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Russian Regulator Moves to Block Telegram Messaging App

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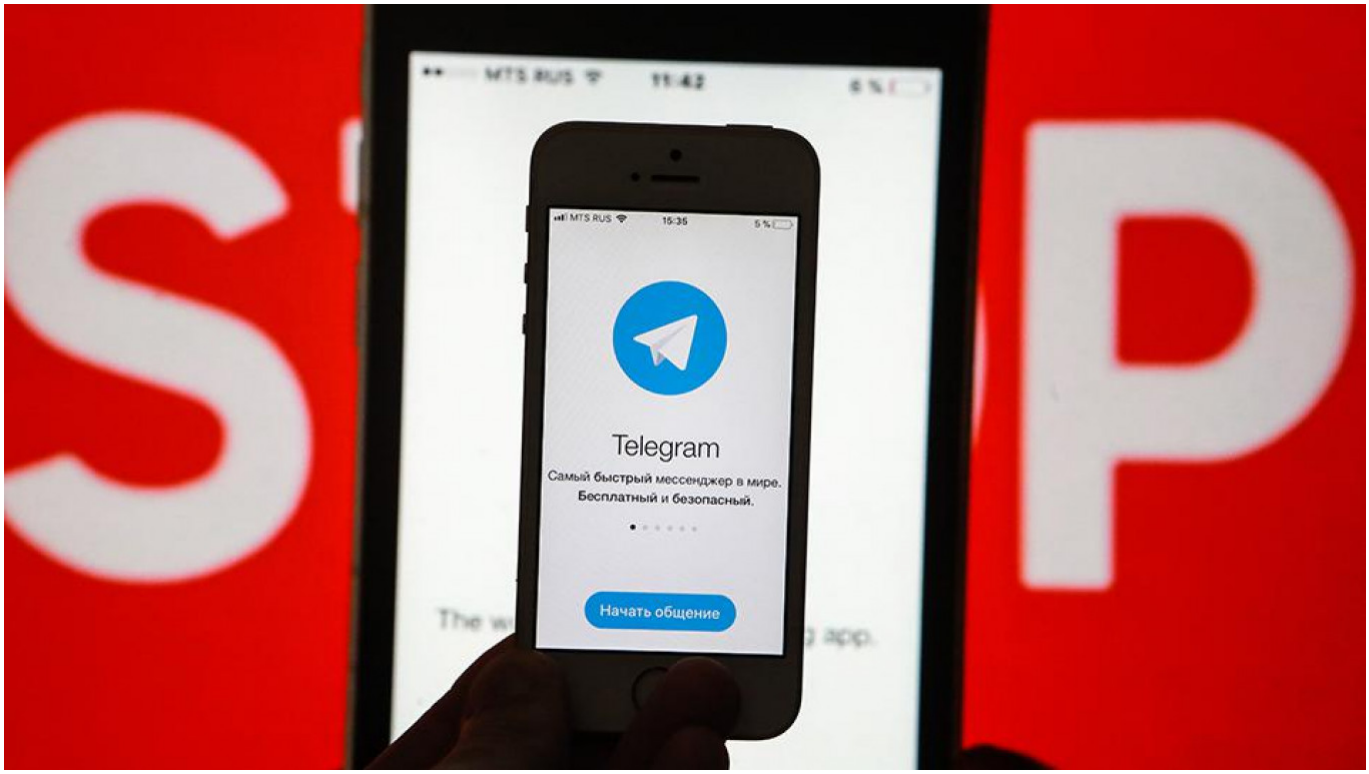

Sergei Konkov / TASS

Russian state regulators have moved to block the popular Telegram messaging app 48 hours after it missed a deadline to provide the government with tools to decrypt users' personal messages.

Russia's state media watchdog Roskomnadzor gave Telegram until Wednesday, April 4, to give up encryption keys to the online conversations of its users. The company has maintained that it does not have the tools with which to allow messages to be decrypted.

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On Friday, Roskomnadzor announced that it had asked a Moscow court to block Telegram in Russia.

The court order came days after FSB chief Alexander Bortnikov announced that terrorists had attempted to coordinate 29 attacks in the country through messaging apps in 2018, Interfax reported.

Telegram's legal defense said Friday that the Federal Security Service's (FSB) demands to hand over decryption keys to private messages were "unconstitutional" and "technically and legally unachievable."

President Vladimir Putin's Internet Ombudsman Dmitry Marinichev was cited as saying Friday that attempting to block Telegram was "silly" because people would find ways to circumvent the ban, but he added that it would force users to "encounter difficulties."

"This war of shields and swords will be, to some extent, senseless and illogical," he told Interfax.

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