Seizing military weapons does not increase violent crime nor risk police safety

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Federal authorities have subsidized weapons and equipment acquisition, but limitations in record keeping about these transfers have rendered studies of their effects not credible, he said. The current study examined 3.8 million archived federal inventory records to gauge the reliability in these other studies.

During a typical three-month period, more than 15,000 controlled items vanish from agency inventories and more than 4,000 are received for transfer, the study indicated.

Lowande, U-M assistant professor of political science, compared this data to data collected when the Obama administration recalled SME in 2015, which resulted in a forced demilitarization of several hundred police departments. Proponents of SME transfers, as well as the Trump administration, say that demilitarization would lead to an increase in violent crime, but that's not what Lowande found.

"When you examine crime and officer safety statistics in these demilitarized departments and compare them to similar departments that weren't impacted, you find essentially no differences," said Lowande, a faculty associate at the Center for Political Studies at U-M's Institute for Social Research.

"I find little to no evidence that demilitarization had an impact on violent crime or officer safety. Put differently, contrary to the claims of those who support the transfer of equipment, these data do not support the conclusion that militarization saves lives—or that demilitarization risks them."
