

Fake, apparently AI-made image of a Pentagon explosion spreads on Twitter as stocks briefly dip

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Source: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/pentagon-explosion-photo-twitter/>

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Fact Check

Fake Pentagon Explosion Pic Goes Viral On Twitter

The picture may have been generated by artificial intelligence (AI). In the past, these fakes were usually created with tools like Adobe Photoshop.

Jordan Liles

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Image courtesy of Twitter

Claim:

A photograph shows an explosion that occurred near the Pentagon on the morning of May 22, 2023.

Rating:

False

About this rating

Context

The photo was fake. No such explosion occurred, according to local authorities.

A fake photograph of an explosion at the Pentagon in Washington that was virally shared on Twitter may have caused the stock market to briefly take a slight dip. The picture went viral on the social media platform on the morning of May 22, 2023. The photo may have originally been generated by artificial intelligence (AI) technology. It was reshared by a number of prominent accounts.

The Arlington County Fire Department in Virginia confirmed on their specially-designated "government or multilateral organization account" that no such explosion had taken place.

According to Insider.com , the stock market happened to fall 0.26% four minutes after one prominent user tweeted the fake news. Bear in mind that all of this happened on a Monday morning, the beginning of the week for Wall Street. Still, the market "quickly bounced back," the reporting said.

Any rumors that claimed the market took a massive hit because of the photo or the false news were not true.

As the news and fake picture went viral, it was shared by Russian state-backed media outlet RT. The tweet was deleted minutes later.

The RT account tweeted there had been "reports" of an explosion, apparently without doing any due diligence to verify the news on their own.

The news of the explosion that never happened also appeared on TV on India's Republic Media Network.

Additionally, a number of users who paid for Twitter Blue shared the news. The paid service provides accounts various perks, including a blue checkmark.

In one case, an account named @BloombergFeed, whose owner had paid for Twitter Blue, tweeted the news. However, despite its handle, this user had no affiliation with Bloomberg News. The account has since been suspended.

In the past, blue checkmarks were not for sale to the general public. They were only handed out to a select number of accounts, many who could have been considered prominent people or authoritative sources.

After Elon Musk completed his purchase of Twitter, policies were put into place that made it so anyone could purchase the checkmark symbol to be placed on their account with Twitter Blue . To some users, this perhaps gave a broad and false sense of trust of authority to tweets from "verified" accounts.

Sources

@ArlingtonVaFD. "@PFPAOfficial and the ACFD Are Aware of a Social Media Report Circulating Online about an Explosion near the Pentagon. There Is NO Explosion or Incident Taking Place at or near the Pentagon Reservation, and There Is No Immediate Danger or Hazards to the Public." Twitter , 22 May 2023, <https://twitter.com/ArlingtonVaFD/status/1660653619954294786>. Cohen, Rebecca. "An Apparently AI-Generated Hoax of an Explosion at the Pentagon Went Viral Online — and Markets Briefly Dipped." Insider , 22 May 2023, <https://www.insider.com/ai-generated-hoax-explosion-pentagon-viral-markets-dipped-2023-5>.

By Jordan Liles

Jordan Liles is a Senior Reporter who has been with Snopes since 2016.

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