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Russia's Media Watchdog Asks Twitter to Block A Dozen Extremist Accounts

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Russia's media watchdog has asked Twitter to block a dozen extremist accounts.

Russia's media watchdog has asked Twitter to block access to a dozen accounts it deems to be "extremist," the agency's head said, as Moscow seeks greater control over Internet sites based beyond its borders.

Alexander Zharov, the head of communications watchdog Roskomnadzor, said after a meeting with Twitter's head of global public policy, Colin Crowell, that the social network had agreed to Russia's request, Izvestia reported Monday.

The accounts of about 10 "extremist" organizations, including Ukraine's nationalist Right Sector group, will be blocked in Russia within days, the report said.

A spokesman for Twitter, Nu Wexler, confirmed Monday's meeting had taken place but said it had not agreed to block any further accounts in Russia.

“That claim is inaccurate, as we did not agree to remove the accounts,” Wexler was quoted as

saying by Bloomberg.

Last month, Twitter blocked access in Russia to an account linked to a far-right Ukrainian nationalist group, days after an official at the regulator threatened to cut off the micro-blogging site completely if it did not comply with new rules that allow the government to ban sites without a court order.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev denied at the time there was any plan to close down Twitter.

One of several new laws on the Internet requires firms to keep servers handling Russian traffic inside the country and store information about users for at least six months.

President Vladimir Putin, who has described the Internet as a "CIA project", signed a law last month requiring blogs with more than 3,000 daily visits to register with Roskomnadzor and adhere to rules governing the mass media.

The Kremlin, which denies allegations of media or Internet censorship, also adopted a law earlier this year giving authorities power to block websites deemed either extremist or a threat to public order without a court ruling.

Among those websites blocked under the new rules were those of Kremlin critics Alexei Navalny and Garry Kasparov because they "contained calls for illegal activity".

Material from The Moscow Times was included in this report.

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