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## Our Readers Say: Misconceptions about MRAP include thinking it's a tank

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I wish to respond to the Letter to the Editor from Helen Waitz ("Citizens need answers on tank acquisition," Our Readers Say, Feb. 6, 2014) and I hope clear up some misconceptions evident in her letter and in comments made in other forums around town.

First, the headline and other references to the vehicle as a "tank" are misleading and alarmist.

The city of Redlands has not acquired a tank.

Late last year, the Redlands Police Department received a surplus Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle at no cost to the city from the Department of Defense.

A total of 165 of the surplus vehicles were provided last year to police departments nationwide as part of a national military surplus program started by President Bill Clinton in the 1990s.

RPD applied for the MRAP to repurpose as a ballistic capable rescue/tactical vehicle to be utilized to enhance officer and citizen safety when responding to active shooter type incidents.

Ms. Waitz asks "Why would a small, quiet, college town in Southern California need a MRAP ... vehicle with a machine gun mounted in its turret?" Let me assure your readers that there is no machine gun mounted anywhere on the vehicle. There was no turret-mounted gun on the vehicle when RPD took delivery and such military-style weaponry is not essential or desired for the vehicle's intended purpose as a tactical rescue vehicle.

To the first part of the question, as a "small, quiet, college town," Redlands is not immune to the type of violence we have become all too familiar with over the past decades.

Blacksburg, Va., was a small, quiet, college town with a population of just over 42,000 when a gunman killed 32 people on the Virginia Tech campus in April 2007.

Littleton, Colo., home of Columbine High School, is a small Denver suburb of 40,000, where two teenagers went on a rampage, killing 12 fellow students.

Newtown, Conn., a small town of 27,560, is sadly familiar to all of us after 20 children and six adults were gunned down at an elementary school there just over a year ago.

Each of these towns is smaller than Redlands.

None of them expected their names to become synonymous with horrific, senseless violence.

I have a responsibility to the residents, businesses and visitors of Redlands to think about the unthinkable and to be prepared to take action to protect innocent lives.

My commitment to our community is that under my command I will always do everything in my power to promote the safety of my officers and our community and to do so in a compassionate manner.

Before deploying this rescue vehicle, the RPD will develop a written policy governing its use.

The cost to retrofit the vehicle will come from asset seizure funds. No General Fund money will be used.

To Ms. Waitz's final question, "Who is getting the benefit of this acquisition?" the answer is clear — it is the businesses, the visitors and the residents of Redlands who will clearly benefit.

— Mark A. Garcia, Redlands Police Chief