

TikTok says Oracle to keep US user data safe

June 17 2022



TikTok says it is working to 'fully pivot' to having Oracle handle US user data.

TikTok on Friday said Oracle will store all the data from its US users, in a bid to allay fears about its safety in the hands of a platform owned by ByteDance in China.

The announcement came as the popular video snippet sharing service

fended off concerns about the ability of engineers in China to access information about US users that isn't public.

ByteDance employees have repeatedly accessed information about US TikTok users, according to a BuzzFeed news report citing leaked audio from TikTok in-house meetings.

It is common for some engineers at internet firms to be granted access to data, and TikTok told AFP it is trying to minimize that kind of system privilege.

"Similar to industry peers, we will continue to drive our goal of limiting the number of employees who have access to user data and the scenarios where data access is enabled," TikTok chief information security officer Roland Cloutier said in a blog post highlighted by the company.

"Our goal is to minimize data access across regions so that, for example, employees in the (Asia Pacific) region, including China, would have very minimal access to user data from the EU and US."

TikTok has been adamant that it has never given US user data to Chinese officials and that it would refuse if asked to do so.

Last month, TikTok created a new US data security devoted to strengthening protection policies and protocols to safeguard user information, a TikTok spokesperson told AFP.

"We've brought in world class internal and external security experts to help us strengthen our data security efforts," the spokesperson said.



TikTok, owned by ByteDance in China, is looking to have Silicon Valley based Oracle manage data gathered about US users in an effort to allay concerns it will fall into the hands of Chinese officials.

TikTok will continue to use its own datacenters in Virginia and Singapore to backup information as it works to "fully pivot" to relying on Oracle in the United States, it said in a post.

"We know we are among the most scrutinized platforms from a security standpoint, and we aim to remove any doubt about the security of US user data," said Albert Calamug, who handles US security public policy at TikTok.

President Joe Biden last year revoked executive orders from his

predecessor Donald Trump seeking to ban Chinese-owned apps TikTok and WeChat from US markets on national security concerns.

Trump had given his blessing to a plan that would have given TikTok to US tech giant Oracle with investments from retail powerhouse Walmart, but that deal failed to win approval in Beijing.

Biden's new executive order nixed the unimplemented ban and called for "an evidence-based analysis to address the risks" from internet applications controlled by foreign entities.

WeChat, part of Chinese tech giant Tencent, is a "super app" which includes social networking, messaging, e-commerce and more.

TikTok revealed late last year that it had a billion users worldwide.

"Today, 100 percent of US user traffic is being routed to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure," Calamug said.

"In addition, we're working closely with Oracle to develop data management protocols that Oracle will audit and manage to give users even more peace of mind."

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Citation: TikTok says Oracle to keep US user data safe (2022, June 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2022-06-tiktok-oracle-user-safe.html>

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