Google Employees Refuse to Work on AI Drone and Tracking Project for the Pentagon

written by GEG | May 15, 2018

Around a dozen Google employees have quit and close to 4,000 have signed a petition over the company's involvement in a controversial military pilot program known as "Project Maven," which will use artificial intelligence to speed up analysis of drone footage and the program will have the ability to track individuals as they come and go from different locations. The Tech Workers Coalition is circulating a petition that reads, "We can no longer ignore our industry's and our technologies' harmful biases, large-scale breaches of trust, and lack of ethical safeguards These are life and death stakes."

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> *Project Maven, a fast-moving Pentagon project also known as the Algorithmic Warfare Cross-Functional Team (AWCFT), was established in April 2017. Maven's stated mission is to "accelerate DoD's integration of big data and machine learning." In total, the Defense Department spent $7.4 billion on artificial intelligence-related areas in 2017, the Wall Street Journal reported.*
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> *The project's first assignment was to help the Pentagon efficiently process the deluge of video footage collected daily by its aerial drones—an amount of footage so vast that human analysts can't keep up. —Gizmodo*

Project Maven will use machine learning to identify vehicles and other objects from drone footage — with the ultimate goal of enabling the automated detection and identification of objects in up to 38 categories — including the ability to track individuals as they come and go from different locations.

> *Project Maven's objective, according to Air Force Lt. Gen. John N.T. "Jack" Shanahan, director for Defense Intelligence for Warfighter Support in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, "is to turn the enormous volume of data available to DoD into actionable intelligence and insights." —DoD*

The internal revolt began shortly after Google revealed its involvement in the project nearly three months ago.

> *Some Google employees were outraged that the company would offer resources to the military for surveillance technology involved in drone operations, sources said, while others argued that the project raised important ethical questions about the development and use of machine learning. —Gizmodo*

The resigned employees cited a range of frustrations, from ethical concerns over the use of AI in a battlefield setting, to larger concerns over Google's overall political decisions.

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