NewsGuard/BBC Panorama investigation: Trump campaign uses AI to generate fake images of assumptive Republican presidential nominee with Black ‘admirers’

Artificial intelligence tools have been used to generate seemingly authentic images of former U.S. President Donald Trump with Black voters — demonstrating how powerful new technologies are already being weaponized in the 2024 presidential campaign.

What Happened: Widely shared images purporting to depict Trump posing with Black voters aren’t what they seem: The photos were created by artificial intelligence tools, apparently produced by Trump supporters.

- “Anyone that says Trump is a racist is totally wrong,” X user “Joey Franko” wrote in an X post sharing one of the AI-generated images. “He stopped his motorcade to take pictures with these young gentlemen that flagged him down.”
- Conservative commentator Mark Kaye, a pro-Trump supporter who said he created one of the photos, wrote on Facebook, “President Trump now has the support [of] BLM…and just about everybody else. It’s truly a Christmas miracle.”

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A Closer Look: An examination of the photos shows multiple indicators of creation by AI, including missing fingers and a waxy, cartoon-like appearance of the people. Hive, an AI detection tool used by NewsGuard, rated the images as 99.9 percent AI generated.

Bigger Picture: At a Feb. 29, 2024, news conference, FBI Director Christopher Wray said, “This election cycle the U.S. will face more adversaries, moving at a faster pace, and enabled by new technology.” Wray noted that generative AI has made it “easier for both more and less-sophisticated foreign adversaries to engage in malign influence.”

Tricks of our Trade: To determine whether a photo is AI-generated, you can use free detection tools such as Hive. While such tools are imperfect and should be cross-referenced with other sources, the results can help assess the authenticity of seemingly manipulated images.

The bogus photos of Trump posing with fictional Black supporters were first reported by the documentary series “BBC Panorama.”

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