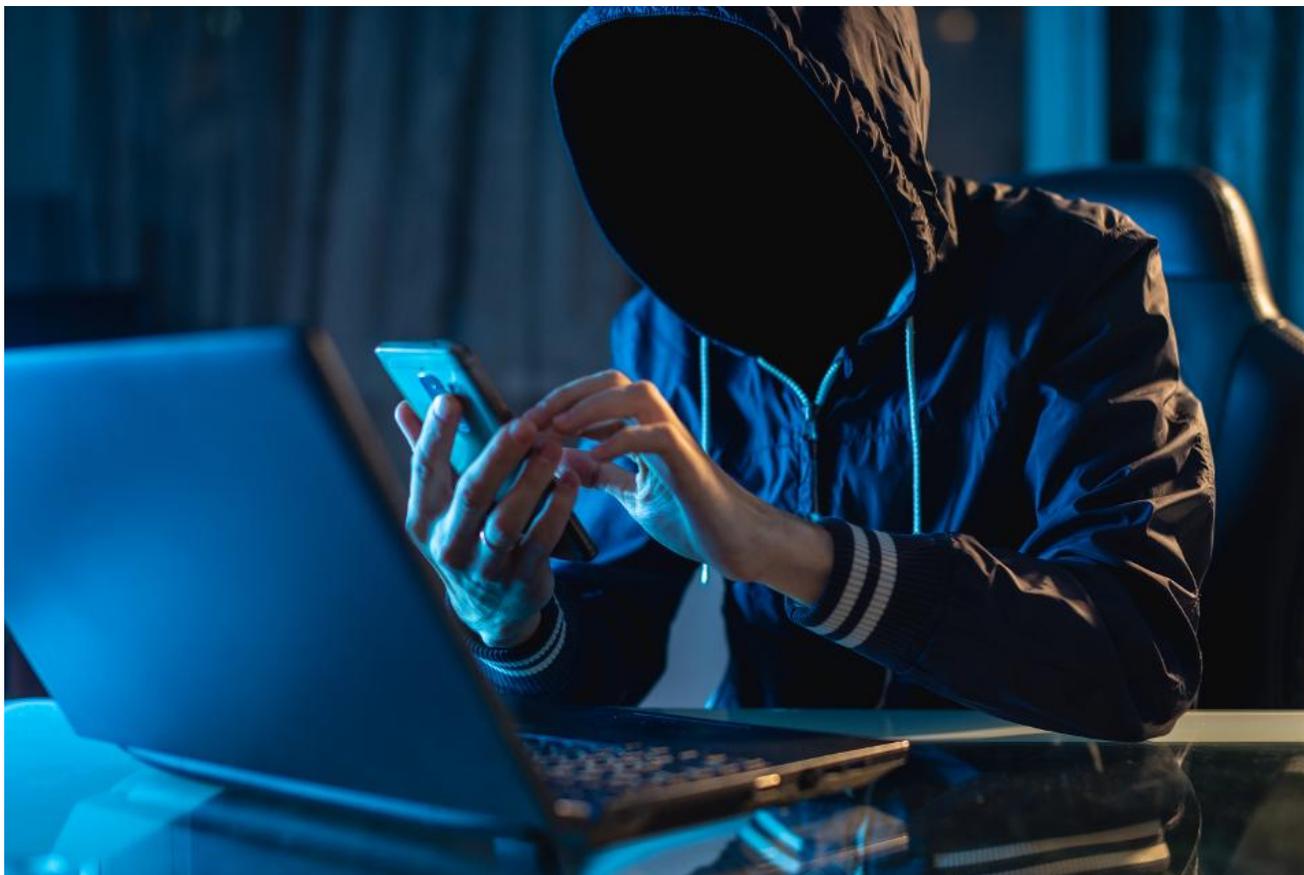


A Voice Deepfake Was Used To Scam A CEO Out Of \$243,000

F forbes.com/sites/jessedamiani/2019/09/03/a-voice-deepfake-was-used-to-scam-a-ceo-out-of-243000

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Anonymous hacker programmer uses a laptop to hack the system in the dark. Creation and infection of ... [+] Getty

It's the first noted instance of an artificial intelligence-generated voice deepfake used in a scam.

Phone scams are nothing new, but the mark usually isn't an accomplished CEO.

According to a new report in *The Wall Street Journal*, the CEO of an unnamed UK-based energy firm believed he was on the phone with his boss, the chief executive of firm's the German parent company, when he followed the orders to immediately transfer €220,000 (approx. \$243,000) to the bank account of a Hungarian supplier.

In fact, the voice belonged to a fraudster using AI voice technology to spoof the German chief executive. Rüdiger Kirsch of Euler Hermes Group SA, the firm's insurance company, shared the information with WSJ. He explained that the CEO recognized the subtle German accent in his boss's voice—and moreover that it carried the man's “melody.”

According to Kirsch, the of yet unidentified fraudster called the company three times: the first to initiate the transfer, the second to falsely claim it had been reimbursed, and a third time seeking a followup payment. It was at this point that the victim grew skeptical; he could see that the purported reimbursement had not gone through, and he noticed that the the call had been made from an Austrian phone number.

While he did not send a second payment, the first had already transferred, which was moved from the Hungarian bank account to one in Mexico, and then disbursed to other locations.

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Earlier this summer, researchers from Dessa, an AI company based in Toronto, [produced a simulation](#) of popular podcaster and comedian Joe Rogan's voice:

Kirsch told WSJ that he believes commercial software in the vein of that used by Dessa was used to spoof the German executives voice—which, if true, makes this the first known instance of AI voice mimicry being used for fraud (though it is of course possible other such instances have occurred).

The fraud in question purportedly occurred in March, two months before Dessa's video went viral.

Because no suspects have been identified, little is known about what software they used or how they gathered the voice data necessary to spoof the German executive—but this case reveals one of the many possible ways machine learning can be weaponized.



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