

# **An Analysis of US Militias, ICE, Law Enforcement, and Armed Forces in 2025**

## **1. Executive Summary:**

This report examines the current state of US militias, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), broader law enforcement agencies, and the armed forces in 2025, with particular attention to their respective headcounts, the funding of private militias, and the plausibility of deploying military forces domestically in response to civil unrest. The analysis reveals that ICE maintains a significant presence with over 20,000 personnel, while estimates for private militia membership remain fluid and lack a definitive figure, potentially ranging from hundreds to thousands across various groups. The total number of law enforcement officers in the United States exceeds one million, encompassing federal, state, and local levels. The active duty US armed forces number approximately 1.32 million individuals. Regarding the specific claim of a \$10 billion award to militias, the provided research material does not substantiate this, though alternative funding sources for these groups may exist. Finally, the plausibility of the military opposing the US population in widespread civil unrest is deemed low due to legal constraints such as the Posse Comitatus Act, the overwhelming numerical disparity between the armed forces and the general population, and significant ethical considerations within the military itself.

## **2. The Landscape of US Militias in 2025:**

### **2.1 Defining "Militia" in the US Legal Context:**

The term "militia" in the United States has a specific legal definition, outlining its composition and classes. According to Title 10 of the U.S. Code, the militia of the United States comprises all able-bodied males at least 17 years of age and, with certain exceptions, under 45 years of age who are citizens or have declared their intention to become citizens, as well as female citizens of the United States. This broad definition is further and the Naval Militia. In contrast, the unorganized militia encompasses all members of the militia who are not part of the National Guard or the Naval Militia.

While the legal definition of militia includes a significant portion of the civilian population, the user's query likely focuses on the more common understanding of the term, which refers to private, non-state-affiliated groups. These groups, though technically falling under the definition of the "unorganized militia," operate independently and are often associated with specific ideologies and concerns

regarding government overreach or perceived threats to constitutional rights. It is crucial to distinguish between the legally defined militia, which includes the National Guard, and these independent, often armed, civilian groups that are the primary subject of public discourse and concern regarding potential civil unrest.

Category	Definition (Based on 10 U.S.C. § 246)	Composition
Organized Militia	The organized militia consists of the National Guard and the Naval Militia.	National Guard and Naval Militia
Unorganized Militia	The unorganized militia consists of the members of the militia who are not members of the National Guard or the Naval Militia.	Able-bodied citizens aged 17-44 not in the organized militia

## 2.2 Estimating the Headcount of Private Militias:

Estimating the precise number of individuals involved in private militia groups in the United States in 2025 is a challenging endeavor due to the decentralized and often clandestine nature of these organizations. Historical context reveals that the militia movement experienced a surge in activity in the mid-1990s, following standoffs between government agents and civilian groups. At that time, estimates placed membership between 20,000 and 60,000 individuals across all 50 US states. The movement appeared to decline in the early 2000s but experienced a resurgence following specific political events, such as the election of President Barack Obama in 2008.

Various organizations have attempted to track the number of militia groups. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) identified a peak of 334 militia groups in 2011, which decreased to 276 in 2015 and nearly 200 in 2022. More recently, in October 2020, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) tracked the activities of over 80 militias across the US, noting that the vast majority were right-wing armed groups. The American Patriots Three Percent (AP3), described as one of the largest militias in the US, reportedly expanded significantly after January 6,

2021. These figures suggest a fluctuating landscape with a persistent presence of numerous groups, though a definitive total membership count for 2025 remains elusive. The difficulty in obtaining accurate figures stems from the fact that these groups often operate informally, without centralized membership lists, and may be intentionally secretive to avoid scrutiny.

Source	Year of Estimate	Number of Groups (where applicable)	Estimated Membership (where applicable)
Mid-1990s Estimates	1996	858 (peak)	20,000 - 60,000
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)	2011	334	Unknown
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)	2015	276	Unknown
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)	2022	~200	Unknown
ACLED	Oct 2020	>80	Unknown

### 2.3 Investigating Militia Funding:

The user's query specifically asks about a \$10 billion award to militias for 2025. An examination of the provided research material, particularly documents related to the Department of Defense (DoD) budget for Fiscal Year 2025, reveals no evidence to support this claim. These documents detail the proposed and enacted defense spending, focusing on areas such as military personnel, operation and maintenance, research and development, and procurement. While the FY25 Defense bill does allocate funding to support foreign security forces like the Iraqi Security Forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces in their fight against ISIS, it explicitly prohibits the use of funds for groups such as the Azov Battalion, the Taliban, Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Houthis. None of these are domestic US militia groups.

