# Disarmament CP

#### CP Text: The United States will implement a policy of disarmament for police officers.

#### CP solves case – creates a cultural and physical shift away from police violence, creates trust between police and civilians.

**Berlatsky 16[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Yet there is some evidence that **disarming the police might be less dangerous that it sounds**. **According to statistics compiled by the F**ederal **B**ureau of **I**nvestigation, **of the 27 law enforcement officers murdered in 2013 in the line of duty, only 6 were able to fire their weapons at assailants**. Another two were killed after their firearms were stolen and used against them. (Note: several dozen other officers died while on duty during this time, the majority from car accidents.) In many cases, it seems arming officers isn’t a black and white issue of officer safety. Especially since the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report reports that **461 people were shot and killed by police in 2013**. International precedents Then there is the global precedent. Other nations have had success in disarming police. **In** **England and Wales, where officers generally do not carry firearms, police didn’t kill anyone between March 2012 and March 2014**. In comparison, **New York City police shot and killed 16 people in 2012 alone**. It’s worth noting that London armed more police officers in the aftermath of November’s Paris attacks—but 92% of the city’s 31,000 officers still won’t carry guns. The goal, according to a statement by police commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe, is to “make sure that our firearms response continues to come from a group of highly specialist and highly skilled officers.” The UK has much tighter gun control laws than the US, which means that police in the US are more likely to confront situations involving citizens bearing firearms. But Iceland is a different matter. According to GunPolicy.org, an international database hosted by the University of Sydney’s School of Public Health, an estimated **one-third of Iceland residents own guns**, making the country 15th worldwide in gun ownership per capita. **Nonetheless, police in Iceland routinely patrol unarmed**. **There is only one recorded incident of a suspect shot and killed by police in the country’s entire history**. Gudmundur Oddsson, a professor of sociology at Northern Michigan University and a native of Iceland, tells Quartz that Iceland police on routine patrols are unarmed for both safety and public relations reasons. “This practice is rooted in the belief that **arming the police with guns engenders more gun violence than it prevents**,” Oddson says. “Currently, police officers are only armed with extendable batons and pepper spray on their person [. . .] Arming police officers with guns runs the risk of striking fear in the hearts of the public and undermining the great public support the Icelandic police has enjoyed thus far.” Oddson noted that **public trust in police is about 80% in polls**, although it did drop slightly recently following news that some police departments had secretly acquired firearms from Norway. (The guns have since been returned.) According to Oddson, police in Iceland operate “by consent, rather than through the explicit threat or use of force. The effectiveness of any police force to protect and serve the public depends to a great extent on having the consent of the people. And **having police officers that are not armed with guns** helpsremove barriers between the police and the public and **builds** **trust** on both sides.” Given the low rates of gun crime and violent crime in Iceland, and virtually nonexistent police shootings, Oddson concludes, “the practice of not arming police officers with guns in Iceland has worked remarkably well.” Respecting the officer, not the holster Of course, Iceland is a small, homogeneous country that’s very different from the US. But its success in reducing violence through disarmament still seems worth considering. Gregory Smithsimon, professor of sociology at Brooklyn College, argued in a recent article at metro politics that **arming police** tends to **feed violent interactions in marginalized communities**. “**Police demand respect, civilians resent disrespect, and interactions become confrontations that escalate into** mistreatment, abuse, and **violence**,” Smithsimon writes. Pointing to the example of St. Louis police officer Darren Wilson, Smithsimon notes that **the addition of weaponry** can **accelerate confrontation**. “Wilson could have continued on his way,” he says. “But **the gun on his hip gave him the possibility to escalate with Michael Brown**.” **Guns** aren’t just a danger in and of themselves. They **enable a policing philosophy built on violence and forced compliance, rather than one founded on respect, trust and consent**. **That philosophy affects every police interaction**, even those that don’t involve actual shooting. “Even if disarming the police only reduced police shootings and not other police homicides, it would be a historic improvement,” Smithsimon tells Quartz. “But I suspect that **taking guns out of the equation in police officers’ everyday interactions would improve police-civilian relations**, like **the kind that Eric Garner experienced repeatedly**.” Garner sold loose cigarettes on the street in New York and was frequently hassled by police. In July 2014, he was killed when officers put him in a choke hold. Mutual de-escalation Policing in the US needs to change. But even if mass disarmament is a political and legal impossibility right now, there are other options. As a first step toward changing law enforcement philosophy, Smithsimon that suggests police departments consider disarming officers when they are not working. Studies have shown that much police misconduct occurs while police are off duty. There are plenty of incidents in which off-duty police recklessly fire weapons, sometimes with deadly consequences. “**US police wearing their gun all the time has an important ideological effect**,” Smithsimon tells Quartz. “It makes police feel like they are never civilians, never normal people, that they’re always cops, and that they’re never safe without a gun. I don’t think that’s the most productive frame of mind for civilians who are charged with keeping our cities safe and calm.” Hayes, the police officer from Chicago, suggests that another possible step could be for some jurisdictions to introduce “unarmed non-sworn positions, commonly called Community Service Officers.” Hayes tells Quartz that these types of officers could handle “many of the lower risk, non-emergent calls that burden so many police force.” Such a solution would require substantial changes in staffing and training—but with such a radically broken system, radical solutions may be necessary to reduce the risk of unnecessary police shootings. “America is moving more and more rapidly toward a garrison state, and soon we will not find solace by repeating to ourselves: ‘Ours is a democratic society,'” Paul Tagaki wrote in 1974. These words have proved prophetic: In many respects, the US has transformed itself into a garrison state. Undoing that transformation will be difficult. But we can start by taking steps to re-train, and in some cases even disarm, our vast police force

#### **Disarming the police leads to a paradigm shift in how we view poor communities of color – leads to progress in civil rights, enhanced rule of law, and democracy**

Smithsimon 15**[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Some **opponents to disarmament argue that it works in** more **social-democratic countries because a strong social safety net means there is little poverty and** hence less **crime**. **Exactly**: **a heavily armed police force allows a society to impoverish** a segment of **its citizens** **and** still **keep them in place**. **A society without an armed police force must** move **towards address**ing **poverty, discrimination, and social inequality peacefully, not reinforce it violently**. The conservative response that disarmament might work in homogeneous, social-democratic countries but that our racially divided, high-poverty state depends on armed policing unintentionally supports Michelle Alexander’s (2010) claim that armed police are the front lines of the repressive new Jim Crow, and leaves no legitimate reason for such a heavily armed force in our neighborhoods. If we don’t need guns, what are they for? **On the front line of law and order’s replacement for Jim Crow**, **armed police patrol African-American neighborhoods as a reminder of the deadly consequences of stepping out of line**. **Guns are there to discipline Black men into following a racist social order**. The protests on the streets of Baltimore, New York, Ferguson, Oakland, and beyond have been demands that we treat everyone as a citizen, not a suspect. **Disarming the police is not only a step towards safer communities and safer environments for police, it’s an important goal for progress in** civil rights, the rule of law, and the creation of a fully prosperous, truly democratic society.

1. Noah Berlatsky "The case for disarming America’s police force" January 27, 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, Associate Professor of Sociology @ Brooklyn College) “Disarm the Police [↑](#footnote-ref-2)