

UK bans TikTok on government phones on security grounds

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The icon for the video sharing TikTok app is seen on a smartphone, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, in Marple Township, Pa. TikTok was dismissive Wednesday, March 15, of reports that the Biden administration was calling for its Chinese owners to sell their stakes in the popular video-sharing app, saying such a move wouldn't help protect national security. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Slocum, File

British authorities said Thursday that they are banning the Chinese-owned video-sharing app TikTok from government mobile phones on security grounds, following [similar moves by the U.S. and European Union](#).

Cabinet Office minister Oliver Dowden told Parliament that the ban applies with immediate effect to work phones and other devices used by government ministers and civil servants. He described the ban as a "precautionary move," and said it does not apply to personal phones and devices.

"Given the particular risk around government devices, which may contain [sensitive information](#), it is both prudent and proportionate to restrict the use of certain apps, particularly when it comes to apps where a large amount of data can be stored and accessed," Dowden told British lawmakers.

The U.S. government mandated last month that employees of federal agencies have to delete TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices. Congress, the White House, U.S. armed forces and more than half of U.S. states already had banned the app.

The [European Union](#), [Belgium](#) and others have also temporarily banned the app from employee phones.

The moves were prompted by growing concerns that TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, would give [user data](#) such as browsing history and location to the Chinese government, or push propaganda and misinformation on its behalf.

The company has insisted that such concerns are based on "misinformation" and said it was taking steps to boost protection of user data from the U.K. and Europe.

"We believe these bans have been based on fundamental misconceptions and driven by wider geopolitics, in which TikTok and our millions of users in the U.K, play no part," the company said. "We remain committed to working with the government to address any concerns but should be judged on facts and treated equally to our competitors."

China accused the United States on Thursday of spreading disinformation and suppressing TikTok following reports that the Biden administration was calling for the short-form video service's Chinese owners to sell their stakes in the popular app.

Last year, Britain's Parliament shut down its TikTok account, which was intended to reach younger audiences, just days after its launch after lawmakers raised concerns.

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