

Activision says it fired dozens over harassment allegations

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Bobby Kotick, chief executive officer of Activision Blizzard in 2019.

The video game giant Activision Blizzard said Monday it has fired nearly 40 employees and disciplined more than 40 others since July as it deals with allegations of sexual harassment and other misconduct.

Over the past seven months the company has received about 700 reports of employee concerns over sexual assault or harassment or other misconduct, in some cases separate reports about the same incident, The Wall Street Journal reported.

A summary of the personnel action that the maker of "Call of Duty," "World of Warcraft" and other blockbuster games has taken was scheduled to be released before the winter holidays, the Journal said.

But CEO Bobby Kotick delayed the release, arguing that it would make the company's workplace problems look even bigger than they were known to be, the paper added.

Activision denied as "simply inaccurate" the allegation that Kotick held up the report, in a statement prompted by the Journal story.

"An interim update to our employees is still being worked on, and the company remains committed to continuing to provide periodic updates on its progress," the statement said.

It said the company has completed reviews of 90 percent of the complaints it has received since July—it did not say how many there were—and that "37 employees have exited the company and another 44 received written reprimands, formal warnings or other discipline."

In July, California state regulators accused the company of condoning a culture of harassment, a toxic work environment, and inequality.

In September the Securities and Exchange Commission launched a probe into the company over "disclosures regarding employment matters and related issues."

And two months later the Journal reported that Kotick, accused of

mishandling the harassment complaints, had signaled he would consider stepping down if he failed to quickly fix the company culture. He has led the company for more than three decades.

Nearly 20 percent of Activision Blizzard's 9,500 employees have signed a petition calling for Kotick to resign.

The Journal said the company is under pressure from shareholders and business partners for more accountability over its handling of misconduct issues.

Late last year chief operating officer Daniel Alegre pledged a 50 percent increase in female and non-binary staff over the next five years so that they will account for more than a third of Activision's workers.

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