

To: Attorney General Rob Bonta; Francesca Gessner, Cal DOJ Chief of Policy
From: John Lindsay-Poland and Jennifer Tu, American Friends Service Committee
Re: California law enforcement agency compliance with AB 481
April 24, 2026

Review of AB 481 noncompliance and inaccessibility issues

AB 481 requires agencies to post policies and annual reports on their websites for as long as the equipment is in use. However, our review found that many departments do not have military equipment use policies or annual reports posted on their websites or have removed previous years' military equipment annual reports. To assess compliance with these requirements, we reviewed agency websites for all 58 sheriffs and the 50 largest municipal police departments, as well as CDCR and CHP, in February and March of this year.

Annual use reports are essential to AB 481's transparency goals. Without consistent reporting and public access, community members cannot understand how military equipment is used, how that use may change over time, or what military equipment agencies possess.

Similarly, failure to post military equipment policies (as required by AB 481) denies communities critical information about the risks of interaction with law enforcement. For example, some use policies allow overly broad discretion for situations where dangerous weapons may be used.

Communities are increasingly aware of the dangers of less lethal munitions, due to recent uses by federal immigration enforcement. But without transparency provided by AB 481 reports, communities may not be aware that local law enforcement agencies use these same weapons. Similarly, without access to AB 481 policies, communities and governing bodies cannot effectively oversee or place limits on how these weapons are used. AB 481 compliance is critical for protecting California communities.

Unfortunately, for many Californians, law enforcement agencies fail to provide that legally required transparency. As a result, communities are unable to make informed decisions about the costs or use of military equipment. A few of the ways law enforcement agencies fail these communities:

Complete Absence of Required Reporting and Policies

Some law enforcement agencies have continued to fail to post any military equipment use reports, use policies, or both, despite AB 481 requirements:

- Among the agencies that have no military equipment use report posted at all are sheriff departments in Colusa, Del Norte, Fresno, Humboldt, Lassen, and Riverside Counties, and police departments in [Corona](#), [Fontana](#), [Garden Grove](#), [Monterey Park](#), [Oceanside](#), and [Riverside](#).
- Many agencies were also noncompliant with the requirement to post military equipment **policies**. Sheriffs in eight counties and two of the 50 largest police departments had no military equipment policy visibly posted on their websites: Del Norte, Humboldt, Kern, Modoc, Sierra, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Trinity; and police in Anaheim and Visalia.
- CDCR and CHP are among the largest law enforcement agencies in California and are required by AB 481 to post military equipment use policies, but not to post annual use reports. [CDCR has posted](#) military equipment use policies. CHP, despite maintaining [an AB 481 page](#) (misleadingly located in a COVID 19 transparency section), has not posted a military equipment use policy.

“Annual Reports” That Do Not Function as Reports

Some agencies label documents as annual reports while omitting required reporting elements or providing only inventories rather than use information.

- Some agencies post documents called “annual reports” on military equipment use, but the reports are instead inventories that include no information on use of the equipment over the previous year. This is the case for [Baldwin Park PD](#), [Carlsbad PD](#), [Oceanside PD](#), and [Pomona PD](#).
- The vast majority of agencies exclude at least some components of a military equipment annual report required by AB 481, for example, the personnel costs for the use of each type of military equipment, as required by Section 7072(a)(4). Many exclude a summary of the purposes for which each type of military equipment was used in the year reported, as required by Section 7072(a)(1).
- Some agencies post documents labeled “annual report” that do not specify the time period covered by the report. This is the case for [Clearlake PD](#), [Gardena PD](#), and [Marin County Sheriff’s Office](#).

Inconsistent and Sporadic Compliance with Reporting Requirements

Many agencies report irregularly and have missed required years, deleted reports, or stopped reporting altogether after initial compliance.

- Some agencies produced and posted reports for the first year or two, then stopped doing so (Orange PD, Santa Rosa PD). Others delete previous years' reports from their sites after posting the most recent report (Fresno PD, San Jose PD, Stockton PD).
- Another 12 county sheriffs and six police departments have not posted a report for 2022 but have posted reports for most recent years.¹
- Another 18 agencies have posted a report for the most recent year, but not for multiple previous years.²
- In the case of San Jose PD, the Department created an AB 481 page, as some departments have, in 2022. This is typically a useful way to organize and facilitate public access to AB 481 policies and reports. However, San Jose PD – like [San Rafael PD](#) - has not posted any military equipment reports since its initial report in 2022.

Barriers to Public Access and Transparency

Even when agencies post required materials, website visibility practices create significant barriers to public access.

- Many reports are difficult to find on agency websites, requiring targeted searches by someone familiar with both AB 481 and law enforcement websites, while other agencies have created pages that consolidate links to AB 481 policies and reports in one page that is relatively easy to locate.
- Some agencies fail to provide reports in accessible formats. This violates state Government Code 7405, which requires local government online documents to be accessible. When California law enforcement agencies fail to provide AB 481 reports in a format compatible with assistive technology, Californians who rely on assistive technology to read are unable to access this information. A few of the law enforcement agencies that fail to provide accessible reports include the [Modoc County Sheriff's Office](#), [Mendocino County Sheriff's Office](#), [Shasta County Sheriff's Office](#), [Solano County Sheriff's Office](#), [Glendale Police Department](#), [Brentwood Police Department](#), [Huntington Beach Police Department](#), and the [Los Angeles Police Department](#).
- Of 58 county sheriffs and 50 largest police departments, only seven sheriffs and 16 police departments had posted both a military equipment policy and annual use reports from 2022 to the most recent year's report.³

- In 15 counties, the agency posted a general military equipment policy, but no use policy *for each type of equipment* as required by Section 7070(d). This was the case for: Sheriffs in: Alpine, Calaveras, Imperial, Inyo, Lassen, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Riverside, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, and Stanislaus.

These findings – underreporting of assault rifles, failure to publish AB 481 reports and policies, and other forms of AB 481 noncompliance – undermine the transparency that AB 481 was designed to provide to California communities. Information we have cited above, along with other publicly available information, shows that multiple agencies are not complying with the letter or spirit of AB 481. We urge the California Department of Justice to take appropriate steps to ensure that law enforcement agencies comply with both the letter and intent of AB 481.

¹ Agencies that posted AB 481 reports for the most recent year but not for 2022: Sheriffs: Alameda, Amador, Butte, El Dorado, Kern, Lake, Marin, Monterey, Orange, Sacramento, San Mateo, and Santa Clara. Police departments: Bakersfield, Huntington Beach, Inglewood, Sacramento, Santa Monica, and Stockton.

² Agencies that posted AB 481 reports for the most recent year but not multiple previous years: Sheriffs in Inyo, Los Angeles, Mendocino, Nevada, San Francisco, Shasta, Tehama, Yolo, and Yuba counties; police departments in Beverly Hills, Fresno, Irvine, Modesto, Ontario, [Pomona](#), Roseville, Santa Barbara, and Whittier.

³ County and city agencies that posted both an AB 481 policy and annual reports for at least 2022, 2023, and 2024 were: Sheriffs: Contra Costa, Kern, Madera, Merced, Monterey, San Bernardino, San Diego, Sonoma and Ventura Counties. Police departments: Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Concord, Escondido, Fremont, Glendale, Hayward, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Salinas, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Ana, Sunnyvale, and Torrance.