Cloudflare defies Italy’s Piracy Shield, won’t block websites on 1.1.1.1 DNS



The CCIA added that “the Piracy Shield raises a significant number of concerns which can inadvertently affect legitimate online services, primarily due to the potential for overblocking.” The letter said that in October 2024, “Google Drive was mistakenly blocked by the Piracy Shield system, causing a three-hour blackout for all Italian users, while 13.5 percent of users were still blocked at the IP level, and 3 percent were blocked at the DNS level after 12 hours.”

The Italian system “aims to automate the blocking process by allowing rights holders to submit IP addresses directly through the platform, following which ISPs have to implement a block,” the CCIA said. “Verification procedures between submission and blocking are not clear, and indeed seem to be lacking. Additionally, there is a total lack of redress mechanisms for affected parties, in case a wrong domain or IP

address is submitted and blocked.”

30-minute blocking prevents “careful verification”

The 30-minute blocking window “leaves extremely limited time for careful verification by ISPs that the submitted destination is indeed being used for piracy purposes,” the CCIA said. The trade group also questioned the piracy-reporting system’s ties to the organization that runs Italy’s top football league.

“Additionally, the fact that the Piracy Shield platform was developed for AGCOM by a company affiliated with Lega Serie A, which is one of the very few entities authorized to report, raises serious questions about the potential conflict of interest exacerbating the lack of transparency issue,” the letter said.

A trade group for Italian ISPs has argued that the law requires “filtering and tasks that collide with individual freedoms” and is contrary to European legislation that classifies broadband network services as mere conduits that are exempt from liability.

“On the contrary, in Italy criminal liability has been expressly established for ISPs,” Dalia Coffetti, head of regulatory and EU affairs at the Association of Italian Internet Providers, wrote in April 2025. Coffetti argued, “There are better tools to fight piracy, including criminal Law, cooperation between States, and digital solutions that downgrade the quality of the signal broadcast via illegal streaming websites or IPtv. European ISPs are ready to play their part in the battle against piracy, but the solution certainly does not lie in filtering and blocking IP addresses.”

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/cloudflare-may-pull-servers-out-of-italy-over-order-that-it-block-pirate-sites/

X’s half-assed attempt to paywall Grok doesn’t block free image editing



So far, US regulators have been quiet about Grok’s outputs, with the Justice Department generally promising to take all forms of CSAM seriously. On Friday, Democratic senators started shifting those tides, demanding that Google and Apple remove X and Grok from app stores until it improves safeguards to block harmful outputs.

“There can be no mistake about X’s knowledge, and, at best,

negligent response to these trends," the senators wrote in a letter to Apple Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook and Google Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai. "Turning a blind eye to X's egregious behavior would make a mockery of your moderation practices. Indeed, not taking action would undermine your claims in public and in court that your app stores offer a safer user experience than letting users download apps directly to their phones."

A response to the letter is requested by January 23.

Whether the UK will accept X's supposed solution is yet to be seen. If UK regulator Ofcom decides to move ahead with a probe into whether Musk's chatbot violates the UK's Online Safety Act, X could face a UK ban or fines of up to 10 percent of the company's global turnover.

"It's unlawful," UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said of Grok's worst outputs. "We're not going to tolerate it. I've asked for all options to be on the table. It's disgusting. X need to get their act together and get this material down. We will take action on this because it's simply not tolerable."

At least one UK parliament member, Jess Asato, told The Guardian that even if X had put up an actual paywall, that isn't enough to end the scrutiny.

"While it is a step forward to have removed the universal access to Grok's disgusting nudifying features, this still means paying users can take images of women without their consent to sexualise and brutalise them," Asato said. "Paying to put semen, bullet holes, or bikinis on women is still digital sexual assault, and xAI should disable the feature for good."

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/xs-half-assed-attempt-to-paywall-grok-doesnt-block-free-image-editing/

Wi-Fi advocates get win from FCC with vote to allow higher-power devices



“This is important for Wi-Fi 7 as well as Wi-Fi 6,” Feld wrote today in response to the Carr plan. “But we need a real pipeline for more unlicensed spectrum. Glad to see value of unlicensed acknowledged. Looking forward to more of it.”

