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Russia's 'Big Brother' Law Facing Delays

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Controversial anti-terror legislation▣requiring Russian mobile phone providers to record users' messages▣and phone calls could be delayed until 2019.

New laws forcing companies to▣store customers' messages, photos and videos for at least six▣months were due to come into force on July 1, 2018.

The change will instead allow operators▣to implement the law step-by-step in order to help them offset the▣legislation's massive costs,
the Vedomosti newspaper reported▣Thursday.

Under new proposals by telecoms giant▣MTS, companies would only collect data from users living in certain▣"pilot areas." The number of Russians who would see their▣information recorded would gradually increase as more pilot areas▣were rolled out across the country.

Officials will back the plans at a▣meeting between industry representatives and the State Duma's Open▣Government committee on Friday, Vedomosti reported.

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The new data storage law is part of conservative anti-terror reforms authored by United Russia politician Irina Yarovaya.

Signed by President Putin in July 2016, the Yarovaya legislation has provoked a strong backlash from activists and businesses, who call the legislation "Russia's 'Big Brother' Law."

In a letter to the Russian government last year, the country's top communications companies claimed that the law could cost as much as 2.2 trillion rubles ($39 billion) to put in place.

Russia's Deputy Minister for Economic Development, Oleg Fomichev, went on to tell reporters in July 2016 that the data storage infrastructure required to implement the plans simply "didn't exist."

Yarovaya herself has dismissed the criticism as a "baseless" excuse for mobile phone operators to increase prices.

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