

Palmer Luckey's company earned a contract for the Pentagon's Project Maven AI program

Palmer Luckey's Anduril Industries has won a contract on the Pentagon's controversial AI program, Project Maven, reports *The Intercept*. Since founding the company in 2017, Luckey has focused on the defense industry, building advanced systems that could be used for border surveillance.

Project Maven is a controversial artificial intelligence program that uses machine learning to sort through millions of hours of drone footage to help systems distinguish people from their surroundings. The project would help reduce the burden on human analysts and improve the intelligence that's captured in cameras. The project's goal is to get better information to military officers, with the idea that with better decisions, there's less of a change of mistakes that result in civilian casualties.

But that project has a complicated track record in Silicon Valley. Google offered up its resources as part of a pilot project last year, which sparked considerable internal discussion, with employees demanding that the company pull out of the project altogether. Google ultimately decided to let its contract with the Department of Defense expire, although the it says it will still work with the Pentagon for non-weapons projects. Other high-profile military contracts have been met with resistance from other companies as well – Microsoft employees recently demanded that the company drop a

contract with the US Army for a \$480 million HoloLens project.

Luckey – the founder of Oculus Rift – founded his company shortly after he left Facebook, focusing on developing surveillance technology for places like the US border. Last year, *Wired* reported that the company's Lattice system is made up of a combination of technologies – cameras, LIDAR, and infrared sensors – which then uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to discern humans from other moving objects along the border. In tests, the system has reportedly helped border agents catch numerous people crossing the border.

Luckey reportedly began work on Project Maven in 2018, and it seems as though there's overlap between the efforts of Luckey's Anduril Industries on the US border and Project Maven – deep learning used to distinguish objects from vast amounts of collected data. According to *The Intercept*, Anduril Industries is using its Lattice system to provide 3D imagery to soldiers to direct drones in combat, and has completed the “first phase” of its research, with plans for the technology to be deployed in Afghanistan.

And unlike Google, Luckey's company is far more receptive to defense contracting – he has been outspoken about the need for technology companies contribute to defense projects.

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