U.S. Government Considers Banning Tik Tok

Mike Pompeo suggests using TikTok puts your private information ‘in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.’

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The Trump administration has been laser-focused on removing Chinese hardware manufacturers from the US market, including Huawei and ZTE, but now the focus seems to be turning to Chinese social media apps.

As CNBC reports, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told Fox News that the US government is looking to ban certain social media apps offered by Chinese companies. They include the extremely popular video-sharing app TikTok. “We are taking this very seriously. We are certainly looking at it … With respect to Chinese apps on peoples’ cellphones, the United States will get this one right too,” Pompeo says.

On June 30, the FCC announced that both Huawei and ZTE had been designated as national security threats. TikTok seems to be next on the list, as when asked by Fox News if Americans should use the app, Pompeo said, “Only if you want your private information in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.”

TikTok is owned by Chinese company ByteDance, but the video-sharing app has been very keen to present itself as in no way beholden to China. In response to Pompeo's remarks, a TikTok spokesperson said, "TikTok is led by an American CEO, with hundreds of employees and key leaders across safety, security, product, and public policy here in the U.S. We have no higher priority than promoting a safe and secure app experience for our users. We have never provided user data to the Chinese government, nor would we do so if asked."

TikTok says it stores US user data on servers located within the US and backed up in Singapore. Apparently none of the data centers it uses are located within China. As the BBC reports, the video-sharing service has also taken the decision to exit Hong Kong following the introduction of a new security law imposed by the Chinese government.

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