Six Chinese AI firms accused of aggressively copying US frontier models

The United States has now named six Chinese AI firms accused of waging industrial-scale attacks distilling US frontier AI model capabilities and perhaps sparing billions in Chinese development costs.

In a joint release Tuesday, the National Security Agency (NSA), Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) alleged that DeepSeek, Moonshot AI, Alibaba, MiniMax, StepFun, and Z.AI have been attacking US models since at least late 2024. The firms “likely” acted with “Chinese government awareness” when extracting capabilities from US models, including variants of Claude, GPT, Gemini, and Grok, agencies said.

“China-based AI companies that conduct industrial-scale distillation against US AI models see significantly shorter AI development timelines and reduced financial expenditures in training a frontier model,” agencies said.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/six-chinese-ai-firms-accused-of-aggressively-copying-us-frontier-models/

Lawsuit: Amazon refused to give pregnant workers bathroom breaks and chairs

Amazon discriminated against pregnant warehouse employees by denying accommodations like bathroom breaks and the option to sit while working, according to a lawsuit filed yesterday by four women who worked for Amazon while pregnant. The lawsuit is a class-action complaint that seeks to represent Amazon workers throughout the US.

“Plaintiffs Willamina Barclay, Kristina Green, Jennifer Hatch, and Dazaria Parks were formerly Amazon warehouse employees,” said the lawsuit filed in US District Court for the Eastern District of New York. “All four became pregnant. All four asked Amazon for basic pregnancy-related accommodations so they could keep doing their jobs. Amazon denied them basic modifications the law recognizes pregnant workers regularly need, even in uncomplicated pregnancies: Bathroom breaks. An extra 15-minute break. Sitting instead of standing.”

The lawsuit said the four plaintiffs were unlawfully terminated from jobs at Amazon facilities in New York between April 2025 and July 2026. After the plaintiffs “took medically necessary breaks or absences to get off their feet, visit the doctor, or go to the emergency room, they were punished,” the lawsuit said. “Amazon deducted their limited bank of *un*paid time off. Soon enough, they had depleted that limited bank of ‘unpaid time off,’ and Amazon threatened to terminate them.”

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Supreme Court forces TV stations to sell more election ads at steep discounts

In a victory for Republican campaign committees, the Supreme Court issued an order on Friday that forces broadcast TV stations to cut the prices of election ads purchased by political parties and joint fundraising committees. The September 4 ruling came in response to a petition filed by the National Republican Congressional Committee and National Republican Senatorial Committee.

The Supreme Court order was issued just in time for the start of a 60-day period before the election, in which broadcasters are required by US law to offer ad discounts to individual candidates. Because of the top court's order, TV stations must also give their lowest ad rates to political parties and joint fundraising committees, which face fewer limits on how much money they can raise and spend.

The legally required discount is known as the "lowest unit charge," or LUC. A US law that applies to any licensed station that airs election ads requires that the lowest price be charged for "the use of any broadcasting station by any person who is a legally qualified candidate for any public office in connection with his campaign." The main legal question is whether "use… by" a candidate can refer to ad time purchased on a candidate's behalf by parties and joint fundraising committees.

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“This is the AI men actually use”: Meta ads pushed apps nudifying real teens

Meta took days to remove ads containing AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on Facebook and Instagram. Some ads featured photos of real kids, including a press photo of a young member of a European royal family and images swiped from a popular Instagram profile of a preteen girl deemed an influencer.

In an investigation published Tuesday, the Tech Transparency Project (TTP) reported that Meta failed to detect 332 ads containing CSAM this year. The “vast majority” of ads promoted AI apps made in China, while many ads promoted so-called “nudify” apps that make it easy for bad actors to use AI and digitally alter images of children.

TTP matched “multiple CSAM ads to photos of real children that appeared online.” These ads seem to violate federal child pornography laws, since the Justice Department has clarified that AI CSAM is just as harmful as CSAM. The young royal’s image was “animated into a video of her performing a graphic sex act,” TTP found. Other ads animated a photo of a 14-year-old Instagram influencer “showing off her new sports club uniform” into “a video of her performing oral sex.” A third “preteen” victim “posing in a pink athletic outfit with

pigtails” in a series of stock photos was morphed into a video where she looks frightened as she’s molested by an adult male, TTP reported.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/real-photos-of-young-girls-were-in-nudify-app-ads-on-facebook-instagram/

Musk wins court order to block use of “Twitter,” but not “tweet” and bird logo

On Thursday, Elon Musk’s X won a court order blocking Operation Bluebird from launching a new app taking over the Twitter name.

In his opinion, Chief Judge Colm Connolly explained that Operation Bluebird was unlikely to prove that X had entirely abandoned the Twitter name. Therefore, X was likely to succeed on trademark infringement and dilution claims tied to the platform’s former name.

Most compellingly, X argued that it still uses the Twitter name in the current listing for the X app in Apple’s App Store. In the first sentence of that listing, written in the same size font as the rest of the text, a single clause clinched the early court win for X by stating, “Welcome to X (formerly known as Twitter).”

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Spending deal comes with a bonus: Blocking political control of grants

On Tuesday, the House of Representatives passed a stopgap measure that would continue funding the US government through early December. While the measure still requires the signature of President Trump, it’s widely expected that he will act to avoid a government shutdown immediately before the midterm elections.

