

Discord promises outraged users it won't store call recordings—for now



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Before it was updated last month, Discord's privacy policy specifically promised to alert users "in advance" if the company ever started storing contents of video calls, voice calls, or channels. That's why some users became alarmed when the latest updates—which go into effect March 27—seemed to quietly drop this promise. One Discord user asked Ars to investigate, wondering, "Does Discord plan to retain call

recordings?”

According to a Discord spokesperson, the answer is no.

“There has not been a change in Discord’s position on how we store or record the contents of video or voice channels,” a Discord spokesperson told Ars. “We recognize that when we recently issued adjusted language in our privacy policy, we inadvertently caused confusion among our users. To be clear, nothing has changed and we have reinserted the language back into our privacy policy, along with some additional clarifying information.”

Before users began complaining, the policy was going to be updated to say that Discord would be collecting information on “any content that you upload to the service. For example, you may write messages or posts (including drafts), send voice messages, create custom emojis, create short recordings of GoLive activity, or upload and share files through the services. This also includes your profile information and the information you provide when you create servers.”

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As users raised concerns on Reddit, Discord staffers seemed to rush to assuage fears, saying, “We understand that the wording of the new privacy policy is broad and can be misunderstood” and promising, “We are going to fix this.”

Since then, Discord added back in the missing language, word for word: “We generally do not store the contents of video or voice calls or channels. If we were to change that in the future (for example, to facilitate content moderation), we would disclose that to you in advance.” A Reddit user identifying as a Discord staffer told Redditors that Discord won’t “regularly” collect this type of content.

In the United States and the European Union, call recordings by anyone not participating in the call are illegal and generally require consent. It’s likely that Discord updated

the privacy policy not just to appease users but also to cover its tracks legally, but that doesn't mean it will never happen. In response to user outrage, the policy's new updated language now also specifies that Discord may collect some of this type of content in the future.

"We may build features that help users engage with voice and video content, like create or send short recordings," Discord's new policy states.

Discord doesn't have a perfect record when it comes to user privacy. Last year, Discord was fined 800,000 euro for privacy violations in the EU, including failing to close out voice rooms when Windows users clicked the "X" icon. Instead of exiting those users, the EU found that users unwittingly stayed logged in to voice rooms, which continued running in the background and could be transmitting private conversations that users did not know could be overheard.

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