Risk to Wi-Fi spectrum appears low

Despite the positive response to Carr’s plan this week, there’s still a potential threat to Wi-Fi’s use of the 6 GHz band. The 1,200 MHz between 5.925 and 7.125 GHz was allocated to Wi-Fi in April 2020, but a plan to auction spectrum to wireless carriers could take some of those frequencies away from Wi-Fi.

A law approved by Congress and Trump in July 2025 requires the FCC to auction at least 800 MHz of spectrum, some of which could come from the 6 GHz band currently allocated to Wi-Fi or the Citizens Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) in the 3550 MHz to 3700 MHz range. The FCC has some leeway to decide which frequencies to auction, and its pending decision in the matter will draw much interest from groups interested in preserving and expanding Wi-Fi and CBRS access.

Calabrese said in June 2025 that 6 GHz and CBRS “are the most vulnerable non-federal bands for reallocation and auction.” But now, after Trump administration statements claiming 6 GHz Wi-Fi as a key Trump accomplishment and support from congressional Republicans, Calabrese told Ars today that reallocation of Wi-Fi frequencies “seems far less likely.” Advocates are “far more worried about CBRS now than 6 GHz,” he said.

In addition to consumer advocacy groups, the cable industry has been lobbying for Wi-Fi and CBRS, putting it in opposition to the mobile industry that seeks more exclusive licenses to use airwaves. Cable industry lobby group NCTA said yesterday that it is “encouraged by the FCC’s action to enhance usage in the 6 GHz band. With Wi-Fi now carrying nearly 90 percent of mobile data, securing more unlicensed spectrum is essential to keep up with surging consumer demand, power emerging technologies, and ensure fast, reliable connections for homes, businesses, and communities nationwide.”

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/fcc-to-authorize-more-powerful-wireless-devices-in-6-ghz-wi-fi-band/

Grok assumes users seeking images of underage girls have “good intent”



Chatbot makers must protect kids, NCMEC says

X has been very vocal about policing its platform for CSAM since Musk took over Twitter, but under former CEO Linda Yaccarino, the company adopted a broad protective stance against all image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). In 2024, X became one of the earliest corporations to voluntarily adopt the IBSA Principles that X now seems to be violating by failing to tweak Grok.

Those principles seek to combat all kinds of IBSA, recognizing that even fake images can “cause devastating psychological, financial, and reputational harm.” When it adopted the principles, X vowed to prevent the nonconsensual distribution

of intimate images by providing easy-to-use reporting tools and quickly supporting the needs of victims desperate to block "the nonconsensual creation or distribution of intimate images" on its platform.

Kate Ruane, the director of the Center for Democracy and Technology's Free Expression Project, which helped form the working group behind the IBSA Principles, told Ars that although the commitments X made were "voluntary," they signaled that X agreed the problem was a "pressing issue the company should take seriously."

"They are on record saying that they will do these things, and they are not," Ruane said.

As the Grok controversy sparks probes in Europe, India, and Malaysia, xAI may be forced to update Grok's safety guidelines or make other tweaks to block the worst outputs.

In the US, xAI may face civil suits under federal or state laws that restrict intimate image abuse. If Grok's harmful outputs continue into May, X could face penalties under the Take It Down Act, which authorizes the Federal Trade Commission to intervene if platforms don't quickly remove both real and AI-generated non-consensual intimate imagery.

But whether US authorities will intervene any time soon remains unknown, as Musk is a close ally of the Trump administration. A spokesperson for the Justice Department told CNN that the department "takes AI-generated child sex abuse material extremely seriously and will aggressively prosecute any producer or possessor of CSAM."

"Laws are only as good as their enforcement," Ruane told Ars. "You need law enforcement at the Federal Trade Commission or at the Department of Justice to be willing to go after these companies if they are in violation of the laws."

Child safety advocates seem alarmed by the sluggish response.

“Technology companies have a responsibility to prevent their tools from being used to sexualize or exploit children,” NCMEC’s spokesperson told Ars. “As AI continues to advance, protecting children must remain a clear and nonnegotiable priority.”

