopers</u> turn their armored vehicles over to Russian separatists. Maybe John McCain can send them more weapons to hand over to Moscow.

Americans play Monopoly, Russians chess: We landed on Park Place fair and square, and that gave us the right to put down a hotel. Never mind that Ukraine is a basket case with a per capital income a tenth that of the European Community, whose best young people (along with some of its

worst) have left the country, with a ruined economy and a declining population. Putin isn't playing by the rules printed on the inside top cover of the board game. He's another Hitler! Where is our Churchill? It's a Monty Python remake of *Dr. Strangelove*. A few provocateurs holding a Russian flag pass out handbills demanding that Jews in Eastern Ukraine register with the authorities, and the whole of the media as well as the Obama administration hyperventilates, until the affair is exposed as a hoax.

The threat, as the great chess theorist Aron Nimzowitsch wrote, is mightier than the execution. Putin will let the West take ownership of the Ukrainian disaster until it festers, and then he will pick and choose what he wants. We will huff and puff and bloviate about Putin, the new Hitler, while Ukraine's economy disintegrates. Bismarck's aphorism applies: die ganze Ukraine ist nicht die gesunden knochen eines pommerschen Grenadiers wert. (the whole Ukraine is not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier.) (Actually, Bismarck said "the whole of the Balkans is not worth . . . )

#### **National Review**

## **Unleashing the Socks of War**

The U.S. response to Vladimir Putin's actions has been less than inspiring. by Jonah Goldberg

President Obama is right. He told Major Garrett of CBS this week that "Mr. Putin's decisions aren't just bad for Ukraine. Over the long term, they're going to be bad for Russia."

I believe that Putin's adventures in Russia's "near abroad" are a mistake. Indeed, they are part of a whole tapestry of wrongheadedness. It's also bad for the Kremlin to crush dissent, censor the news, and hobble the economy by handing it over to oligarchs and a kleptocratic bureaucracy. Putin's scapegoating and demonizing of gays isn't only morally wrong, it's not in Russia's long-term interests either. That Putin prefers to use his oil and gas assets as a political weapon abroad and an excuse not to diversify his economy at home has me googling the Russian word for "boneheaded."

But here's the thing: Putin disagrees. And on the matter of Ukraine — like so much else — he is immune to persuasion. All of the condemnations, communiqués, joint statements, and other diplomatic lamentations — not to mention the late-night bull sessions on the phone with Obama — will not shake him from his views of what is best for Russia.

In a sense, arguing with the Russian bear is like arguing with a real bear. No matter how eloquently you explain to the bear that it should not eat your face, it's going to eat your face if it wants to eat your face — that is, if you do nothing tangible to stop it.

Obama seems to think that's what he's been doing. He told CBS, "Each time Russia takes these kinds of steps that are designed to destabilize Ukraine and violate their sovereignty, there are going to be consequences."

Unfortunately, the credibility of Obama's "consequences" took a big hit when he was unwilling — or unable — to make good on his vow that the use of chemical weapons in Syria would amount to a "red line" for the U.S.

And then there are the consequences Putin has already faced as a result of his annexation of Crimea. The Obama administration did impose sanctions targeted at a few of Putin's henchmen and cronies. They publicly laughed them off, but it was worth a try.

Beyond that, though, Obama's consequences haven't even been inconsequential; they've had the opposite of their intended effect. Rather than send the Ukrainians weapons or useful intelligence, we sent them a bunch of MREs ("Meals Ready to Eat"). And even that we were unwilling to do in too provocative a way. We didn't use Air Force cargo-planes, but rather sent the snacks in by civilian trucks. Meanwhile, pleas from allies to deploy more assets to Poland and other front-line NATO states were rebuffed by the White House.

On April 12, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the White House was still weighing requests from the Ukrainian government for other supplies such as "medical kits, uniforms, boots and military socks."

"You want to calibrate your chest-thumps," a senior military official told the *Journal*, explaining this step-by-step approach. "He does something else in Ukraine, we release the socks."

Now, imagine you are Vladimir Putin. You illegally sent Russian soldiers without military insignia into Ukraine (a major violation of the Geneva Conventions). You lied about doing so at the time (Putin has since boasted that he did exactly that). And your aide brings in the news that a "senior military official" of the United States has announced that if you take another step toward carving up Ukraine, the U.S. will be forced to give the Ukrainians the socks they've been asking for.

Call me crazy, but I doubt the response will be, "Comrades! Call it off! We can't take the chance that the Ukrainians will have warm, dry feet when we invade Kiev!"

Consequences that are not sufficiently painful or sufficiently scary aren't consequences in the sense Obama means at all. They're invitations. It's like trying to get a bear to leave you alone by throwing salmon at it.

