Twitter Thread by Melissa “Claudio” Lewis



Melissa “Claudio” Lewis
@Claudio_Report



this will be a lofty thread that I’ve spent some time researching. Buckle in.
On 12/3/2020 I noticed a self congratulatory tweet from Jeff Merkley about banning riot control munitions in Hong Kong for the last year.

> BREAKING: Final 2020 defense bill just released\u2014and it includes an extension of my ban on exporting crowd control equipment to #HongKong. An important victory! As Beijing intensifies its crackdown against pro-democracy activists in HK, the US absolutely must not be complicit.
>
> — Senator Jeff Merkley (@SenJeffMerkley) December 4, 2020

I found this darkly funny for a few reasons: number one, we had obviously been assaulted with these same munitions for the last several months and two, the current Hong Kong protests had been going since March 15, 2019. We were supplying riot control munitions before that?

Also, this was not Hong Kong’s first rodeo. This implied we were supplying them THEN too. Good god, I thought. Do we do this everywhere? The answer, unfortunately, is a resounding yes.
A bit about munitions. Every Portlander is a goddamn connoisseur at this point...

and can likely identify each one by their flavor notes and tannins. But let’s talk about about their creation and who is responsible for them ending up all over the world. The primary companies exporting to Hong Kong are Safariland and Amtec Less-Lethal...
https://t.co/jtHRm6DKZl

(the poorly abbreviated ALS). Safariland is run out of Jacksonville, and ALS hails from Tallahassee. As I said above, we all know less lethals are just that, LESS lethal, but they absolutely kill. “A meta-analysis of 26 studies published from 1990 to 2017 shows...

the use of such projectiles caused significant morbidity and mortality. Of the close to 2,000 injured people identified in the analysis, more than 50 died as a result of their injuries and 300 suffered permanent disability.”

ALS features tacky YouTube videos of white men shooting off munitions in the desert, completely ignoring the fact that they cause human suffering. We are all intimately familiar with Safariland, who hasn’t been kissed by one of their products?

Until very recently, Safariland was helmed by Warren Kanders. He was very aware that his product went to foreign conflicts, and encouraged police wounded in the line of duty to come speak in his factories to motivate his workers.

According to Business Insider, Kanders took in a $500 million a year profit from tear gas, although I'd imagine that's from the entire Safariland line. Not just tear gas. But the point stands: that's quite the paycheck from human suffering. https://t.co/53Js2fdbV4

What's more, Warren Kanders has dubious ties to the disgraced Sackler kingpins. In July, Kanders stepped down after direct action at his home pressured him to do so.
Less lethal munitions, especially tear gas, are a booming industry.

In 2016 the tear gas industry was worth a whopping $6.3 billion, and they had no idea what was going to go down in Hong Kong or the United States in 2020 then. The estimates are anticipating the industry will be worth $11.3 billion in 2023. https://t.co/Z40okzxN3h

Tear gas makes up a quarter of those profits. That's $3 billion dollars for choking, gasping, and vomiting. You know the feeling. During a respiratory pandemic, no less.

So the timeline is thus:
3/15/19 the current Hong Kong protests begin. Safariland and ALS sell LLM to Chinese police and profit wildly. While it has been illegal to use chemical weapons in war for quite some time (regulations got particularly strict in 1993)...

it remains legal in law enforcement applications. The US profits off selling them to international law enforcement agencies to use on their own citizens.
11/20/19 Merkley announces his bill for banning LLM sales to Hong Kong has been unanimously passed by bipartisan legislation

11/27/19 The bill's language is clarified. The specified items banned include "tear gas, rubber bullets, and handcuffs." The president can make exceptions (I could find no evidence he has) and it will expire in a year. Even Marco Rubio agrees. https://t.co/oQyzKgSZsP

The summary of the unanimously supported bill.

https://t.co/mtmTf4WhBh

5/29/20 "Riot Night" in Portland, Oregon following the death of George Floyd protesters unknowingly experience the deep irony of being hit with every Safariland product that was banned in Hong Kong. Protesters are deemed violent and deserving of these measures.

7/6/20 Portland Police release this hilarious graphic https://t.co/MXKtWigJeQ which depicts Hong Kong tactics Jeff Merkley felt were worthy of banning LLMs in Hong Kong, but not in Portland.

> We have seen all of this at demonstrations in Portland. https://t.co/jYlZrHKhH8

— Portland Police (@PortlandPolice) July 6, 2020

- 12/3/20 Jeff Merkley congratulations himself on the anniversary of banning American made less lethal munitions and tear gas in Hong Kong. Fails to see the irony.

Fin.

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