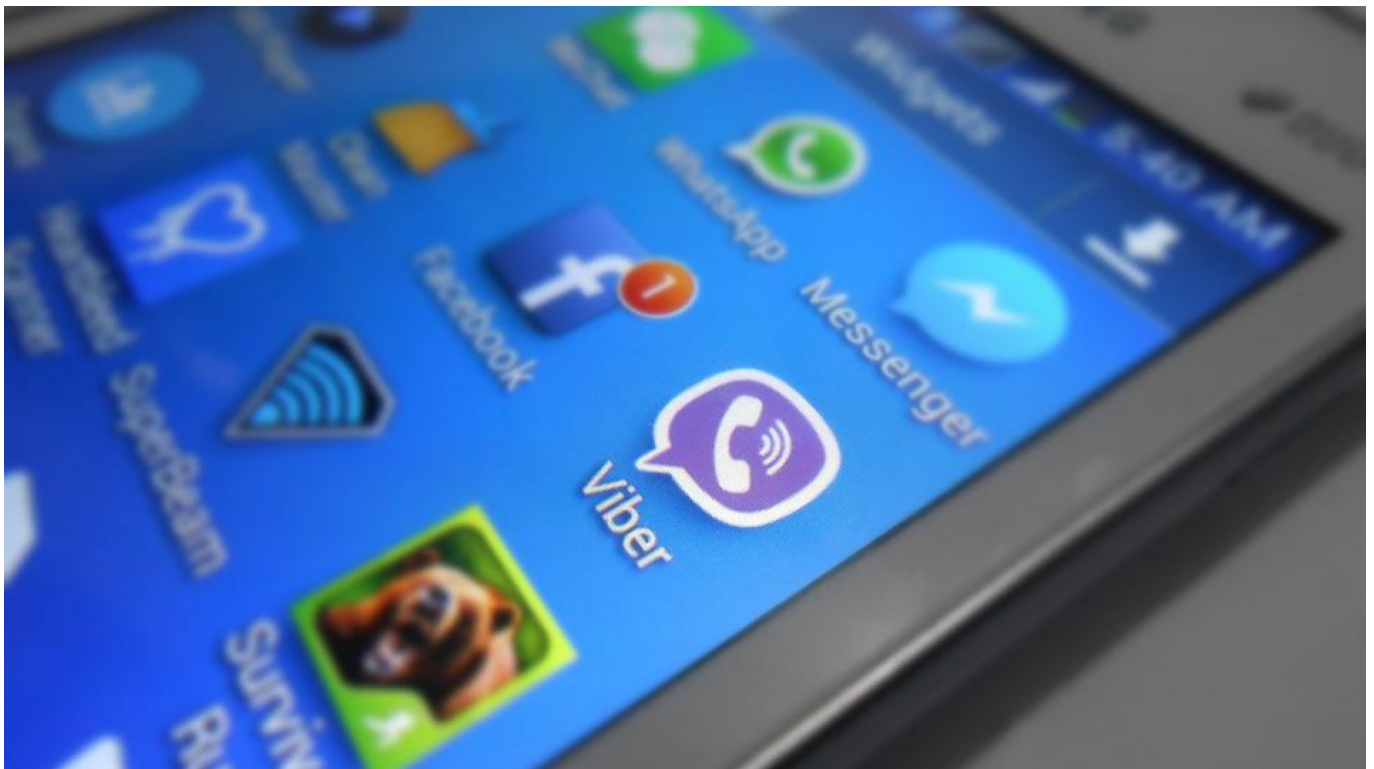


Russia Could Ban Messaging Service Viber, Minister Says

May 03, 2018



Sam Azgor / Flickr (CC BY 2.0)

Russia has not ruled out targeting the messaging service Viber for failing to grant security services access to users' private communications, a minister said.

Russia's communications regulator Roskomnadzor has disrupted unrelated online services in its attempts to enforce an April court order banning Telegram for refusing to turn over encryption keys to the Federal Security Service (FSB). Tech firm representatives, including Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov, have maintained that providing encryption keys or gaining access to information beyond the device is impossible.

Viber, one of Russia's most popular messaging apps, restored service this week after accessibility problems that resulted from the regulator's ongoing Telegram ban.

Related article: [Russian Tech Firms Rebuke Regulator Over Telegram Ban](#)

“If they [Viber] have problems with providing encryption keys, then they [the FSB] could also go to court and obtain a similar court ruling,” the state-run TASS news agency cited Communications Minister Nikolai Nikiforov as saying Thursday.

“It’s the FSB’s area of expertise because the authority on such specific issues as executing orders on providing encryption keys is under the FSB’s remit,” he added.

Roskomnadzor warned Facebook last month that the popular social network could also be banned for failing to comply with Russia’s local storage legislation. The 2015 law, which requires tech firms to store Russian citizens’ personal data on local servers, had forced the LinkedIn social platform to cease operations in Russia.

Roskomnadzor reassured Viber users that the app will not meet the same fate as Telegram for the time being.

“There aren’t any reasons to block [Viber] yet,” Vadim Subbotin, the state regulator’s deputy head, was quoted as saying later on Thursday.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/05/03/russia-could-ban-viber-minister-says-a61341>