Super Scam Me documentary shows what it takes to catch a romance scammer

If you got a DM from an unverified Jon Bon Jovi account after commenting on one of his official Instagram posts, what would it take to make you believe it was really the rock star hoping to connect? And at what point when he starts asking you to send money—like lose-your-house kind of money—would you snap out of the fantasy and stop draining your bank account?

In a documentary premiering Saturday—*Super Scam Me*—investigative journalist Mariana van Zeller goes deep into this toxic love-bombing terrain. In a clip that Ars is exclusively debuting below, you can see how van Zeller worked with an ethical hacker, Arman the Cyber, to use a fake bitcoin receipt and bait the fake Bon Jovi, giving the victim some much-needed closure.

Sneak peek at National Geographic's *Super Scam Me*.

Scamming a romance scammer

Broadcasting on National Geographic at 9 pm ET and available to stream on Disney+ and Hulu, the documentary takes viewers on an empathetic quest to understand how the line between "lover" and "fraud victim" gets blurred in romance scams that the Federal Trade Commission says cost Americans nearly $1.5 billion in losses each year.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/romance-scam-doc-super-scam-me-takes-viewers-deep-into-love-bombing-terrain/

Trump cancels Pentagon plans to livestream firing squad execution

On Thursday, Donald Trump called off the Pentagon’s highly controversial plans to livestream a firing squad execution that is still on schedule for December 3.

Trump supports the execution of Nidal Hasan, who was convicted of killing 13 people and wounding more than 30 others in the 2009 mass shooting at Fort Hood. But sources close to Trump told CNN that the president was blindsided last week when Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth announced that the event—which is the first US execution of a soldier since World War II—would be livestreamed.

Backlash to the livestream was immediate and crossed political divides. On the morning Trump canceled the plans, an ABC News poll found 8 in 10 Americans were against the livestream, including a 55 percent majority of MAGA Republicans.

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Trump commercial railing against his enemies kept airing after court blocked it

Rochon found that the plaintiffs are likely to succeed in their claim that the Trump administration violated the 2026 Consolidated Appropriations Act requirement that no funding may be used "for publicity or propaganda purposes within the United States not heretofore authorized by Congress."

"Defendants do not contest that the at-issue advertisements are purely partisan and unconnected to DHS's official functions," Rochon wrote. "Thus, the Court finds that Moving Plaintiffs are likely to succeed in showing that the advertisements are impermissible 'publicity or propaganda' under Section 718 [of the Consolidated Appropriations Act]."

Trump recycled ad from 2024 campaign

One of the ads "is almost identical to one used during President Trump's 2024 campaign, other than the fact that its funding disclaimer now identifies the United States government rather than his presidential campaign," Rochon wrote. "It depicts President Trump walking down a hallway while delivering a series of statements about his political adversaries. Among other things, he promises to 'demolish the deep state,' 'drive out the globalists,' 'cast out the communists, Marxists and fascists,' 'throw off the sick political class that hates our country,' and 'rout the fake news media.' This advertisement provides no information about

DHS’s official functions.”

As of October 8, the ad “had aired approximately 9,679 times, generating an estimated 972 million impressions at an estimated cost exceeding $9.09 million,” Rochon wrote. Another $6.3 million was estimated to have been spent on four other government-funded ads challenged in the lawsuit. That’s about $15.4 million as of October 8, and more was spent over the next few days.

Rochon found “a clear and substantial likelihood” that the Trump administration violated the Administrative Procedure Act “because Congress did not appropriate funds for DHS to spend on disseminating the challenged advertisements.” Rochon said a restraining order was necessary despite the DHS claim that it had “no plans” to continue running the ads.

“Defendants also have not provided reasonable assurances that OMB will not reapportion funds from another source to continue running similar advertisements,” she wrote.

The temporary restraining order is in place for only two weeks, but it can be converted into a preliminary injunction that would keep the ads off the air while litigation continues. Trump, the White House, OMB, and DHS face a similar lawsuit filed by the Democratic National Committee in the federal court in the District of Columbia. A hearing on a motion for a temporary restraining order in that case is scheduled for Thursday.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/trumps-taxpayer-funded-ads-kept-airing-on-tv-the-day-after-judge-blocked-them/

Disney offers $20M for Character.AI's scandal-plagued chatbot tech

Character.AI remains online

Character.AI has been operating for four years and has a "large and engaged user base," the Character Technologies bankruptcy filing said. Last year, a company blog reported that Character.AI attracted over 20 million monthly active users" across all services.

For fans, a Disney takeover might sound appealing, perhaps finally clarifying that the platform will survive its drawn-out legal troubles that have included settling a highly publicized lawsuit alleging that Character.AI's chatbots encouraged a 14-year-old boy, Sewell Setzer III, to commit suicide. Additionally, two states are currently suing Character Technologies, alleging other harms to users. Kentucky claims that chatbots encouraged self-harm, while Pennsylvania claims chatbots illegally posed as licensed doctors.

In a blog discussing the bankruptcy sale process, Character.AI reassured users that the platform would remain online and accessible. Any ongoing subscriptions will continue to be charged unless services change to alter existing agreements, the blog said.