I entirely understand that Americans are war-weary, and for good reason. But has it really gotten to the point where the U.S. military now defines "chest-thumping" as unleashing the socks of war?

#### Examiner

# <u>Obama must defend NATO's real red lines from Vladimir Putin's aggression in Ukraine</u>

by Michael Barone

Last week masked men, in camouflage garb with no insignia, dressed and equipped like <u>Russian</u> special forces, started taking over police stations and other government buildings in the <u>Donets</u> <u>basin</u> in eastern Ukraine. They appeared to be working in tandem with local militias in defying the Ukrainian government.

This week the <u>Ukraine</u> government has responded by sending in military forces to counter these actions. There has been shooting and violence. But Ukraine's military doesn't seem capable of asserting control.

So <u>Vladimir Putin's</u> Russia, with some 40,000 troops massed just outside Ukraine, seems to have taken effective control of a significant chunk of that country -- or at least denying effective control to the Ukraine government.

Whether Putin will follow up with an explicit occupation and annexation, as he did with <u>Crimea</u>, is unclear. Polling and previous referendum results suggest much less support for absorption into Russia in eastern Ukraine than in Crimea.

What is clear is that Putin's actions violate the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, signed by Russia, the U.S. and <u>Britain</u>, which guaranteed Ukraine's boundaries in return for Ukraine giving up its <u>nuclear weapons</u>.

And what is just as clear is that the United States is unable or unwilling to do anything effective to enforce its commitment.

<u>Barack Obama's</u> response has been tepid. Ukraine authorities requested light arms, antitank weapons and intelligence assistance. Obama agreed to provide Meals Ready to Eat. And to have them delivered by commercial trucks rather than military transport planes, so Putin wouldn't consider it provocative.

But Putin surely finds provocative Obama's verbal condemnations of Russia's actions and the <u>sanctions</u> on a handful of Russian insiders imposed by the U.S. and <u>Europe</u>.

Obama seems to have chosen a middle option. He declined the recommendation of <a href="NATO">NATO</a> military commander Gen. Philip Breedlove for strategic intelligence sharing with Ukraine. And he has declined some <a href="foreign policy">foreign policy</a> experts' advice that we should acquiesce without complaint in Russia's domination of Ukraine.

Strong arguments can be made that either option would be preferable to the middle course Obama has chosen. It has left the United States, contrary to Theodore Roosevelt's advice, speaking very loudly and wielding a very small stick.

Obama came to office, as did his two predecessors, hoping to establish a cooperative post-<u>Cold War</u> relationship with Russia. Characteristically, and unlike <u>Bill Clinton</u> and <u>George W. Bush</u>, he blamed current problems on his predecessor and called for a "reset."

But the KGB veteran Putin, who called the demise of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century, sees things differently. He pocketed Obama's concessions on <u>missile defense</u> and nuclear arms, and seeks to expand Russia's domain back toward czarist and Soviet dimensions.

Clinton and Bush encouraged the expansion of NATO and the <u>European Union</u> eastward to include former Soviet satellites and the Baltic nations absorbed by the Soviets pursuant to the Hitler-Stalin pact.

But the hopes that the appeal of European-style democracy would spread farther east have not been fulfilled.

Ukraine has remained an economic basket case, with a kleptocracy like Russia's but without its oil resources. Politically, it has been closely and bitterly divided between a pro-Russian east and south and a pro-Western west and north.

The lure of the European example has been diminished by Europe's sluggish economies and the fiasco of the Euro. And if Obama has been unwilling to give military aid, European leaders dependent on Russian <u>natural gas</u> and investments have been wary of imposing economic sanctions.

The real danger may lie not in Ukraine but farther west. Obama's dismissal of his red line in <u>Syria</u> and his tepid actions on Ukraine may lead Putin to believe he will not back up other commitments.

Putin says he is protecting Russian minorities in Ukraine; what if he does so in the Baltic republics?

The British historian Christopher Clark, author of <u>The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914</u>, warns of "the danger, in trying to avoid conflagration in Ukraine, that Western leaders fail to provide clear signals to Putin."

The West, he says, must show "firmness and clarity in defending the real red lines established by NATO." That means more U.S. and NATO military forces in the Baltics and Poland. And beefing up U.S. and NATO militaries.

Putin's goal may be to dismantle NATO as he believes NATO dismantled the Soviet Union — the greatest geopolitical tragedy of 21st century. Obama must not allow that to happen.

#### **National Review**

The United States of SWAT?

*Military-style units from government agencies are wreaking havoc on non-violent citizens.*by John Fund

Regardless of how people feel about Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy's standoff with the federal Bureau of Land Management over his cattle's grazing rights, a lot of Americans were surprised to see TV images of an armed-to-the-teeth paramilitary wing of the BLM deployed around Bundy's ranch.



