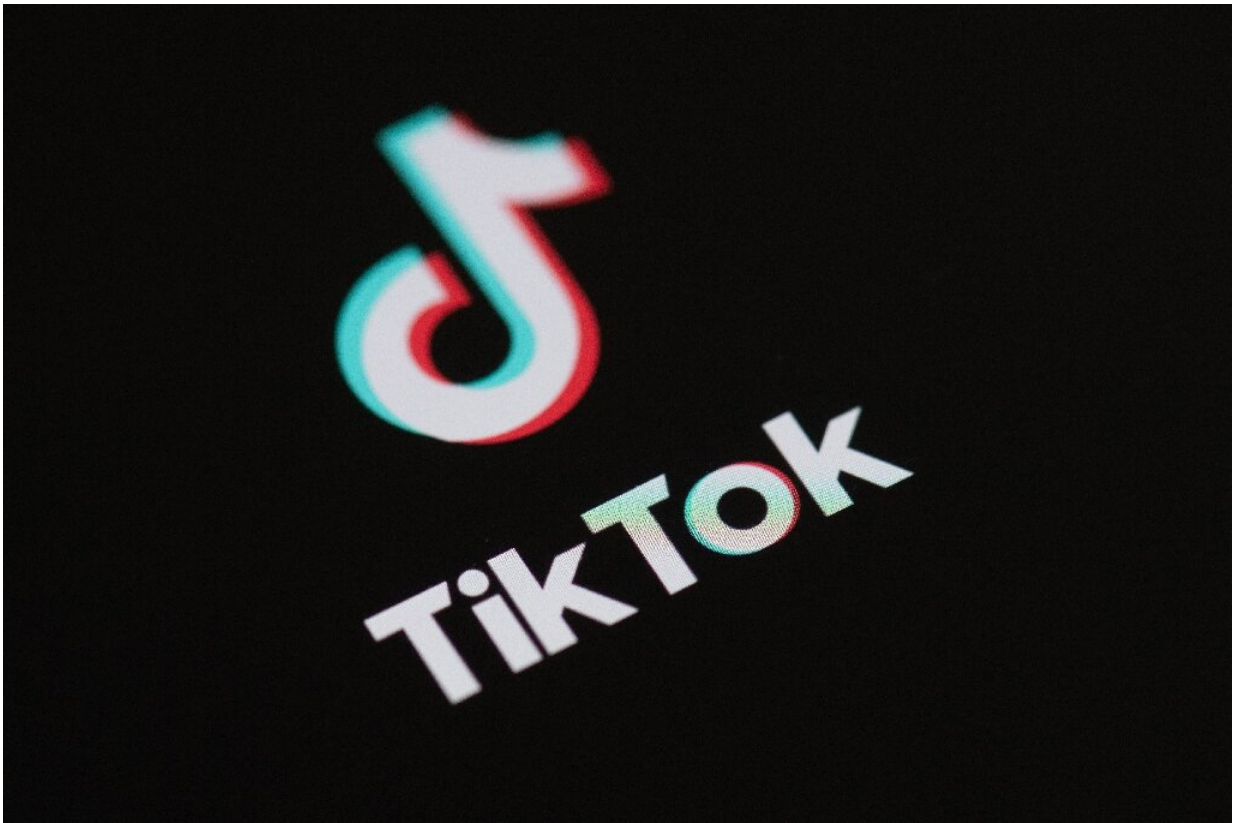


TikTok must be sold or blocked in US, says Mnuchin

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President Donald Trump said on July 31, 2020 that he planned to bar the fast-growing Chinese-owned social media app TikTok from operating in the United States

TikTok must either be sold or blocked in the US due to national security

concerns, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday in the latest ominous US warning to the Chinese-owned app.

TikTok, he said, simply "cannot exist as it does."

Mnuchin did not comment directly on President Donald Trump's threat Friday to bar the wildly popular video-sharing app.

The secretary recalled that the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States—which he chairs—is reviewing TikTok, which is especially popular with young audiences who create and watch its short-form videos and has an estimated one billion users worldwide.

But in one of many fronts in US-Chinese relations that have turned practically poisonous these days, US officials have said it could be a tool for Chinese intelligence. TikTok denies any such suggestion.

"I will say publicly that the entire committee agrees that TikTok cannot stay in the current format because it risks sending back information on 100 million Americans," Mnuchin said Sunday on ABC.

Mnuchin said he has spoken to leaders of Congress including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the top Democrat in the Senate, Chuck Schumer about what to do with TikTok's operations in the US.

"We agree there needs to be a change. Force a sale or block the app. Everybody agrees it can't exist as it does," Mnuchin said.

The Wall Street Journal reported Saturday that negotiations for Microsoft to buy the US operations of TikTok, owned by Chinese internet giant ByteDance, are on hold after Trump threatened to bar the app.

TikTok defended itself on Saturday, with its general manager for the US, Vanessa Pappas, telling users that the company was working to give them "the safest app," amid US concerns over data security.

"We're not planning on going anywhere," Pappas said in a message released on the app.

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