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Russia's FSB Says Facebook Smart Glasses 'Spy Gadget' – Reports

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Facebook and Ray-Ban's smart glasses launched last month, but are not available in Russia. **Mark Zuckerberg / instagram**

Russia's FSB security service said new smart glasses launched by Facebook and Ray-Ban are a possible "spy gadget" — a designation which could prohibit them from being sold in Russia.

The social networking giant and the iconic eyewear brand launched "Ray-Ban Stories" in September, offering a wireless connection to Facebook as well as voice-command photo and video capabilities. A white light in the front of the frames turns on when a camera is being used, intended as a privacy feature to alert people nearby that they could be being filmed.

But Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said the futuristic smart glasses could act as a means of "secretly obtaining information," the TJournal tech news website reported, citing the FSB's press service.

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The glasses are not being sold on the Russian market. If formally banned, Russians who try to buy them online could face criminal prosecution, TJournal reported.

There have been several high-profile incidents of Russians being prosecuted for purchasing widely available consumer technology online in recent years.

A Siberian skier was found guilty in 2019 of the "illicit traffic" of espionage equipment after buying a $30 pair of ski goggles with an inbuilt camera from a Chinese online marketplace.

In 2018, a Russian farmer was arrested for purchasing Chinese GPS trackers to help locate stray cattle. He was released after public outcry.

Russia's Supreme Court later ruled that people cannot be prosecuted for the purchase of spy gadgets if they were "mistaken about their actual purpose," and lawmakers drafted a number of exceptions to the list of banned devices.

AFP contributed reporting.

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