They shouldn't have been. Dozens of federal agencies now have Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams to further an expanding definition of their missions. It's not controversial that the Secret Service and the Bureau of Prisons have them. But what about the Department of Agriculture, the Railroad Retirement Board, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Office of Personnel Management, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? All of these have their own SWAT units and are part of a worrying trend towards the militarization of federal agencies — not to mention local police forces.

"Law-enforcement agencies across the U.S., at every level of government, have been blurring the line between police officer and soldier," journalist Radley Balko writes in his 2013 book <u>Rise of the Warrior Cop</u>. "The war on drugs and, more recently, post-9/11 antiterrorism efforts have created a new figure on the U.S. scene: the warrior cop — armed to the teeth, ready to deal harshly with targeted wrongdoers, and a growing threat to familiar American liberties."

The proliferation of paramilitary federal SWAT teams inevitably brings abuses that have nothing to do with either drugs or terrorism. Many of the raids they conduct are against harmless, often innocent, Americans who typically are accused of non-violent civil or administrative violations.

Take the case of Kenneth Wright of Stockton, Calif., who was "visited" by a SWAT team from the U.S. Department of Education in June 2011. Agents battered down the door of his home at 6 a.m., dragged him outside in his boxer shorts, and handcuffed him as they put his three children (ages 3, 7, and 11) in a police car for two hours while they searched his home. The raid was allegedly intended to uncover information on Wright's estranged wife, Michelle, who hadn't been living with him and was suspected of college financial-aid fraud.

The year before the raid on Wright, a SWAT team from the Food and Drug Administration raided the farm of Dan Allgyer of Lancaster, Pa. His crime was shipping unpasteurized milk across state lines to a cooperative of young women with children in Washington, D.C., called Grass Fed on the

Hill. Raw milk can be sold in Pennsylvania, but it is illegal to transport it across state lines. The raid forced Allgyer to close down his business.

Brian Walsh, a senior legal analyst with the Heritage Foundation, <u>says it is inexplicable</u> why so many federal agencies need to be battle-ready: "If these agencies occasionally have a legitimate need for force to execute a warrant, they should be required to call a real law-enforcement agency, one that has a better sense of perspective. The FBI, for example, can draw upon its vast experience to determine whether there is an actual need for a dozen SWAT agents."

Since 9/11, the feds have issued a plethora of homeland-security grants that encourage local police departments to buy surplus military hardware and form their own SWAT units. By 2005, at least 80 percent of towns with a population between 25,000 and 50,000 people had their own SWAT team. The number of raids conducted by local police SWAT teams has gone from 3,000 a year in the 1980s to over 50,000 a year today.

Once SWAT teams are created, they will be used. Nationwide, they are used for standoffs, often serious ones, with bad guys. But at other times they've been used for crimes that hardly warrant military-style raids. Examples include angry dogs, domestic disputes, and misdemeanor marijuana possession. In 2010, a Phoenix, Ariz., sheriff's SWAT team that included a tank and several armored vehicles raided the home of Jesus Llovera. The tank, driven by the newly deputized action-film star Steven Seagal, plowed right into Llovera's house. The incident was filmed and, together with footage of Seagal-accompanied immigration raids, was later used for Seagal's A&E TV law-enforcement reality show.

The crime committed by Jesus Llovera was staging cockfights. During the sheriff's raid, his dog was killed, and later all of his chickens were put to sleep.

Many veteran law-enforcement figures have severe qualms about the turn police work is taking. One retired veteran of a large metropolitan police force told me: "I was recently down at police headquarters for a meeting. Coincidently, there was a promotion ceremony going on and the SWAT guys looked just like members of the Army, except for the police shoulder patches. Not an image I would cultivate. It leads to a bad mindset."

Indeed, the U.S. Constitution's Third Amendment, against the quartering of troops in private homes, was part of an overall reaction against the excesses of Britain's colonial law enforcement. "It wasn't the stationing of British troops in the colonies that irked patriots in Boston and Virginia," Balko writes. "It was England's decision to use the troops for everyday law enforcement."

There are things that can be done to curb the abuses without taking on the politically impossible job of disbanding SWAT units. The feds should stop shipping military vehicles to local police forces. Federal SWAT teams shouldn't be used to enforce regulations, but should focus instead on potentially violent criminals. Cameras mounted on the dashboards of police cars have both brought police abuses to light and exonerated officers who were falsely accused of abuse. SWAT-team members could be similarly equipped with helmet cameras.

After all, if taxpayers are being asked to foot the bill and cede ground on their Fourth Amendment rights, they have the right to a transparent, accountable record of just what is being done in their name.









