

# Utah will test hidden technology that tries to find weapons among crowds at schools, stadiums and churches

*Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes has signed an agreement to help test a new commercial product called HEXWAVE that is marketed as a way to identify weapons, both metallic and non-metallic, on people at crowded places, such as sporting events, concerts, schools and even churches.*

*Salt Lake Tribune*

By Benjamin Wood and Erin Alberty

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Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes is partnering with Georgia-based Liberty Defense to test and promote a product that uses 3D imaging and artificial intelligence to detect concealed weapons on people in public spaces.

The company's product, HEXWAVE, can be hidden in walls and other structures as it scans for objects like guns, knives and explosives obscured by clothing or bags, according to a promotional video on the Liberty Defense website.

The technology, as Liberty Defense has described it, appears to "strike the balance between privacy interests on one side and security and safety," Reyes said. "Hexwave seems to be right in that sweet spot."

According to Liberty Defense, the agreement with Reyes includes the attorney general facilitating introductions between the company and prospective clients and advising interested parties on the potential uses of HEXWAVE. Park City police have had discussions with the company about testing it at the Sundance Film Festival. Because the imaging technology identifies objects, rather than the people carrying them, Reyes said he believes it could be less invasive than, say, facial recognition technology or even driver license scanners.

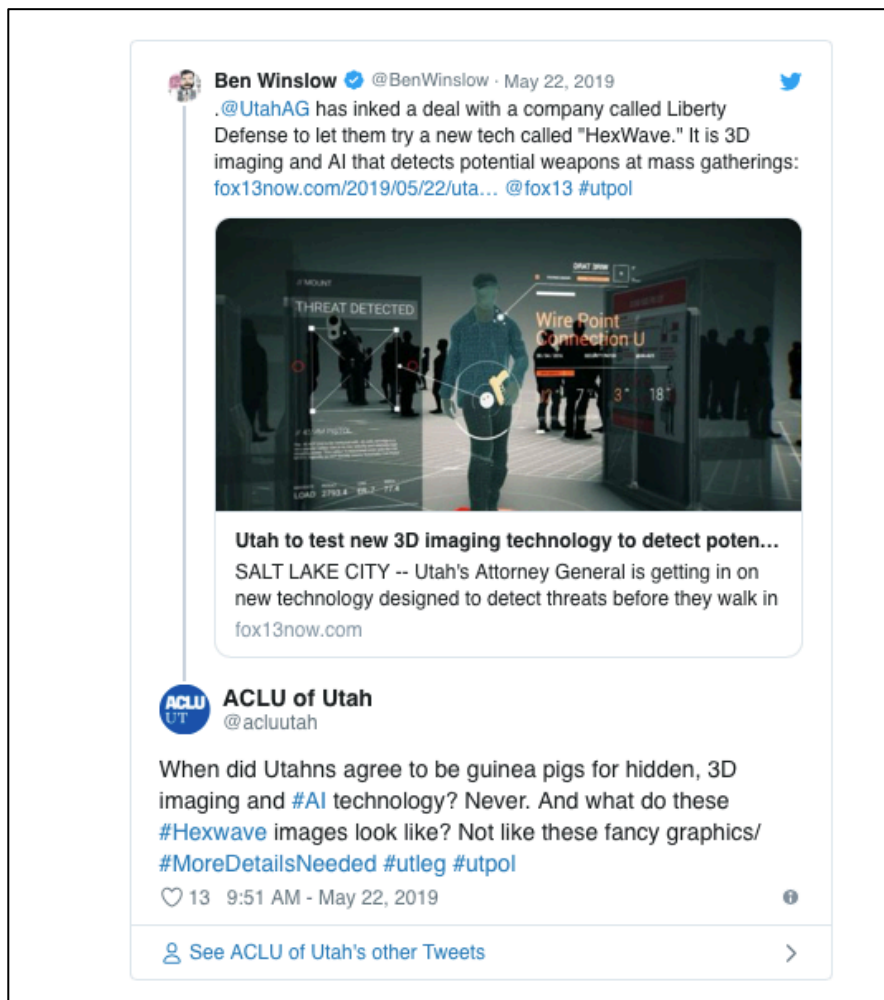
"If you can imagine an open place like Park City during Sundance to be able to have a little more of an awareness of what — not who and what their identity is and where they live and what their driver license is — but what they might have on them and where that is, ... to make sure everybody is as safe as possible."

