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Russia Blocks U.S. Stock Photo Site's Domain Over 'Objectionable' Content

By Gabrielle Tétrault-Farber for Reuters

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Shutterstock confirmed that its domain was blocked over a picture of a miniature Russian flag planted in a pile of feces. **Web Summit / Flickr (CC BY 2.0)**

Russia has blocked one of U.S. stock photography and footage provider Shutterstock's domains over content it said constituted an insult to state symbols.

The website of communications watchdog Roskomnadzor showed that one of the firm's domains had been blocked in Russia as a result of a decision by the country's Attorney General on Nov. 13. It did not immediately say what had prompted the decision.

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But on Tuesday Roskomnadzor issued a statement saying the domain had been blocked for "insulting state symbols."

The watchdog added that specific Shutterstock pages had also been blocked for showing ways to commit suicide. It was unclear what this was a reference to.

In a statement to Reuters on Monday, Shutterstock said it was aware that the image.shutterstock.com domain had been blocked and that it was working with the Russian authorities to resolve the issue.

"We're aware of content that has been deemed objectionable by the regulatory body in Russia," the company said, referring to Roskomnadzor.

"The content has already been removed and Shutterstock is continuing to work with the agency to remove thumbnail images from the site."

Roskomnadzor countered Shutterstock's comments, saying the "banned information has not been deleted."

Roskomsvoboda, a website monitoring internet freedom in the country, had reported that a picture of a miniature Russian flag planted in a pile of feces is what had caused the domain to be blocked. Shutterstock later confirmed to Reuters that this picture had in fact caused the issue.

The company said it had filed a request for review with Roskomnadzor in a bid to "promptly resolve the issue so that Shutterstock is available again in the region."

Earlier this year President Vladimir Putin signed into law tough fines for those who spread online what the authorities regard as "blatant disrespect" for the state, the authorities, the public, the Russian flag or the constitution.

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