
TRIPLE-CHASER

Forensic Architecture (FA) and Praxis Films present a video investigation into two companies—Safariland, a manufacturer of tear gas, and Sierra Bullets, a manufacturer of sniper bullets—linked to Warren B. Kanders, vice chair of the board of trustees of the Whitney Museum of American Art and CEO of the Safariland Group. The video, produced for the 2019 Whitney Biennial, is narrated by David Byrne.

- The 10 min video presents a new research project by FA which deploys machine learning and computer vision to identify Safariland-produced tear gas munitions.
- The project uses machine learning to automate the detection of ‘Triple-Chaser’ tear gas grenade, manufactured by the Safariland Group. We hope to use this as a test case, and subsequently to contribute to the development of similar machine learning algorithms to search for other munitions and military hardware around the world.
- Training a machine learning algorithm using ‘computer vision’ requires a training set of thousands of images, but relatively few images of the Triple-Chaser exist online. To fill the gap, we built a training set from scratch by constructing thousands of ‘synthetic’ images from 3D models of the canister. This represents the first application of research into ‘synthetic data’ and computer vision in a human rights context.
- As part of their research, FA and Praxis Films found that Kanders does not only profit from the manufacture of tear gas, but also from the manufacture of bullets. Kanders is the Executive Chairman of the Clarus Corporation, which, under his stewardship, purchased the manufacturer Sierra Bullets in 2017.
- Open source research suggests that Israeli army snipers use ammunition loaded with Sierra Bullets.
- FA and Praxis Films referred this research to the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, (ECCHR) which informed Sierra Bullets that they are considering possible legal steps in connection with the use of sniper fire against civilians on Gaza’s eastern border in 2018, where over 150 civilians were killed during a nine-month period, actions that the UN considers may amount to ‘war crimes’.
- On 15 May, Palestinians will mark Nakba Day. Mass civilian protests are expected along Gaza’s eastern border starting tomorrow and further casualties are feared due to possible Israeli sniper fire.

Safariland: [Click here](#) for more on our technical investigation, as well as media and resources.

Sierra Bullets: [Click here](#) to read our open source investigation, 'MatchKing: Warren B. Kanders, Sierra Bullets, and the Israel Defense Forces.'

Quotes

Eyal Weizman, Forensic Architecture's director, said: 'The controversy surrounding the 2019 Whitney Biennial presented us with a challenge that unites two of the fields within which we operate: human rights and culture. When arms traders support culture, their reputations are burnished by cultural and symbolic capital. We resolved to use the Biennial to invert this economy through these investigations.'

'I've had my own encounter with Kanders. In April 2014, at a protest in the Palestinian village of Nabi Saleh, an Israeli soldier fired a tear gas grenade directly at a group of us, with a grenade launcher manufactured by Safariland. A woman standing right next to me was struck in the head by the grenade.'

Laura Poitras, filmmaker/Praxis Films, said: 'As an artist who has exhibited at the Whitney, I am grateful to the 95 museum staff who came forward last November to express their moral outrage at the indiscriminate use of tear gas on migrants at the US/Mexico border. This film is a collaboration with many people who have experienced the violence of tear gas manufactured by Kanders' company. This film would not be possible without the contributions of the filmmakers at Ain Media in Gaza, artists in Gezi Park and Bethlehem, and activists around the world who took risks to document and share findings with us.'

FA researcher in Gaza [anonymity preferred], said: 'I remember last year's protests in Gaza as the single bloodiest day since the 2014 war. This was largely because of Israel's open-fire policy, where snipers and live ammunition were used to disperse civilians in the Great March of Return. I've had over a dozen doctors in Gaza explain to me, in gruesome detail, the extensive damage to organs and limbs resulting from this ammunition. The possibility that bullets manufactured by companies connected to Kanders were used by the IDF in Gaza against civilian protests is a moral outrage. If the Whitney does not investigate or take action, they are complicit.'

Alican Akturk, FA's researcher in charge of modeling and design for this project, said: 'I first experienced the taste of tear gas in Gezi Park, Istanbul in 2013. I saw how huge crowds are dispersed in a matter of minutes, suffocating. But I saw, too, how we regrouped more determined, and united. It's important to understand how far up the food chain this issue goes, and how many other protests around the world are directly affected by Safariland products.'

Lachlan Kermode, the project's Software Development Lead, said: 'This project demonstrates that machine learning can be a powerful and practical method in human rights research. 'Open source', for us, means not only making code and other assets available, but also cultivating a community around the identification of these munitions, and around machine learning as a method in our work. We hope that other journalists, activists, and research agencies will contribute with us in the next stage.'

About Forensic Architecture

Forensic Architecture is an interdisciplinary research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London. We undertake spatial and media analysis for international prosecutors, human rights groups and NGOs. Our research is presented in political and legal forums, truth commissions, courts, and human rights reports, as well as in exhibitions and public events.

About Praxis Films

Praxis Films is a documentary production company founded by filmmaker, journalist, and artist Laura Poitras. *CITIZENFOUR*, the third instalment of Poitras's post-9/11 trilogy, won an Academy Award for Best Documentary. Part one of the trilogy, *My Country, My Country*, about the U.S. occupation of Iraq, was nominated for an Academy Award. Part two, *The Oath*, focused on Guantanamo and the war on terror. Poitras's exhibition *Astro Noise*, was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2016.

For more information please contact: info@forensic-architecture.org