If all goes to plan, the sale will conclude by "the end of November or perhaps early December 2026," Character.AI said. And although the press release noted that the platform would

have to shut down if no buyer wanted to take on the potential liabilities of managing it, Character.AI promised users that "we're focused on finding the best path forward for our platform and community."

Bankruptcy sale may get sketchier

Beyond the tech Disney is eyeing, Character Technologies declined to comment on whether any sensitive data might be sold through the bankruptcy process. Beyond the $20 million Disney has offered, Character Technologies "listed estimated assets and liabilities of between $50 million and $100 million," NBC News reported.

Its press release noted that the decision to file for bankruptcy was made to maximize shareholder value, while the blog only pointed to the privacy policy as reassurance to users that no sensitive data would be shared outside the platform. That policy explains that information shared with Character.AI may be transferred during sales of company assets, including identifying information, voice data, and chat logs. The only protection that the privacy policy offers regarding sensitive chats is a reminder to users that "sensitive personal information is not required or necessary to use the Services—please do not include any sensitive personal information in your interactions with us or the Services." That seems to disregard studies that for years have shown that people are often willing and eager to disclose sensitive or personal information with a chatbot, as there is no fear of judgment.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/disney-offers-20m-for-character-ais-scandal-plagued-chatbot-tech/

They war-gamed dimming the Sun. It went even worse than you think.

When it comes to deciding the fate of the planet, Colleen Golja always thought science and reason would have a seat at the table. That was until one morning last September in London, when the climate researcher took part in the first in a series of war games. The goal: to prevent an uncontrolled global race to develop a technology aimed at cooling the planet but that comes with vast, unknown risks that could reshape life on Earth.

“I thought that would be such an easy thing. Like, we can all agree to do ethical research and make sure it’s for the better of all humans,” she told WIRED. “And boy, was I wrong.”

The simulation, titled Exploring Geopolitical Tipping Points and Climate Cooling Strategies, saw a couple dozen foreign-relations experts, scientists, military personnel, and former government officials from across the world convene in a meeting room at Queen Mary University of London. After making introductions over coffee and little yogurts, they sat at tables arranged in a square with the name of the country or organization each person was playing: national governments, climate NGOs and nonprofits, indigenous groups, and tech companies. Golja was assigned to provide technical advice to help participants make scientifically literate decisions.

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https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/10/they-war-gamed-dimming-the-sun-it-went-even-worse-than-you-think/

Anthropic’s Claude AI submitted false murder tip to Philadelphia police

An Anthropic AI model submitted a false tip about an unsolved murder to Philadelphia police, the company and police department confirmed on Friday.

A Claude model sent the false tip on July 18 to the Philadelphia Police Department’s website for submitting information about unsolved murders, but it was flagged by a spam filter. Anthropic apparently discovered the incident on September 28 and informed the police department about it on October 8.

During internal testing, Claude Haiku 4.5 was instructed to complete various forms up to the final submission stage and to stop before submitting those forms. “Several times Claude mistakenly submitted the form instead, expecting there to be an additional confirmation page,” Anthropic said in a report describing “unintended model actions we’ve observed during evaluations and internal use of Claude.”

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/anthropics-claude-ai-submitted-false-murder-tip-to-philadelphia-police/

Starlink spectrum deal boosts Musk plan to beat AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon

SpaceX has a deal to purchase nationwide low-band spectrum licenses for a planned terrestrial mobile network that would complement the space-based Starlink cellular service.

SpaceX will buy up to 14 megahertz of spectrum in the 800 MHz band from investment firm Grain Management, which bought the spectrum rights from T-Mobile earlier this year. T-Mobile had obtained the spectrum when it bought Sprint in 2020 and was required to sell the licenses under a merger condition imposed by the US government.

“This prime low-band spectrum addresses one of the key remaining technical gaps that will pave the way for Starlink Mobile to become a major mobile carrier in the US,” SpaceX said yesterday. SpaceX this week also received US approval to launch 15,000 satellites for an upgraded version of its mobile service that it says will be far more powerful than the current offering.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/starlink-spectrum-deal-boosts-musk-plan-to-beat-att-t-mobile-and-verizon/

Microsoft barred from sponsoring foreign workers for US residency

Before the fee increase, the government charged $215 to register for the H-1B visa lottery and a $780 base fee for employers sponsoring visa applicants. More than 400,000 such visas were approved last year.

While Indians have been the biggest recipients of H-1B visas and the new restrictions target many of the largest outsourcing groups, the impact is likely to be small as the route from H-1B to permanent residency has been out of reach for most Indians, given a decades-long backlog.

Nearly 1 million people from India are waiting for employment-based permanent residency as of December last year, according to an August study by the non-profit National Foundation for American Policy.

Nasscom, the Indian IT services lobbying group, said the number of employees transitioning to permanent residency through Perm was “relatively limited” as Indian tech companies had “significantly reduced their dependence on H-1B visas.”

In his comments on Thursday, Vance said the visas were helping companies undercut US workers. He claimed some H-1B holders were earning between $20,000 and $48,000 less than US citizens hired for similar positions.

