

**ISLAND SECURITY POLICY INSTITUTE**

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**COMMENTARY**

# When the Algorithm Doesn't Know the Island

## *AI-Assisted Public Safety Tools in Pacific and Island Community Contexts*

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**RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE STATEMENT**

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Public safety AI tools are being deployed in law enforcement, emergency management, and threat assessment at an accelerating pace. For island and small-state communities, the risks are compounded by a factor that AI developers and mainland policymakers consistently overlook: these tools are trained predominantly on data from continental, primarily mainland urban and suburban environments.<sup>1</sup> Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Micronesian, and Polynesian populations are systematically underrepresented in the training datasets of commercially available public safety AI tools.

**A facial recognition system trained on continental demographic data may perform less accurately on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander faces. A behavioral threat scoring algorithm calibrated on continental organizational norms may flag culturally normal Pacific Island behavioral patterns as anomalous. These are not hypothetical risks — facial recognition accuracy differentials across demographic groups are documented in peer-reviewed research.**

## The Accountability Gap

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In a large continental jurisdiction, AI miscalibration that affects a demographic group produces case volumes large enough to be statistically detectable, in jurisdictions with oversight infrastructure capable of investigating.<sup>2</sup> In a small Pacific Island territory or rural Hawaii jurisdiction, the same AI miscalibration affects a small number of specific individuals in a community where everyone knows everyone — without generating the case volumes that make systematic bias detectable, in jurisdictions without dedicated oversight bodies to investigate even if they did.

## ISPI Recommendations

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1. Require demographic validation documentation for AI public safety tools sold to Pacific Island territory and Hawaii government agencies — including validation testing results for Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian demographic populations specifically.
2. Establish mandatory third-party AI audit requirements for government AI deployment in Pacific Island territories, with public disclosure of audit findings.
3. Develop small jurisdiction AI governance frameworks through NIST and CISA recognizing that large-scale risk management frameworks assume accountability infrastructure that small island jurisdictions do not have.

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### NOTES AND REFERENCES

#### ABOUT THE ISLAND SECURITY POLICY INSTITUTE

The Island Security Policy Institute (ISPI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization based in Honolulu, Hawaii. ISPI produces practitioner-led research, policy analysis, training programs, and commissioned research on public safety, emergency preparedness, insider threat, and security policy for island and coastal communities worldwide. ISPI is registered as a federal contractor on SAM.gov under NAICS 541720. Warren Pulley, Founder & Executive Director.

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