

Musk stiffing Google could unleash yet more abuse on Twitter, report says

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In what might be another blow to the stability of Twitter's trust and safety efforts, the company has allegedly stopped paying for Google Cloud and Amazon Web Services (AWS), which host tools that support the platform's safety measures, Platformer reported this weekend.

According to Platformer, Twitter relies on Google Cloud to host services "related to fighting spam, removing child sexual abuse material, and protecting accounts, among other things." That contract is up for renewal at the end of this month after being negotiated and signed prior to Elon Musk's takeover. Since "at least" March, Twitter has been pushing to renegotiate the contract ahead of renewal—unsurprisingly seeking to lower costs, Platformer reported.

But now it's unclear if the companies will find agreeable new terms on time or if Musk already intends to cancel the contract. Platformer reported that Twitter is rushing to transition services off the Google Cloud Platform and seemingly plans to drop the contract amid failed negotiations.

Should the companies remain at odds, Twitter could end up canceling licensing to display tweets in Google search results.

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Twitter has also stopped paying Amazon, Platformer reported, leading to threats from Amazon to stop paying for Twitter advertising.

AWS told Ars it has no comment on Platformer's report. Twitter and Google did not immediately respond to Ars' request for comment.

Twitter's escalating trust and safety concerns

The headlines about Twitter's trust and safety department this year have not exactly been reassuring.

Not only did both its brand safety chief and its trust and safety chief recently resign, but Twitter has also seen hate speech surge. Spam bots remain a problem, and propaganda accounts are thriving. Perhaps most concerningly, Twitter failed to remove child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) while hosting buyers and sellers, researchers revealed this month.

Twitter has also seemingly become incentivized to turn a blind eye to malicious activity from its paid subscribers—failing to remove 99 percent of hate speech posted by Blue Verified users. A barrage of hate speech during the West Hollywood Pride parade got so overwhelming—partly because Twitter allegedly did not respond to reports of hate speech—that the Los Angeles County district attorney's office shut down its Twitter account last week, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Now, Platformer has reported that a Twitter service called Smyte—an automated anti-abuse and anti-harassment tool that was previously operating on Google Cloud Platform (GCP)—will potentially shut down on June 30. This could lead to a flood of spam bots and CSAM on Twitter as bots and content could fail to be removed.

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