This is a normal part of how the US government has operated in recent years, as it’s often difficult to build the political support needed to pass a full year’s budget in advance. In fact, dissent within the House’s Republican caucus prevented them from agreeing on their own measure to keep the government open; instead, the House simply adopted a version of the spending bill that had previously passed the Senate.

From the perspective of scientists and their supporters, that adoption turned out to be a very good thing, because the Senate’s budget bill, passed in early August, contains a provision that blocks the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) from implementing new rules that would give political appointees full control over what science is funded and allow them to cancel any grant at any time. The proposed rule has been widely decried as catastrophic for science, and it faced

widespread opposition from scientific and health-focused organizations.

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https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/09/budget-deal-puts-political-control-of-grants-on-hold-until-december/

FCC plans robocall scorecard to grade phone companies on spam call blocking

The Federal Communications Commission today said it will create a robocall mitigation scorecard to rate phone companies on how effectively they block illegal spam calls.

The scorecards could include call-blocking statistics along with data on customer complaints and enforcement actions. The FCC said scorecards could grade providers on a number scale, with letter grades, or by classifying providers as low risk, medium risk, or high risk.

“The Scorecard will empower consumers and encourage providers to continue to combat illegal robocalls by providing the public with an assessment of the effectiveness of voice service providers’ efforts to protect consumers from illegal robocalls,” the FCC Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau said in a public notice.

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Trump may be forced to reveal secret rules feds use for AI safety testing

Four federal agencies have been sued amid calls to release information about the secret framework that the Trump administration uses to conduct safety reviews of frontier AI models prior to release.

In a Wednesday press release announcing the lawsuit, a nonpartisan nonprofit called Protect Democracy alleged that “almost no details” have been released to the public or Congress. To everyone except a few vague “trusted partners,” it remains unclear what the government’s review process looks like, which companies are involved in constructing the framework, or what legal authority Trump officials have to conduct the reviews.

“Neither the identities of those entities nor the criteria by which they were selected have been made public,” Protect Democracy said.

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FTC alleges Amazon illegally made $20 billion by rigging billions of ad auctions

The Federal Trade Commission and 22 states sued Amazon yesterday, alleging that it has conducted a secret scheme to overcharge advertisers for seven years.

“Since 2019, Amazon.com, Inc. has secretly and systematically overcharged its approximately 1.2 million advertising customers by manipulating the ‘auctions’ that it uses to set the price of ads on its platform,” the lawsuit said. “Amazon represents, and advertisers believe, that competitive auctions set the prices for advertising on its leading e-commerce website. But, in reality, Amazon overrides and replaces the actual auction results with higher prices set by Amazon to increase its profits.”

The FTC said it obtained internal documents and messages that reveal how Amazon secretly inflated auction prices for Sponsored Products, Sponsored Brands, and Sponsored Display advertisements that appear alongside results seen by consumers when they search for a product. The FTC investigation began in 2024.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/ftc-alleges-amazon-illegally-made-20-billion-by-rigging-billions-of-ad-auctions/

X wants to keep suing advertisers, asks 5th Circuit to overrule district judge

Asking the 5th Circuit to reverse Boyle, X argued that advertisers colluded to boycott X, "eliminat[ing] the independent decision-making that would otherwise force each firm to weigh the competitive benefits of continuing to advertise on the platform, suppressing competitive rivalries and insulating the boycott from market forces. The group boycott targeting X thus distorts competition in multiple markets in clear contravention of the antitrust laws."

X's claims relate to the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM), an initiative by the World Federation of Advertisers to define violent and obscene content and help advertisers create brand-safety guidelines. The ad industry shut down Garm after Musk filed the lawsuit in 2024, though law professors described X's legal case as a weak one.

X's filing yesterday said that GARM "exercised collective power through its rules for membership. As a condition of joining GARM, members agree[d] to adopt GARM solutions to improve business operations.' For GARM's advertiser and advertising agency members, that meant agreeing to enforce the implementation of the Brand Safety Standards by the social-media platforms from which they purchased advertising."

X’s big ad revenue drop

X, then called Twitter, suffered a large drop in advertising revenue after Musk bought the company in October 2022 and made major changes to content moderation. Advertisers stayed away, worried that ads would appear next to antisemitic posts, misinformation, and other objectionable content.

Specific numbers on X ad revenue were hard to come by the past few years because Musk took the company private when he bought Twitter. But X Corp. is now a subsidiary of SpaceX, which recently went public and must report earnings.

SpaceX’s earnings report this week said the company made $367 million in advertising revenue in Q2 2026, down from $426 million in Q2 2025. For the first six months of 2026, ad revenue was $710 million, down from $870 million in the first six months of 2025.

Twitter reported much higher ad revenue before being bought by Musk. “X’s current quarterly ad revenue has dropped even more drastically compared to the last quarter before Musk bought the popular social-media platform,” MediaPost reported. “In the second quarter of 2022, Twitter reported $1.08 billion in ad revenue, roughly $713 million more than Q2 2026.”

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/08/elon-musks-x-isnt-done-suing-advertisers-asks-court-to-revive-boycott-case/