

US opens national security probe of Chinese-owned app TikTok: report

2 November 2019



US authorities are reportedly investigating national security concerns around TikTok, a popular short-form video-sharing app

The US government has opened a national security investigation into the Chinese-owned video app TikTok, the New York Times reported Friday.

The report, citing anonymous sources, said the [review](#) by an [intergovernmental panel](#) may be looking into whether the app, popular for its [music videos](#), was sending data to China.

The investigation is led by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, a government panel that reviews acquisitions in the United States by [foreign companies](#), the report said.

The news comes after lawmakers called for a review of the national security risks of TikTok, warning it could be used for spying by Beijing.

A review could look into the acquisition in 2017 of TikTok, which at the time was known as Musical.ly, by Beijing-based ByteDance.

The deal gave the Chinese company the app, which has been popular with youth for homemade karaoke videos and which now has an estimated 500 million users worldwide.

Senator Marco Rubio welcomed news about the review.

"Last month I asked @USTreasury to conduct a CFIUS review of @tiktok_us," Rubio tweeted.

"Because any platform owned by a company in #China which collects massive amounts of data on Americans is a potential serious threat to our country."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer and Republican Senator Tom Cotton last week suggested that TikTok's owner ByteDance could be forced to share user information with Chinese intelligence.

"With over 110 million downloads in the US alone, TikTok is a potential counterintelligence threat we cannot ignore," the two senators said in a letter to acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire.

The senators also warned that TikTok could potentially be used to influence voters in next year's election in the same way Russians manipulated US social media in the 2016 campaign.

Queried by AFP, TikTok said it could not comment on any regulatory matter but noted that it "has made clear that we have no higher priority than earning the trust of users and regulators in the US."

Last week, TikTok sought to distance itself from China, saying "we are not influenced by any foreign government, including the Chinese government."

The company's data centers are located outside China and "none of our data is subject to Chinese

law," it said.

The US Treasury, which coordinates CFIUS reviews, said it could not comment on whether or not a review was in the works.

"By law, information filed with CFIUS may not be disclosed by CFIUS to the public," a Treasury spokesman said.

© 2019 AFP

APA citation: US opens national security probe of Chinese-owned app TikTok: report (2019, November 2) retrieved 19 August 2022 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2019-11-national-probe-chinese-owned-app-tiktok.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.