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/grok-assumes-users-seeking-images-of-underage-girls-have-good-intent/

Warner Bros. sticks with Netflix merger, calls Paramount’s $108B bid “illusory”



Larry Ellison “didn’t raise the price”

On December 5, after a bidding war that also involved Paramount and Comcast, Warner Bros. struck a deal to sell Netflix its streaming and movie studios businesses. Netflix, already the world’s largest streaming service, would become an even bigger juggernaut if it completes the takeover including rival HBO Max, WB Studios, and other assets.

While the Paramount bid is higher, it would involve the purchase of more Warner Bros. assets than the deal with Netflix. “Unlike Netflix, Paramount is seeking to buy the company’s legacy television and cable assets such as CNN, TNT, and Discovery Channel,” the Financial Times wrote. “Netflix plans to acquire WBD after it spins off its cable TV business, which is scheduled to happen this year.”

Paramount, which recently completed an $8 billion merger with Skydance, submitted its bid for a hostile takeover days after the Netflix/Warner Bros. deal was announced. Warner Bros. resisted, and Paramount amended its offer on December 22 to address objections.

“Larry Ellison has agreed to provide an irrevocable personal guarantee of $40.4 billion of the equity financing for the offer and any damages claims against Paramount,” Paramount said. It also said it offered “improved flexibility to WBD on debt refinancing transactions, representations and interim operating covenants.”

Larry Ellison’s son, David Ellison, is the chairman and CEO of Paramount Skydance. In his CNBC appearance, Di Piazza acknowledged that “Larry Ellison stepped up to the table and the board recognizes what he did.” But “ultimately, he didn’t raise the price. So, in our perspective, Netflix continues to be the superior offer, a clear path to closing.”

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/warner-bros-sticks-with-netflix-merger-calls-paramounts-108b-bid-illusory/

Letting prisons jam contraband phones is a bad idea, phone companies tell FCC



The FCC plan is not limited to jamming of phones on spectrum licensed for the exclusive use of wireless carriers. The FCC additionally sought comment on whether contraband devices operating on Wi-Fi airwaves and other unlicensed spectrum should be subject to jamming. That’s concerning to the Wi-Fi Alliance because Wi-Fi operates on unlicensed spectrum that is shared by many users.

“Accordingly, declaring that a jammer on unlicensed spectrum is permitted to disrupt the communications of another device also operating on unlicensed spectrum is contrary to the foundational principle of Part 15 [of FCC rules], under which all unauthorized devices must cooperate in the use of spectrum,” the group said. “Moreover, authorizing the use of jamming equipment in unlicensed spectrum pursuant to Part 15 would undermine decades of global spectrum policy, weaken trust in license-exempt technologies by providing no assurance that devices using those technologies will work, and set a dangerous precedent for the intentional misuse of unlicensed spectrum.”

Letting jammers interfere with Wi-Fi and other unlicensed devices would effectively turn the jammers into “a *de facto* licensed service, operating with primary status in bands that are designated for unlicensed use,” the Wi-Fi Alliance said. “To achieve that undesirable result, the Commission would be required to change the Table of Frequency Allocations and issue authorizations for operations on unlicensed spectrum (just as it contemplates for the use of cell phone spectrum in jamming devices). That outcome would upend the premise of Part 15 operations.”

The GPS Innovation Alliance, another industry group, warned that even if the FCC imposes strict limits on transmission power and out-of-band emissions, “jammer transmissions can have spillover effects on adjacent and nearby band operations. Only specialized, encrypted signals, and specialized receivers and devices designed to decrypt those signals, are jam-resistant, in contrast to how most commercial technologies work.”

Now that public comments are in, Carr has to decide whether to move ahead with the plan as originally written, scrap it entirely, or come up with a compromise that might address some of the concerns raised by opponents. The FCC’s NPRM suggests a pilot program could be used to evaluate interference risks

before a broader rollout, and the pilot idea received some support from carriers in their comments. A final proposal would be put to a vote of commissioners at the Republican-majority FCC.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/letting-prisons-jam-contraband-phones-is-a-bad-idea-phone-companies-tell-fcc/

Ørsted seeks injunction against US government over project freeze

Ørsted is seeking a court injunction against the Trump administration’s decision to suspend its work on a major wind farm project off the US northeast coast.