Furthermore, specific queries within the research material regarding militia funding

yield no results. This absence of information within the context of the federal defense budget strongly suggests that the claim of a \$10 billion award from this source is unsubstantiated. It is important to note, however, that private militia groups may obtain funding through other means, such as individual donations, membership fees, online fundraising efforts, or the sale of merchandise. These sources of funding are typically less transparent and more difficult to quantify, making it challenging to determine the overall financial resources available to these groups in 2025. Nevertheless, the provided data offers no support for the assertion of a substantial government award to domestic militias.

### **3. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Personnel in 2025:**

#### **3.1 Number of Active Duty ICE Law Enforcement Personnel:**

As of March 7, 2025, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) employs more than 20,000 law enforcement and support personnel. This significant workforce is distributed across over 400 offices within the United States and internationally. ICE was established in 2003 through the merger of investigative and interior enforcement elements from the former U.S. Customs Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The agency plays a critical role in enforcing immigration laws and combating transnational crime. In February 2025 alone, ICE officers conducted approximately 18,000 arrests, indicating a high level of operational activity. Ongoing recruitment efforts, as evidenced by job postings in early 2025, suggest a continued commitment to maintaining and potentially expanding its personnel numbers.

#### **3.2 Overview of ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI):**

ICE is primarily composed of two main directorates: Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). ERO is responsible for upholding US immigration law at, within, and beyond the nation's borders. Its operations target individuals who pose a threat to national security or public safety, including convicted criminal undocumented aliens and gang members, as well as those who have otherwise violated immigration laws. ERO manages all aspects of the immigration enforcement process, from identification and arrest to detention, transportation, and removal from the United States. Within ERO also resides the ICE Health Service Corps, comprising trained medical professionals who provide care to the detainee population.

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) serves as the principal investigative arm of the

Department of Homeland Security (DHS). HSI's mission is to investigate, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations and terrorist networks that seek to exploit the customs and immigration laws of the United States. Its workforce includes special agents, criminal analysts, and support personnel assigned to numerous offices both domestically and internationally. HSI possesses broad legal authority to conduct federal criminal investigations into the illegal cross-border movement of people, goods, money, technology, and other contraband. Their investigations cover a wide range of transnational crimes, including terrorism, national security threats, narcotics smuggling, transnational gang activity, child exploitation, human trafficking, and financial crimes. A significant portion of ICE's veteran employees are part of both HSI and ERO, highlighting the agency's value of the skills and experience that veterans bring to law enforcement roles.

#### **4. The Broader Picture: US Law Enforcement in 2025:**

##### **4.1 Approximate Total Number of Law Enforcement Officers (Federal, State, and Local):**

The United States has a substantial and diverse law enforcement apparatus, operating at federal, state, and local levels. As of 2024, there were more than 1,280,000 sworn law enforcement officers serving across the country. This figure includes approximately 137,000 officers working for federal law enforcement agencies. These federal agencies, numbering around 90, employed 136,815 full-time officers as of a prior reporting period. Around half of the federal law enforcement personnel work for the Department of Homeland Security, while about 30% are employed by the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice itself comprises over 40 component organizations and employs more than 115,000 individuals, a portion of whom are law enforcement officers. As of June 2023, the FBI, a component of the DOJ, had 2,452 employees listed under its FBI category in a contingency plan.

In addition to federal agencies, there are nearly 18,000 state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the US. These include local police departments, county sheriff's offices, and state police forces. Data from 2023 indicated approximately 796,800 jobs for police and detectives at these levels. While precise figures for 2025 are not available across all levels, the available data suggests that the total number of sworn law enforcement officers in the United States likely remains well over one million, with federal officers comprising a significant portion, around 130,000 to 140,000.