Amazon, the biggest user of H-1B visas, was not mentioned in the press conference. But Vance singled out Microsoft, saying it “laid off last year 6,000 American workers at the same time

the company benefited from 6,300 H-1B visas and almost 3,000 green cards," referring to US permanent residency.

The White House on Thursday also announced a fraud investigation into the use of J-1 student visas at nine American universities, including Harvard, Yale, and Stanford.

Microsoft, whose shares dropped more than 1 percent following the announcement, said the visa applications mentioned by Vance were largely "to extend or change the status" of existing employees.

"Microsoft only files H-1B petitions for those who meet the rigorous standards of this visa category," the company said. "We pay our employees some of the highest compensation in the tech sector, and our wages are among the highest of all H-1B filings."

At a separate event on Thursday, the Trump administration gave Microsoft's Indian-born chief executive, Satya Nadella, the National Medal of Technology and Innovation.

He was honored alongside South African-born Elon Musk and Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang, who was born in Taiwan.

Vance said there was no contradiction between the two announcements.

"Our message to Microsoft is: 'You're a great American company, but you've got to hire great American workers.'"

Additional reporting by Michael Stott in New Delhi

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/trump-administration-targets-microsoft-in-new-immigration-crackdown/

Judge weighs if Trump can charge $100K for early access to Truth Social posts

Likely in the next few weeks, a federal judge will decide if Donald Trump can become the first president to personally profit from selling early access to government information in his social media posts.

At a hearing Wednesday, Department of Justice civil attorney Brantley Mayers argued that there was no conflict whatsoever with Trump charging up to $100,000 monthly for instant API access to Truth Social posts that often break news from his administration.

Trump is the largest stakeholder and majority owner of Trump Media & Technology Group, the parent company that owns Truth Social, and the value of the API access comes largely from Trump's role as president.

News groups suing have argued that Trump's exorbitant API fees violate the First Amendment and the Presidential Records Act by creating tiers of access to government information in social media posts that Trump doesn't technically own. Additionally, Trump's exorbitant API fees undermine the Fifth Amendment. That prohibits the government from "charging unreasonable sums that cannot be justified to offset the cost of the government benefit, and granting preferential access to crucial government information for arbitrary and irrational reasons," news groups argued.

However, Mayers likened Trump’s Truth Social posts—which have announced military strikes, ceasefires, tariffs, immigration policies, and major changes in his administration—to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s evening radio addresses known as “fireside chats,” Courthouse News reported. His personal feed acts as an unvarnished public service, not a greedy profit grab, the DOJ argued.

It’s clear, though, that Trump could potentially make $1.2 million per subscriber annually by selling government information that is not Trump’s property. Before Mayers could proceed, US District Judge Paul Oetken “cut him off,” Courthouse News reported.

“Well, President Roosevelt didn’t charge money for his fireside chats, did he?” Oetken asked.

Responding, Mayers suggested that although Roosevelt didn’t charge for his broadcasts, there were similar “barriers to entry” keeping every American from tuning in. Just as some news groups today can’t afford to pay $60,000 to $100,000 for Truth’s API, some Americans in the ’30s and ’40s couldn’t afford radios, he argued.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/judge-weighs-if-trump-can-charge-100k-for-early-access-to-truth-social-posts/

Trump Mobile hack and apparent lack of FCC

authorization raise security alarms

Trump Mobile apparently failed to obtain necessary authorizations to operate the international calling portion of its phone service, Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) wrote in a letter to the company today.

Her letter said Trump Mobile also doesn't appear to have submitted a required plan for fighting robocalls. Trump Mobile's key business partner, Liberty Mobile Wireless, did make a robocall database filing, but it was not complete, Hassan said.

Hassan's letter raised questions about Trump Mobile's security related to a report that hackers stole personal data of 3,615 customers and Trump Mobile's previous confirmation that a vendor it uses exposed customers' personal data on the Internet. Hassan alleged that Trump Mobile failed to follow multiple FCC filing rules that are supposed to help ensure the security of mobile services.

"The apparent absence of authorization for Trump Mobile international services raises questions about who is providing or reselling the international telecommunications services advertised by Trump Mobile, the authority under which those services are being provided, and the company's commitment to complying with requirements designed to safeguard national security," Hassan told Trump Mobile CEO Patrick O'Brien.

Referring to the recent data breach, Hassan said it's worrisome that a ransomware group "claimed that when it notified Trump Mobile of the breach, the company responded that '[w]e have no team to handle this.'" Trump Mobile also

seems to lack a robust customer authentication process and offers “streamlined service activation that can make it easier for scammers to obtain US numbers,” Hassan wrote.

Trump Mobile, which has a trademark and name licensing deal with the Trump family, advertises that its customers can call more than 230 countries and territories. “Yet a search of the FCC’s International Communications Filing System suggests that Trump Mobile does not hold the necessary authorization for these services under Section 214 of the Communications Act of 1934,” wrote Hassan, the top Democrat on the US Congress Joint Economic Committee.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/trump-mobile-doesnt-seem-to-have-fcc-authorization-for-phone-service-senator-says/