

Trump order targets Chinese internet stars TikTok, WeChat

7 August 2020



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US President Donald Trump on Thursday ordered sweeping restrictions against Chinese-owned social media stars TikTok and WeChat, which could strangle their ability to operate in the United States.

Trump's executive order, which takes effect in 45 days, bars anyone under US jurisdiction from doing business with TikTok or WeChat's owners.

It heaps pressure on ByteDance, TikTok's parent, to close negotiations to sell to Microsoft and further escalates the Trump administration's multi-front confrontation with Beijing.

Trump's order cites a threat to "national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States" in taking aim at the companies.

"TikTok automatically captures vast swaths of

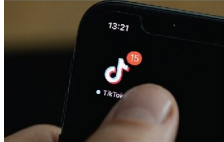
information from its users, including Internet and other network activity information such as location data and browsing and search histories," the order contended.

Data from TikTok could potentially be used by China to track the locations of federal employees and contractors, build dossiers on people for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage, the order alleged.

The TikTok [mobile app](#) has been downloaded some 175 million times in the US and more than a billion times around the world.

The US Senate voted Thursday to bar TikTok from being downloaded onto US government employees' telephones, intensifying US scrutiny of the popular Chinese-owned video app.

TikTok Social networking app



- Estimated **800 million** monthly active users
- **57%** of TikTok/Douyin users live in China
- **36%** of TikTok users live elsewhere in Asia
- **India was top market** for TikTok downloads outside of China in 2019 with 323 mln
- Estimated **2.2 billion** downloads worldwide
- **46 million US TikTok downloads** in 2019
- More than **\$90.7 million** user spending in June 2020

Chinese ownership
Released worldwide by Chinese company ByteDance in Aug 2018

Maintains a separate app for the Chinese market, known as Douyin, started Sep 2016

Available in 39 languages

Wanted in the US

US President Donald Trump has given ByteDance 6 weeks to sell its US operations to an American company

Said it would be "out of business" otherwise

Claims the US treasury will be owed a percentage of the purchase price "because we're making it possible"

The app has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds for being legally bound in China to share the personal data it collects with authorities if they demand it

AFP Source: businessofapps.com/Hootsuite/We Are Social/Sensor Tower

Factfile on Chinese video-sharing social networking app TikTok.

The bill passed by the Republican controlled Senate now goes to the House of Representatives, led by Democrats.

Several US agencies already bar employees from

downloading TikTok onto their phones.

Trump and other officials have argued the app could be used for Chinese espionage, a claim repeatedly denied by TikTok, which does not operate within China.

Trump, who has locked horns with China on a range of issues including trade and the coronavirus pandemic, has set a deadline of mid-September for TikTok to be acquired by a US firm or be banned in the United States.

Microsoft has expanded its talks on TikTok to a potential deal that would include buying the global operations of the fast-growing video-sharing app, the Financial Times reported Thursday.

Microsoft declined to comment on the report, after previously disclosing it was considering a deal for TikTok operations in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

TikTok's kaleidoscopic feeds of short video clips feature everything from hair dye tutorials to dance routines and jokes about daily life.



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The company on Thursday announced plans for its first data center for European users, to be set up in

Ireland.

WeChat is a messaging, social media, and electronic payment platform owned by TenCent Holdings and is reported to have more than a billion users.

Trump's order contended that WeChat captures user data that could then be exploited by the Chinese government but provided no evidence that is happening.

"WeChat captures the personal and proprietary information of Chinese nationals visiting the United States," the order read.

"Thereby allowing the Chinese Communist Party a mechanism for keeping tabs on Chinese citizens who may be enjoying the benefits of a free society for the first time in their lives."

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APA citation: Trump order targets Chinese internet stars TikTok, WeChat (2020, August 7) retrieved 27 November 2020 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-08-trump-chinese-internet-stars-tiktok.html>

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