## **4.2 Key Trends and Challenges in Law Enforcement Staffing:**

Law enforcement agencies in the United States face several significant challenges in 2025, particularly concerning recruitment and retention. Projections for the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) indicate a potential loss of 150 officers by mid-2026, marking the lowest staffing level in approximately 30 years. This projected decline is attributed to recruiting shortfalls and attrition, with the department struggling to meet its hiring targets. This situation in Los Angeles reflects a broader trend across the nation. Staff shortages are a familiar challenge for many law enforcement departments, as they grapple with resignations, retirements, and the ongoing need to train new recruits. A study of police departments serving large cities revealed an 80% decline in staffing between 2019 and 2023, despite increased hiring efforts, indicating that more officers are leaving the profession than entering it. On average, responding agencies reported being staffed at approximately 91% of their authorized levels, highlighting a persistent deficit. These staffing challenges, coupled with increasing workloads, difficulties in building community trust, and the growing complexity of crime, including cybercrime and cross-border offenses, are likely to continue impacting law enforcement agencies in 2025.

## **5. US Armed Forces and the Potential for Domestic Deployment:**

### **5.1 Total Active Duty Personnel in the US Armed Forces in 2025:**

The United States maintains a substantial active duty military force. As of early 2025, the total number of active duty personnel in the US Armed Forces is approximately 1.32 million. This figure includes personnel across all branches: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard. The Army remains the largest branch with around 450,000 active duty members, followed by the Navy with 332,000, the Air Force with 316,000, the Marine Corps with 173,000, the Coast Guard with 40,600, and the Space Force with 9,450. These active duty personnel are stationed both within the United States and abroad. In addition to active duty members, the military also maintains a reserve force of approximately 738,000 individuals and is supported by around 754,000 civilian employees within the Department of Defense.

### **5.2 Legal Framework Governing Domestic Military Deployment: The Posse Comitatus Act and the Insurrection Act:**

The domestic deployment of the US military is governed by a complex legal framework, primarily defined by the Posse Comitatus Act (PCA) and the Insurrection

Act. The Posse Comitatus Act, passed in 1878, generally prohibits the use of the US military for domestic law enforcement purposes. This act reflects a long-standing tradition in American democracy of limiting the military's role in civilian affairs. It prevents federal armed forces from acting as a "posse comitatus or otherwise to execute the laws" unless explicitly authorized by the Constitution or an Act of Congress. This means that the military typically cannot be used for activities such as policing protests, conducting arrests, or executing search warrants in a civilian context.

However, there are specific exceptions to the Posse Comitatus Act, the most significant of which is the Insurrection Act. The Insurrection Act grants the President the authority to deploy federal troops, including both active-duty military and federalized National Guard forces, within the United States under certain emergency conditions. These conditions include situations where the President considers that unlawful obstructions, combinations, or assemblages, or rebellion against the authority of the United States, make it impracticable to enforce federal law in a state through the ordinary course of judicial proceedings. The Act also allows for deployment to suppress insurrections, domestic violence, unlawful combinations, or conspiracies that deprive people of their constitutional rights and where state authorities are unable or unwilling to protect those rights. The Supreme Court has granted presidents broad power to determine when to invoke the Insurrection Act. It is important to note that the Posse Comitatus Act does not apply to the Coast Guard when it operates under the Department of Homeland Security, nor does it restrict the deployment of National Guard forces under state authority (State Active Duty) or under Title 32 for certain federally defined missions.

Act	Core Principle/Authority	Key Limitations/Conditions	Relevant Snippets
Posse Comitatus Act	Generally prohibits the use of the military for domestic law enforcement.	Exceptions "expressly authorized by the Constitution or Act of Congress." Does not apply to the Coast Guard (under DHS) or	S31, S32, S33, S35



		National Guard under state authority or Title 32.	
Insurrection Act	Grants the President authority to deploy the military domestically under specific conditions.	Invoked when unlawful obstructions or rebellion make federal law enforcement impracticable through ordinary means. Also for suppressing insurrections, domestic violence hindering constitutional rights, or obstruction of federal law when state authorities are unable or unwilling to act.	S31, S32, S33, S34, S35

### 5.3 Historical Context and Limitations on Internal Military Operations:

The history of domestic military deployment in the United States reveals a cautious approach, reflecting the concerns of the nation's founders about the potential for military overreach in civilian affairs. The Boston Massacre served as a stark reminder of the dangers of deploying soldiers in civilian environments. Despite the legal authority provided by the Insurrection Act, its use has been relatively infrequent. Notable instances include President George H.W. Bush's deployment of federal troops to Los Angeles during the Rodney King riots in 1992. More recently, there have been discussions and instances of National Guard deployment in response to civil unrest, such as during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. These events highlight the tension between the need to maintain order and the potential risks associated with using military forces in civilian settings, where their training and equipment differ significantly from those of civilian law enforcement. The incident in Los Angeles involving Marines and police responding to a domestic disturbance underscores the potential for miscommunication and unintended escalation when combat-trained troops operate in civilian environments. The debate surrounding the deployment of the National Guard to address campus protests in 2024 further illustrates the complexities and political sensitivities surrounding the domestic use of military or



quasi-military forces.