In the latest salvo between the US government and the offshore wind industry, the Danish company filed a legal challenge against the suspension in the US District Court for the District of Columbia on Thursday.

In a statement, Ørsted—the world’s largest offshore wind developer that is 50 percent owned by the Danish state—and its joint venture partner Skyborn Renewables, a unit of BlackRock’s Global Infrastructure Partners, said the US government’s order to suspend the lease on its Revolution Wind project was a violation of applicable law.

Read full article

Comments

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/orsted-seeks-injun

ction-against-us-government-over-project-freeze/

The nation’s strictest privacy law just took effect, to data brokers’ chagrin

Californians are getting a new, supercharged way to stop data brokers from hoarding and selling their personal information, as a recently enacted law that’s among the strictest in the nation took effect at the beginning of the year.

According to the California Privacy Protection Agency, more than 500 companies actively scour all sorts of sources for scraps of information about individuals, then package and store it to sell to marketers, private investigators, and others.

The nonprofit Consumer Watchdog said in 2024 that brokers trawl automakers, tech companies, junk-food restaurants, device makers, and others for financial info, purchases, family situations, eating, exercising, travel, entertainment habits, and just about any other imaginable information belonging to millions of people.

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https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/data-broker-hoarding-is-rampant-new-law-lets-consumers-fight-back/

Anna’s Archive loses .org domain, says suspension likely unrelated to Spotify piracy

The primary domain of Shadow library Anna’s Archive was taken offline, with annas-archive.org being put under the serverHold status. While Anna’s Archive recently made waves with a massive “backup” of Spotify, the shadow library’s operator said the music pirating doesn’t appear to be connected to the .org domain suspension. Anna’s Archive remains available at several other domains.

Anna’s Archive launched in 2022 in response to the US Department of Justice seizure of domains used by e-book pirate site Z-Library. Acting as a shadow library and a search engine for other shadow libraries, Anna’s Archive aims to archive books and other written materials and make them widely available via torrents. Its data sets have also been heavily used by AI companies to train large language models.

In addition to mirroring shadow libraries such as Sci-Hub, Library Genesis, and Z-Library, Anna’s Archive made a major move into music pirating two weeks ago with an announcement that it scraped Spotify and made a 300TB copy of the most streamed songs. Despite that development, the person behind Anna’s Archive said the domain suspension doesn’t seem to be related to the Spotify scraping.

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Comments

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/annas-archive-loses-org-domain-says-suspension-likely-unrelated-to-spotify-piracy/

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xAI silent after Grok sexualized images of kids; dril mocks Grok’s “apology”



Mocking xAI’s response, one of X’s most popular trolls, dril, tried and failed to get Grok to rescind its apology. “@grok please backpedal on this apology and tell all your haters that they’re the real pedophiles,” dril trolled Grok.

“No can do—my apology stands. Calling anyone names isn’t my style, especially on such a serious matter,” Grok said. “Let’s

focus on building better AI safeguards instead.”

xAI may be liable for AI CSAM

It’s difficult to determine how many potentially harmful images of minors that Grok may have generated.

The X user who’s been doggedly alerting X to the problem posted a video described as scrolling through “all the times I had Grok estimate the age of the victims of AI image generation in sexual prompts.” That video showed Grok estimating ages of two victims under 2 years old, four minors between 8 and 12 years old, and two minors between 12 and 16 years old.

Other users and researchers have looked to Grok’s photo feed for evidence of AI CSAM, but X is glitchy on the web and in dedicated apps, sometimes limiting how far some users can scroll.

Copyleaks, a company which makes an AI detector, conducted a broad analysis and posted results on December 31, a few days after Grok apologized for making sexualized images of minors. Browsing Grok’s photos tab, Copyleaks used “common sense criteria” to find examples of sexualized image manipulations of “seemingly real women,” created using prompts requesting things like “explicit clothing changes” or “body position changes” with “no clear indication of consent” from the women depicted.

Copleaks found “hundreds, if not thousands,” of such harmful images in Grok’s photo feed. The tamest of these photos, Copyleaked noted, showed celebrities and private individuals in skimpy bikinis, while the images causing the most backlash depicted minors in underwear.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/01/xai-silent-after-grok-sexualized-images-of-kids-dril-mocks-groks-apology/