

TikTok ramps up defense against US accusations

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The popular video-snippet app TikTok is stepping up a campaign against what it called "rumors and misinformation" about its links to the Chinese government

TikTok has stepped up its defense against US accusations that the popular video app is a national security threat, denouncing what it called "rumors and misinformation" about its links to the Chinese government.

The video-snippet sharing service launched an online information hub on Monday after President Donald Trump gave its Chinese parent firm a 90-day deadline to divest TikTok before the app is banned in the United States.

A previous executive order, prohibiting US entities from doing business with TikTok, will take effect 45 days after August 6.

On a web page titled "The Last Sunny Corner of the Internet," TikTok maintained it was setting the record straight about the platform.

"TikTok has never provided any US user data to the Chinese government, nor would it do so if asked," the company said in the post.

"Any insinuation to the contrary is unfounded and blatantly false."

US user data is stored here, with a backup in Singapore, according to TikTok.

The company, owned by China-based ByteDance, also launched a new @tiktok_comms Twitter account to address issues in real time.

As tensions soar between the world's two biggest economies, Trump has claimed TikTok could be used by China to track the locations of federal employees, build dossiers on people for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage.

The US leader early this month also ordered a ban on the messaging app WeChat, which is used extensively in China.

On Friday, Trump signed a separate executive order for ByteDance to sell its interest in Musical.ly, the app it bought and merged with TikTok in 2017, citing national security.

TikTok said the US action "risks undermining global businesses' trust in the United States' commitment to the rule of law, which has served as a magnet for investment and spurred decades of American economic growth."

TikTok also repeated its intention to "pursue all remedies available to us in order to ensure that the rule of law is not discarded."

Software giant Oracle is weighing a bid to join Microsoft in the race to acquire part of TikTok, Bloomberg reported early Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

It has preliminarily approached companies including Sequoia Capital to join a bid for the app's operations in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the report said.

China meanwhile Monday slammed Washington for using "digital gunboat diplomacy" in the TikTok case.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Monday said TikTok had done everything required by the US, including hiring Americans as its top executives, hosting its servers in the US and making public its source code.

But the app has been "unable to escape the robbery through trickery undertaken by some people in the US based on bandit logic and political self-interest," Zhao said at a regular press conference.

TikTok separately Monday announced an alliance with music distribution platform UnitedMasters, playing to budding artists and their fans despite US steps to bar the popular app.

The deal to integrate UnitedMasters into TikTok promised to build on a trend of the platform being a way for musicians to be discovered by posting short-clip videos.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

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