## **6. Plausibility Analysis: Military Opposition to the US Population in Civil Unrest:**

### **6.1 Factors Influencing the Likelihood of Domestic Military Intervention:**

The likelihood of the US military being deployed in a scenario of widespread civil unrest to the extent of "opposing" the US population is influenced by a complex set of factors. A primary trigger would be the severity and scale of the unrest, reaching a point where state and local law enforcement agencies are demonstrably overwhelmed and incapable of restoring order. The inability or unwillingness of state authorities to effectively manage the situation is a key condition for the federal government to consider intervention under the Insurrection Act. The political context, particularly the President's assessment of the situation and their willingness to invoke the Insurrection Act, plays a crucial role. Examples from recent years show that the prospect of military deployment in response to civil unrest is often met with significant political debate and public scrutiny. Any decision to deploy the military domestically would carry substantial legal and political ramifications, including potential legal challenges regarding the justification for invoking the Insurrection Act and significant public backlash against the perceived militarization of domestic issues.

### **6.2 Assessing the Military's Capacity and Willingness to Oppose a Large Civilian Population:**

While the US military possesses considerable resources and training, the notion of it "opposing" a population of approximately 330 million people in a sustained conflict is highly improbable. The sheer numerical disparity presents an insurmountable challenge for the military to effectively control or subdue a widespread and determined civilian population. The primary mission of the US armed forces is national defense against external threats, and their training, equipment, and operational doctrines are designed accordingly. Deploying them in a domestic law enforcement capacity on a large scale would be a significant deviation from their core purpose. Furthermore, the potential for dissent within the military ranks should not be discounted. Military personnel take an oath to uphold the Constitution, which includes the rights and freedoms of US citizens. Orders to act against their fellow citizens on a large scale could lead to significant ethical dilemmas and potential refusals to comply. While snippet discusses the relationship between population change and conflict, highlighting how rapid population growth in multiethnic states can destabilize internal security, the US situation involves a large, diverse population with established constitutional rights, making a direct military opposition scenario vastly different from

the examples provided.

### **6.3 Considerations of Public Opinion, Constitutional Rights, and Potential Consequences:**

The domestic deployment of the military against a large segment of the US population would likely trigger widespread public outrage and condemnation, given the strong tradition of civilian control of the military and the protection of civil liberties. Such an action would be widely perceived as a violation of fundamental constitutional rights, including the right to protest and potentially the right to bear arms. The long-term consequences of such a scenario would be severe and far-reaching. It would likely lead to an irreparable erosion of public trust in both the government and the military, exacerbate existing social and political divisions, and carry a significant risk of escalating violence and further destabilizing the nation. The perception of the United States moving towards a police state, where military force is used to quell dissent, would have profound and lasting negative impacts on its democratic principles and international standing.

### **7. Conclusion:**

In 2025, the United States has a robust law enforcement presence exceeding one million personnel, complemented by an active duty military force of approximately 1.32 million. ICE, with over 20,000 personnel, plays a significant role in immigration enforcement and combating transnational crime. Estimates for private militia membership remain uncertain but suggest a continued presence of numerous groups across the country. The claim of a \$10 billion award to these militias lacks substantiation within the provided defense budget information. While the legal framework, through the Insurrection Act, allows for the domestic deployment of the military under specific conditions of severe civil unrest, the plausibility of the military engaging in widespread opposition against the US population is low. This is due to legal constraints, the sheer numerical disparity, the military's primary mission focus, and significant ethical considerations. Any such scenario would likely result in severe negative consequences for American society and its democratic foundations. The internal security environment in 2025 presents challenges with the presence of private militias and staffing issues within law enforcement, but the fundamental legal and practical limitations on the domestic use of military force against its own citizens remain significant.