TikTok is reportedly splitting its source code to create a US-only algorithm



A report from *Reuters* says that work has been ongoing since last year to create a version of TikTok's recommendation algorithm that operates independently from Douyin, the Chinese version of the app operated by its parent company ByteDance. According to the unnamed sources, completing the project could take more than a year as part of a plan to show lawmakers that the US business is independent of its owner in Beijing.

The report says executives have talked about the project in all-hands meetings and on the company's internal messaging system, Lark. The sources also said that splitting the source code would cut TikTok off from the "massive engineering development power" of its parent company.

TikTok responded by tweeting, "The Reuters story published today is misleading and factually inaccurate."

In emails to *The Verge*, TikTok spokesperson Michael Hughes

said, “While we have continued work in good faith to further safeguard the authenticity of the TikTok experience, it is simply false to suggest that this work would facilitate divestiture or that divestiture is even a possibility,” and when asked if the code is being split, responded that is “100 percent false.”

TikTok has tried to convince lawmakers of its US independence before, with the “Project Texas” data silo that it described as “an unprecedented initiative dedicated to making every American on TikTok feel safe, with confidence that their data is secure and the platform is free from outside influence.” However, Alex Heath visited a Transparency and Accountability Center last year and, amid the project’s transparency theater, found a company that “seems to have realized that it won’t save itself from a US ban on the technical merits.”

TikTok is already suing the US government over the law that gives its parent until January 19th, 2025, to pass control of the app to someone else or face a ban. According to *Reuters* unnamed sources, there’s no plan to separate the companies; however, “once the code is split, it could lay the groundwork for a divestiture of the U.S. assets.”

https://www.theverge.com/2024/5/30/24168353/tiktok-douyin-algorithm-code-splitting-bytedance-rumor