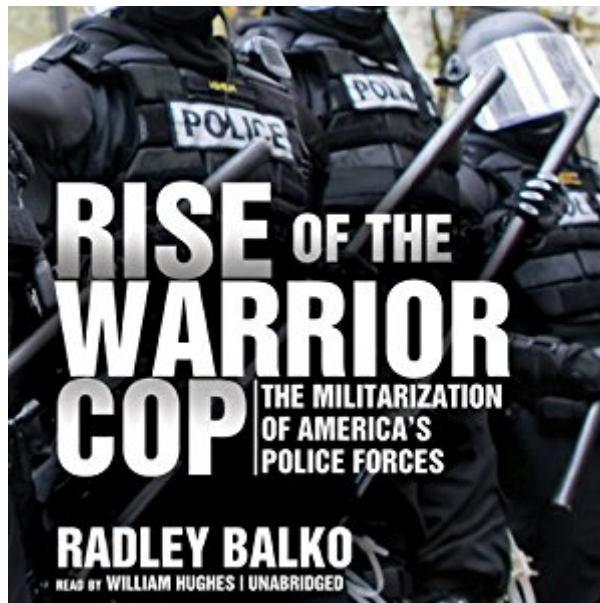




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Rise Of The Warrior Cop: The Militarization Of America's Police Forces



Synopsis

The American approach to law enforcement was forged by the experience of revolution. Emerging as they did from the shadow of British rule, the country's founders would likely have viewed police as they exist today as a standing army and therefore a threat to liberty. Even so, excessive force and disregard for the Bill of Rights have become epidemic in America today. According to civil liberties reporter Radley Balko, these are all symptoms of a generation-long shift to increasingly aggressive, militaristic, and arguably unconstitutional policing - one that would have shocked the conscience of America's founders. *Rise of the Warrior Cop* traces the arc of US law enforcement from the constables and private justice of colonial times to present-day SWAT teams and riot cops. Today relentless "war on drugs" and "war on terror" pronouncements from politicians, along with battle-clad police forces with tanks and machine guns, have dangerously blurred the distinction between cop and soldier. Balko's fascinating, frightening narrative shows how martial rhetoric and reactionary policies have put modern law enforcement on a collision course with the values of a free society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a staunch conservative, a veteran of the U.S. Military, and have worked in private sector for the past 32 years in the Risk Management department for a large U.S. based retailer. I work closely with law enforcement across multiple jurisdictions mostly in the area of Organized Retail Crime and have an inbred respect for all law enforcement. I purchased this book with some reservations as I figured that it would be nothing more than a left wing progressive cop bashing fest. I could not have

been more wrong about this author's body of work or intentions. The book is well researched, full of facts, and I found it surprisingly to be politically neutral! The author in fact goes out of his way to not blame law enforcement for the current trend in the militarization of their officers, or the proliferation of SWAT teams materializing all over the country. In fact he lays most of the blame for this right at the feet of our legislators. No one party or branch of government is exempt. Numerous presidents, senators, members of the house, and Supreme Court Justices are all mentioned, and their roles in getting the Fourth Amendment nullified are presented in excruciating detail. This book highlights how the sacred rights of the Castle Doctrine and the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 have all been circumnavigated. This is a must read for all Americans regardless of their political affiliation.

As always, Balko is alternately infuriating and terrifying, as he details the slow, incremental evolution in our police forces. This is not a "Cops are bad" screed, but rather a "Cops are important and powerful, so we need to pay attention to how they're being trained, equipped and used" warning flare. Well-written by arguably the leading journalist expert on the subject and based on years of following the topic, this is a very powerful and important book that'll make you look at the next picture of a cop in "riot gear" with a different eye.

I wish every American would read this book. We as a country have gone astray, and this book explains when, how, why, and what needs to be done to fix it. It is un-American that we let para-military swat teams invade houses to serve warrants for non-violent consensual crimes. Or for something as inane as code violations. You will be shaking with rage when you read about some of the events in this book, and the things we have let our law enforcement officers get away with. We buy them assault weapons, tanks, heavy duty armor, give them a profit motive to harshly prosecute the drug war and steal the profits from the black market for themselves, and then give them complete immunity from mistakes they might make while kicking in your door, shooting your pets, sometimes you and your children. I don't want to live in a country where an 11 year old boy (Alberto Sepulveda) can be assassinated at point blank range by a cop who suffers no recourse. We have to stop this. Small towns with only a few thousand citizens should not be given tanks by the Federal government because they were lobbied by powerful defense contractors.

I read through this book very quickly because it was well-written, clear and full of one horrifying story after another. What emerges through this book as the story unfolds is that policing tactics have gotten out of control in America. This is NOT an anti-police book. Balko's contention certainly is not

that every cop is a reckless, gun-toting lunatic who either wants to shoot everyone or lock everyone up. Rather, his proposition is that police departments have become overly reliant on SWAT teams and that the tactics these teams are using are invading our lives and eroding our basic rights, particularly with respect to the Fourth Amendment. He further establishes that judges and legislatures have become complicit in this effort, either because they are inherently too deferential to police and/or because they have a fear that resisting the militarization of police forces will lead to public conclusions that they're soft on crime. He places much of the blame for all of this on the War on Drugs. The book is not a collection of statistics; rather, it is a collection of narratives. Balko tells one story after another to illustrate how police tactics have gradually grown more aggressive and how this aggressiveness has become increasingly tolerable. I found myself shaking my head repeatedly as I was reading the book because I was so appalled at the extreme levels to which police would resort to arrest people for very low-level crimes, and especially crimes involving drugs. I was particularly outraged by the lack of accountability for police actions that screamed for accountability. Overall, an outstanding read and a call to action to establish some control over extreme police tactics.

This book documents the alarming trend of militarization among America's police forces. Most importantly, it is impossible to read it and think "this doesn't apply to me because I don't do anything illegal." This is wrong in two ways. First, given the complexity and arbitrary nature of our laws, odds are that almost everyone does something illegal quite often. Second, innocent people are victimized everyday by paramilitary jerks in SWAT teams. For instance in NYC a couple was raided 50 times in 8 years because their address was programmed as the dummy address in the NYPD's computer. Some of the anecdotes in this story are hilarious but sad given that our tax dollars are paying for this kind of waste. For instance, a county bought an assault vehicle and a drone and ended up crashing the drone into the tank; ruining both wastes of military hardware. It is very important for this book to do well and bring a lot of attention to this topic before our country goes down the toilet.

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