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Russian Government Vows to Protect Yandex Against FSB Pressure

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Sergei Konkov / TASS

A top Russian official has said the government will do its best to defend the internet giant Yandex, which is reportedly under pressure from security services to hand over its encryption keys.

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) had asked Yandex to hand over encryption keys for its Yandex.Pochta mail service and Yandex.Disk file hosting service, the RBC news website reported Tuesday. Yandex said it wanted to abide by the law without violating its users' privacy.

Related article: Russia's Yandex Pushes Back Against Pressure to Share Encryption Keys

"Yandex is very important for the national and even global economy," Deputy Prime Minister Maxim Akimov told Interfax on Thursday.

“I think we’ll do everything in our power to ensure that business entities that maintain Russia’s leadership in a number of critical areas don’t suffer in any way,” he said.

Handing over the encryption keys would allow the FSB, the main successor agency to the Soviet-era KGB, to easily access people's passwords and communications throughout Yandex's ecosystem.

Yandex has not yet complied with the FSB's request, which was made several months ago, RBC reported.

Russia has ramped up internet controls in the last five years, requiring social networks to store Russian user data on servers within the country and search engines to delete some search results.

The popular messaging app Telegram has been banned in Russia because it refused to comply with a court order to give security services access to users' encrypted messages.

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