

Grandma Arrested, Jailed 5 Months After AI Facial Recognition Error

It goes without saying that there are a lot of concerns surrounding the proliferation of artificial intelligence.

Yes, there are the glaringly obvious problems like digital necromancy, cheating in school, and job displacement.

But there's a far bigger, far simpler problem when it comes to AI: Despite the way it's lauded by certain parts of the tech sector, AI can be very wrong sometimes.

And that can lead to some life-altering consequences.

Just ask Angela Lipps.

The 50-year-old grandmother from Tennessee claimed that she erroneously spent months in a North Dakota prison after AI mistakenly linked her to a local bank robbery, according to KBTX-TV.

Lipps alleged that authorities had used AI facial recognition technology to apprehend her.

Further adding to the embarrassment of the law enforcement involved, U.S. Marshals apparently barged in and arrested Lipps at gunpoint while she was babysitting four children.

Furthermore, WABM-TV reported that Lipps claimed she never even set foot in the state of North Dakota.

"I've never been to North Dakota. I don't know anyone from North Dakota," Lipps said.

She added, "It was so scary. I can still see it in my head, over and over again."

Obviously, nobody would blame a grandmother who was in the middle of watching young kids for being scared out of her mind.

Speaking of minds... did anyone use theirs while investigating Lipps?

According to court documents obtained by WABM, North Dakota police had been investigating a string of bank fraud cases that occurred between April and May 2025. A suspect had apparently been using a forged U.S. Army military ID to withdraw thousands of dollars.



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During this investigation, AI facial recognition software tagged Lipps as a possible suspect, despite the fact that she lived several states away.

At this point, instead of diving deeper to ensure that they wouldn't be punishing an innocent grandmother, a detective apparently looked only at Lipps' social media and driver's license before determining that she fit the suspect's descriptions.

This mockery of an investigation would eventually lead Lipps to being charged with four counts of unauthorized use of personal identifying information and four counts of theft. She even spent four months in a Tennessee county jail – without the ability to plead her case – until she was eventually extradited to North Dakota, where she was imprisoned for weeks longer.

Lipps would eventually get her day in court, per WDAY, in which case her attorney was able to point out records of the grandmother depositing checks and buying various items during the time of these alleged frauds.

She was eventually released, but somehow the story only gets worse from here.

By virtue of being in North Dakota, Lipps was basically stranded, with no easy way to get home to Tennessee. While she did eventually make it home, Lipps soon found herself unable to pay her bills, leading to her losing her home, car, and – depressingly – her dog, too.

(Oh, and North Dakota police never called to apologize or offer her any financial assistance in the wake of what they did to her.)

What happened to Lipps isn't just a mistake – it's a systemic failure at nearly every level of the process.

An algorithm spits out a “match,” and instead of treating that as a lead to be carefully vetted, it's treated like gospel.

From there, it's a cascade of laziness and abdication of responsibility: minimal investigation, surface-level confirmation, and a rush to slap cuffs on someone who was, by all available evidence, nowhere near the alleged crimes. As much as AI contributed to this debacle, it was still ultimately people that put Lipps behind bars, and they did so while hiding behind the false confidence of that technology.

And if that's the standard, every American should be uneasy. Because if a grandmother with no ties to a crime can be swept up, jailed for months, and have her life effectively destroyed based on what amounts to a glorified guess, then due process has been reduced to a box-checking exercise.

There's a reason the justice system is supposed to rely on evidence, corroboration, and scrutiny. When those basic steps are skipped, the system starts looking far more like a liability than a safeguard.

Which is exactly why Lipps may have a very real path to

holding those responsible accountable in court. Wrongful arrest, false imprisonment, gross negligence – it's hard to look at the facts as presented and not see multiple avenues for legal recourse.

And frankly, there should be. Because if there's no consequence for this kind of failure, there's no incentive to fix it.

Lipps got her freedom back, but everything else she lost deserves more than a shrug and silence – it demands accountability, restitution, and a long-overdue reckoning with the risks of blindly trusting machines over facts.

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