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Amazon, Google Still Uncooperative in Telegram Ban, Says Russian Regulator

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Sergei Konkov / TASS

Russia's state media regulator is in talks with Amazon and Google as it attempts to gain the tech giants' cooperation in blocking the Telegram messaging service.

Regulator Roskomnadzor began enforcing a court ordered ban on Telegram on April 16 after the messaging app refused to grant the Russian security services access to users' encrypted messages. In its effort to block access to Telegram, Roskomnadzor has blacklisted almost 18 million Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, including those of Google and Amazon, disrupting the work of hundreds unrelated online services.

"Contact with Amazon has not yet led to positive results, perhaps for political reasons," Roskomnadzor reported Wednesday, citing its deputy chief Vadim Subbotin following talks with IT representatives. Contact with Google "is, on the contrary, becoming more constructive, a substantive dialogue has begun," Subbotin said.

Meanwhile, Russian researchers have written an open letter asking Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to put an end to the "carpet-bombing" of unaffiliated services.

Related article: The Telegram Ban Is Forcing Ordinary Russians to Break the Law (Op-ed)

Around 400 Russian businesses that use Google and Amazon services have experienced difficulties with data storage, payment, customer service, and other online systems, the Kommersant business daily reported Thursday.

They and the U.S. tech giants could each lose $1 billion by the end of 2018 if the blackout continues, Kommersant estimates. The newspaper anticipates higher demand for the cloud services of Russia's state-controlled operator Rostelecom, Mail.ru Group, and Yandex domestic tech firms, as well as Microsoft.

Presidential Internet ombudsman Dmitry Marinichev told Kommersant that he expects a "snowball" of complaints from companies that have suffered under the Telegram ban.

Head of Russia's Federal Anti-Monopoly Service Igor Artemyev expressed doubt in the success of the "rolling blackouts."

"I hope that, as this goal is achieved, everything around us isn't swept away," state-run TASS news agency quoted him as saying.

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