Here’s the US Army version of HoloLens that Microsoft employees were protesting



In November, we learned that Microsoft won a $479 million contract to supply the US Army with a version of its HoloLens augmented reality headset – a move that Microsoft’s own employees decried this February, prompting Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella himself to respond.

Now, for the first time, we’re seeing what those hundreds of millions of dollars actually bought.

CNBC got an exclusive look at an early draft of the Army’s Integrated Visual Augmentation System (IVAS), which turns out to be a modified version of the new HoloLens 2 for soldiers. Physically, it looks almost identical to the commercial headset – save the new FLIR thermal camera prominently mounted above a user’s forehead.

But it’s what’s inside the glasses that counts, and *CNBC* reports that this prototype of the future of warfare is pretty much what first-person shooter video games have imagined for years now. There’s a heads-up display that can show your exact compass heading just above your field of view and your position on a virtual map relative to your squadmates, not to mention a video game-like virtual reticle to show the direction you’re aiming a gun – and that FLIR thermal camera lets the headset double as a set of thermal / night vision goggles to see foes through bushes and smoke.

Here’s our video about the normal version of the HoloLens 2, for comparison:

It’s pretty clear from CNBC’s report – which features

interviews with both Army officials and soldiers – that the headset is very much the tool of war you'd expect, which probably won't ease the concerns of employees who believe Microsoft shouldn't be in that line of work.

Initially, the US Army requested a few thousand headsets, though Reuters later reported that the military might eventually purchase over 100,000 of them. The Army told CNBC it's hoping to field it to "thousands and thousands of soldiers across the force" as early as 2022, and deploy it by 2028.

You can read CNBC's full story here.

And if you're curious, here's a huge document outlining what the Army hopes this headset will achieve:

https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/6/18298335/microsoft-hololens-us-military-version