The company also suggests the technology could be installed at sporting and concert arenas, school campuses, churches, government buildings and amusement parks. Reyes said some companies in Utah have already expressed interest in being part of the HEXWAVE tests. "HEXWAVE can be applied in a variety of settings to provide a means to identify possible threats before they advance into attacks," Bill Riker, CEO of Liberty Defense, said in a statement. "We are excited that the attorney general of Utah recognizes the potential value of this technology and the opportunity it provides for enhanced security in the state."

Clark Aposhian, a gun-rights advocate and chairman of the Utah Shooting Sports Council, said he wonders about the practical applications for the technology in Utah. Private venues — like the Sundance Film Festival — are free to prohibit weapons, but state law permits concealed carry in public spaces like parks, school campuses and the Utah State Capitol.

“People can walk in there with guns,” Aposhian said. “Permit holders do that all the time.” Aposhian said there’s the potential for lawful gun owners to be harassed by any new approach to security. But most places where weapons are prohibited are already equipped with metal detectors and other types of scanners, he said, and it might be difficult to effectively deploy the HEXWAVE devices in a state with so many authorized gun owners.

“I’m interested to see if technology is moving a little bit faster than logistics and procedures and policy are,” he said.



The ACLU of Utah also expressed criticism, writing on Twitter that Utahns had never agreed to be “guinea pigs” for the technology.

In a prepared statement, ACLU of Utah legal director John Mejia said the HEXWAVE technology could subject Utahns to unnecessary searches and interrogations, or identify personal and private items like insulin pumps, pacemakers and colostomy bags. He described the agreement with Liberty Defense as perpetuating the “airportization” of American life, in which constitutional rights erode against greater government surveillance.

“To decide whether this technology is something that can or should be used in Utah, we’d like to see the Attorney General’s office provide more details and increased transparency about the 3D scanning system, the images it generates, the artificial intelligence software that interprets these images, how and where the images are stored and identified, and who has access to them,” Mejia said.

The agreement with Liberty Defense doesn’t commit the state to make any purchases, Reyes said, but it does allow local law enforcement and private security to weigh in on the product as it’s being developed.

“That’s valuable ... to get real time feedback from law enforcement, saying ‘This is actually what we could use; we wouldn’t need this because we think that might violate the Constitution, but let’s see if you can develop this [other] kind of application.’ In the end it might benefit us,” Reyes said.

And according to the terms of the memorandum, Liberty Defense may display the name and logo of the Utah Attorney General’s Office on its website, brochures, social media and marketing materials “for the purpose of identifying Liberty’s relationship with [Reyes],” subject to the office’s prior review and approval.

The memorandum also states that HEXWAVE is an experimental technology, and that Liberty Defense does not guarantee the product will be effective at detecting security threats or suitable for its intended use. In signing the agreement, the Utah Attorney General’s Office assumes full risk and responsibility for the use of the technology.

Reyes’ Office “is advised to use caution and not to rely in any way on the correct functioning, effectiveness or performance of HEXWAVE,” the agreement states.

Reyes acknowledged potential concerns from gun owners that their legally concealed weapons could be flagged as a threat.

“I say potential [threat] because there might be a very law-abiding citizen, with a legal right to have a weapon,” Reyes said. “But at least it allows more information to be had sooner, and it would allow a private entity or a government to be able to potentially push the perimeter out further, in terms of knowing what possible threats there might be.”

Liberty Defense also has reached HEXWAVE testing agreements with the developer of several shopping malls in Georgia and at Vancouver’s Rogers Arena, home of the Vancouver Canucks hockey team.