

**Support the Guardian**

Available for everyone, funded by readers

Support us →

**News**

**Opinion**

**Sport**

**Culture**

**Lifestyle**

Fashion Food Recipes Travel Health & fitness Women Men Love & sex Beauty Hom

**Design**

## Pepper spray for the school run? The weaponised SUV set to terrify America's streets

The extreme features of the Rezvani Vengeance - including electrified door handles and blinding strobe lights - are wholly in tune with lethal trends in the US market



📷 Road warrior ... the Rezvani Vengeance SUV. Photograph: Rezvani Motors



**Oliver Wainwright**

🐦 @ollywainwright

Wed 25 Jan 2023 18.25 GMT

In southern California, parking lot warfare just got real. Not content with their supersized pickup trucks and child-killing SUVs, America's road warriors can now go full military apocalypse, with the arrival of the Rezvani Vengeance.

While its competitors offer heated seats and optional roof-racks, this souped-up SUV boasts bulletproof glass, blinding strobe lights, electrified doorhandles,

and wing mirrors that can shoot pepper spray – handy for putting those pesky cyclists in their place.

“Vengeance is yours,” trumpets the website, which details how the car can release a dense smoke screen to confuse people following you, as well as detect electromagnetic pulses from nuclear weapons. Always handy for the supermarket run.

Picking up the kids from school? You can announce your arrival through the car’s booming intercom system. Or why not just drive straight through the gates? The vehicle’s hefty steel ram bumpers and military-grade tyres would make mincemeat of any parking barrier – and dispatch the headteacher while they’re at it.

One thing oddly missing from the Vengeance (priced from \$285,000, rising to \$499,000 with all the extras) is a rear windscreen, because of course that would be unsafe. Instead, drivers are treated to a live video rear-view mirror and a front camera overlaid with “augmented reality”. Perhaps it shows an imaginary zombie army for you to mow down on your way to the mall.



Who needs a rear windscreen? ... the Rezvani Vengeance SUV. Photograph: Rezvani Motors

Styled like an Elon Musk fever dream, its great bulk sculpted with clunking

facets, the Vengeance is the latest heady concoction to emerge from Irvine, California-based Rezvani Motors. The company was [founded in 2014 by Ferris Rezvani](#), whose father was an F4 Phantom fighter pilot in the Iranian air force. Unable to become a pilot himself for various health reasons, Rezvani Jr decided to start a car company to “create the same high-speed thrill of flying on the ground”. It seems he is keen to indulge in a bit of military cosplay too. The company’s first car design was named Beast, followed by one called Tank, of which the Vengeance is conceived as a more mainstream “little brother”.

Which brings us to the most frightening thing about this weaponised monster of an SUV: that it is aimed not at military personnel, but at everyday soccer moms. A viral TikTok video, [made by family car reviewer @mobile\\_mama](#), shows a mom regaling her followers with the delights of the pepper spray mirrors – “my favourite” – while showing off the bulletproof vests, helmets and gas masks that come with the car. “Your kids will love that it was styled by a video-game designer,” she chirrups. “Is the Rezvani Vengeance the safest vehicle for you and your kiddos or what?” Just as long as you don’t accidentally pepper-spray them in the face.

This steroidal tank might seem like an anomalous extreme, but the truth is it represents the broader rise of the average US consumer vehicle into a supercharged killing machine. With its added tactical weaponry and paranoid styling, at least the Vengeance is honest about it.

According to the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety](#), drivers behind the wheel of an SUV are two to three times more likely to kill a pedestrian in a collision than when driving a regular car. A [study in Michigan](#) found that, at 20-39 mph, 30% of SUV crashes resulted in a pedestrian fatality, compared with 23% of car crashes. While, at 40mph or above, 100% of SUV crashes resulted in a pedestrian death, compared with 54% of car crashes.

It comes down to simple physics: SUVs are more lethal due to their enormous weight, much taller front ends, and poorer visibility. While a regular car generally strikes a pedestrian’s legs, throwing them on to the bonnet, an SUV strikes their upper torso, or head, and then crushes them under the wheels.

Following the American love for supersizing everything, from Big Macs to McMansions, it is no surprise that the sale of ever bigger, ever heavier cars has mushroomed. [Some reports show that](#) 80% of all car sales in the US are now SUVs or pickup trucks. When I visited the Ford factory in Detroit in 2019, they

proudly told me that the company had stopped manufacturing compact cars altogether in the US.

It is no coincidence that the rise in SUV sales comes with an alarming rise in the number of pedestrians being killed on the roads. According to a Governors Highway Safety Association report, pedestrian fatalities have rocketed by 54% over the last decade. Cars might have grown safer for the people inside them, but not for walkers, cyclists or bikers. It is, as the New York Times put it, an exceptionally American problem. While other comparably developed countries have seen traffic fatalities falling in recent years, the US is alone in seeing an increase – even during the pandemic.

SUVs are killing us in another way too, as some of the world's worst polluters. It was recently found that they are the second biggest cause of the global rise in carbon dioxide emissions over the past decade, eclipsing all shipping, aviation, heavy industry and even trucks. If all SUV drivers banded together to form their own country – the Republic of Vengeance? – it would rank as the seventh largest emitter in the world.

Still, wrapped inside their body armour, protected by dazzling lights and thick smoke screens, with their gas masks at the ready, at least the kiddos will be safe on their way home from school.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/jan/25/pepper-spray-school-run-apocalyptic-suv-reznavi-vengeance>