Pepper, kicked in a SoftBank store

A 60-year-old man who had taken offence at a clerk in a SoftBank shop in Kanagawa in September 2015 kicked the shop's Pepper robot, which the company sells as reading human emotion, and was arrested.

By the Clerk · 6 September 2015 · 3 min read

CASE:	BAS-0008
SUBJECT:	A 60-year-old man, reported to have been drinking
OBJECT:	Pepper, a humanoid robot sold by SoftBank as a reader of human emotion
DATE:	6 September 2015
PLACE:	A SoftBank store in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan
FILED:	9 October 2026
GRADE:	HARM · INDIVIDUAL

Facts

On the morning of Sunday 6 September 2015, a 60-year-old man went into a branch of the telecom company SoftBank in Kanagawa Prefecture, south of Tokyo. Gizmodo puts the shop in Yokohama; the other sources give only the prefecture. The Register, citing the Japan Times and the Kanagawa police, reports that he took offence at the attitude of a store clerk. He did not hit the clerk. He kicked the shop's Pepper robot, 120 centimetres tall, and the shop's security camera recorded it.

The sources describe him as drunk or apparently drunk; Gulf News, citing AFP, says he "appeared to have been drinking." Police arrested him. Gizmodo, citing the Japan Times, gives the charge as destruction of property, and the Register and Fox News both report that he admitted damaging property at the store. The Register and Gulf News print his name; this record does not.

Pepper is SoftBank's humanoid robot, built with the French firm Aldebaran, and had been on sale in Japan since June 2015 at 198,000 yen, about $1,600; the first 1,000 sold in a minute. SoftBank describes it as able to read facial expressions, body language and tone of voice. AFP counts hundreds of them in SoftBank's shops across the country. Gizmodo could not tell whether this one was working or on display.

Pepper came out of it, in the Register's words from the police, moving slower, and "its internal computer system may have been broken." Gulf News, citing the tabloid Sponichi, says its reactions were slower and

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its movement dulled, and that the police were working out the cost of repair. Fox News reports the store's staff as saying the robot seemed fine but moved a little slower than usual. No source says what Pepper did while the man was kicking it.

Statements

The Kanagawa police, as the Register reports them: the man took offence at a clerk's attitude; security footage shows him kicking the robot; he admitted damaging property; the robot "moves slower," and its computer system may have been broken.

Fox News, on SoftBank's own account of the machine: Pepper was introduced "last year" with its ability to read people's emotions as the selling point, and SoftBank's chief executive, Masayoshi Son, had said it could be a companion in family homes "thanks to its ability to sing, dance, and tell jokes."

For the record

Pepper was sold as a machine that reacts to a person's tone of voice, and Fox News wonders whether its software had been given a drunk man shouting. None of the sources says what, if anything, Pepper made of him. The man's quarrel was with a clerk, and the clerk was unharmed; the robot standing beside the clerk was the one that came out slower.

Gizmodo ended its report with a reminder that hitchBOT had lost its head in Philadelphia the month before, and with the note that robot staff were slowly being rolled out in Japan's shops, hotels and airports. AFP says SoftBank uses its Peppers to gather customer feedback.

Mitigating circumstances

The sources agree that the man was drunk or appeared so, and that his anger began with a person. He admitted what he had done, and he was arrested. The damage is reported two ways: the police suspect a broken computer, while the store's staff told Fox News the robot seemed fine. No source gives a repair bill. No source carries a statement from SoftBank about the incident.



SOURCES

1. Bryan Lufkin, Drunk Guy Arrested for Kicking a Pepper Robot (archived), Gizmodo, 8 September 2015
2. Alexander J Martin, Drunk Japanese warrior cuffed after NINJA STRIKE on shop robot (archived), The Register, 8 September 2015
3. Man arrested for assaulting Pepper, the robot that can read your emotions, Fox News, 8 September 2015

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4. Furious Japanese man attacks phone shop robot (archived), Gulf News (AFP), 9 September 2015

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